Teachers' Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum: Common Core State Standards

Ruth Hirsch
Brandman University, hirs5201@mail.brandman.edu

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Teachers’ Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Reform:

Common Core State Standards

A Dissertation by

Ruth Hirsch

Brandman University

Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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Committee in charge:

Donald Crane, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Susan McDougal, Ph.D.

Bruce Newlin, Ed.D.
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
Chapman University System
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation proposal of Ruth Hirsch is approved.

Donald Crane, Ph.D., Dissertation Chair

Susan McDougal, Ph.D., Committee Member

Bruce Newlin, Ed.D., Committee Member

Patricia Chavez, Associate Dean

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Teachers’ Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Reform:

Common Core State Standards

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ABSTRACT

Teachers’ Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Reform:
Common Core State Standards
by Ruth Hirsch

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of intermediate, middle, and high school teachers regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). A triangulation method was used to collect data and analyze from interviews, observations, and artifacts from the three districts in the study. Teachers’ perspectives, personal views, and receptiveness as they related to the implementation of the CCSS within their districts were investigated. The interviews, observations, and artifacts were coded and analyzed for common themes and patterns. The findings revealed that although the teachers were hopeful that future students would be more comfortable and better prepared to analyze real-world problems expected with CCSS curriculum, at the time of the study, their current students would need to be retrained in order to be critical thinkers. The findings also revealed there were discrepancies among the teachers with respect to the professional development they received and with the amount of autonomy they had been given regarding the development of their CCSS lessons. The implications for action were comprehensive staff development for all stakeholders involved in the implementation process, ongoing support for teachers, and collaboration with feeder school districts to ensure student achievement occurs. This study will add to the literature on teachers’ perspectives of CCSS. The results of this study will assist school districts in designing staff development
and support systems for their teachers in order to prepare their students to be competitive in the 21st-century global community.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This is an historic day for American public education and for our nation as we begin the journey to level the academic playing field for every student. State Boards of Education are ready to play an active role in the process and some have already started the progression of adoption. We are eager to move this agenda forward.

—William Bradley Bryant, Georgia State Board of Education

The future of the United States and its potential to be competitive in the 21st-century global community will depend upon the education of future generations. The job of preparing students to be successful in this community will weigh largely on educators. One indication that our educational effort should be improved is the level of preparedness of our high school graduates. High school graduates have not been prepared to enter the 21st-century workplace (Achieve, 2005; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006). The number of college graduates prepared to enter the workforce has grown, but not as much as in other countries. According to Rothman (2012) the United States ranked 15th among 20 major industrialized countries with bachelors’ degrees.

In order for students to be competitive in this global economy they will need to master 21st-century skills taught within their core subjects (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). The themes must encompass creativity, innovation, collaboration, communication, information, technology, and media skills. Finally, in today’s workforce, students need to be equipped with life and career skills including being flexible, self-directed, and productive, with leadership skills as well as social and cross-cultural skills that will allow them to be competitive at home and around the world.
(Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010; Partnership For 21st Century Skills, 2011).

To meet the gap in college prepared students the College, Career, and Ready (CCR) Standards in English/language arts were developed to address the skills students will need to be successful as they enter postsecondary education or the workplace (National Education Association [NEA], 2010). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the CCSSO continued with the development of the Common Core State Standards ([CCSS]; Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015b). CCSS was designed to provide students in the United States with a content rich, comprehensive, and equitable education (NEA, 2010). Guidelines have been designed for what every student should know in kindergarten through 12th grade in the subjects of English/language arts and mathematics. CCSS is the curriculum reform that was developed to assist teachers in the facilitation of 21st-century skills (California Department of Education [CDE], 2014b; CCSSI, 2015a).

Teachers in 43 states and the District of Columbia have begun the process of implementing CCSS in the content areas of English/language arts and mathematics (CCSSI, 2015d). Understanding teachers’ views of CCSS and their preparation to put these standards into practice will determine if there will be a successful transformation from the current and previous academic practices (Center on Education Policy, 2013; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013).

**Background of the Problem**

A generation ago the United States led the world in college completion rates. In 2014, the United States ranked 12th according to the Secretary of Education, Arne
Duncan (Young & Hobson, 2014). In an effort to change the face of education and put the United States back on top in the growing global economy, the National Governors Association for Best Practices in coordination with Achieve, an independent, nonpartisan college preparatory organization; ACT, the national college admissions examination; and the College Board, makers of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, began the development of national educational standards (CCSSI, 2015b).

When it was time for the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it required that every child in Grades 3 through 8 were to be proficient by 2014 or schools would face escalating sanctions. The ultimate sanction for failure to raise test scores was firing the staff and closing the schools (New York State Education Department [NYSED], n.d.; Strauss, 2014). When President Barack Obama took office in 2009, his first 10 months were spent on educational policymaking that would tie education funding to an economic stimulus reform bill. The Race to the Top Fund (RTTT) was introduced (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009).

In order for states to be eligible to apply for RTTT funds districts had to write a proposal that would agree to four main educational reform components: international benchmark standards and assessments, recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers and administrators, the adoption of data systems that would track students’ academic progress, and the improvement of low-performing schools (NYSED, 2009). Then U.S. Educational Secretary, Arne Duncan called upon educational leaders to join together to build a “transformative educational law that guarantees every child the education they want and need” (NYSED, 2009 para. 5). Joining in this coalition was the
National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the CCSSO who began the CCSSI.

The purpose of this initiative was to develop a set of kindergarten through 12th-grade common core standards in English/language arts and mathematics that would clearly identify what is expected of students at each grade level (Guilford County Schools, 2009). The first step in developing a set of national standards for education was the creation of the CCR Standards in English/language arts and mathematics (NEA, 2010). According to the NEA (2010), the CCR Standards were based on data compiled from business and higher education and were compared to standards of countries that have performed well on international assessments.

To better prepare students for college jobs in the 21st century, the governors and chief state school officers formed a coalition to bring a common set of academic standards (T. Grossman, Reyna, & Shipton, 2011). The NGA Center and the CCSSO recognized that real-world learning goals were needed. While standards were not new to the states, they were not the same across the states, nor was each state’s definition of proficiency the same. “The development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a success story of meaningful state-led change to help all students succeed” (CCSSI, 2015b, para. 4).

As of 2014, 43 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted CCSS in the content areas of math and language arts. Minnesota has adopted only the standards for language arts (CCSSI, 2015d). CCSS were designed to ensure that individual states were in charge of how they were implemented and which type of assessment would be given.
However, as these standards are state directed, the timelines for full implementation varied (Phillips, 2014). CCSS requires teachers to provide a rigorous, relevant academic education that will prepare their students to compete in the continually changing global economy. This is a paradigm shift from the last 12 years under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. With this shift comes a new way of teaching. Instead of teaching to a test that is made of multiple-choice answers, students will be required to cite sources from their texts and provide a substantial analysis of the information (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Hirsh and Killion (2009) explained that deep changes occur when leaders are committed to providing the necessary professional support to those who will be engaged in the change. According to Guskey (2003), an important characteristic to effective professional development is helping the teachers “understand more deeply the content they teach and the ways the students learn the content” (p. 749). Student learning outcomes will begin to increase and the gap between the United States and the rest of the global community will shrink (McGee, Wang, & Drew, 2013). Math students will attend to precision with the definitions and symbols they choose to solve problems, reason abstractly and quantitatively, and construct viable arguments to explain results. The complexities of English/language arts texts have changed, and the nature of the tasks to be performed will follow a learning progression as the student ages (NEA, 2010).

Teachers will need to have comprehensive professional development to prepare them for implementing the standards as they have been designed (Dessoff, 2012; Robelen, 2013).

Testing for CCSS occurred during the 2014-2015 school year (CCSSI, 2015c). Randi Weingarten of the American Federation of Teachers “has called for caution on
testing until teachers and students have a chance to adjust to the new requirements” (Schulten, 2013 para. 3). While teachers welcome the improvements that CCSS will bring, they are apprehensive because of concerns that CCSS may have some of the same flaws as NCLB (A. Cheng, 2012).

**Teacher Beliefs**

To better understand teachers’ responsiveness to CCSS, it is essential to examine teacher belief systems. Teachers believe if they can engage their students in learning, the students will learn (Pajares, 1992). Teachers believe if their students are successful, then the teachers are experts in the subjects they teach (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). When teachers believe themselves to be experts, they will also believe they can help other teachers to be better teachers (Kagan & Tippins, 1991). Teachers’ beliefs originate from past experiences as students and with the experiences they obtain during their preservice teacher trainings. The quality of these experiences will play an integral part in the development of their belief systems (J. Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Johnston, 1990). Patterns of how they will instruct their future students are based on these experiences as well. How teachers view or conceive their role as a teacher shapes their teaching practice (Buchmann, 1985).

Teachers’ preparatory programs do not necessarily prepare them for teaching students with low socioeconomic or different ethnic backgrounds, who work slow or are learning-disabled (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Knowledge comes with actual experience with these students. However, teachers can believe themselves inadequate when those students are not academically successful. New teachers need to be prepared to deal with their feelings when students fail in order to find a different way to help them learn.
Lortie (1975) and M. Schmidt (2012) explained that teachers who observe other teachers will not only gain ideas on how to reach these students, but also begin to believe they can reach them. As teachers gain experience a sense of efficacy and confidence will increase (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977; Dewey, n.d.).

Teachers are most receptive to change when they have a high self-efficacy and they believe they are effective teachers (Guskey, 1988; Lee, Cawthon, & Dawson, 2013). Lee et al. (2013) stated, “Teachers’ perspectives and perceptions of their own teaching, and by extension, of their students’ learning, are an integral part of successful teaching practice” (p. 84). Higher teacher efficacy is the result of ongoing professional support from peers, supervisors, parents and the community. Higher student achievement is the end product (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988).

**Educational Reform and Change**

Educational reforms such as NCLB and the accompanying CCSS play a role in shaping teacher beliefs and efficacy. Top-down mandates to change, such as teachers integrating CCSS in their teaching is an organizational process. Change occurs when there is dissatisfaction with the current system that is no longer working (Ely, 1999). According to Yates (2004) and Waugh and Punch (1987), implementing a new change or innovation in the manner it has been designed is very complex and comes in different stages. In order for an innovation to spread over time or diffuse throughout an organization the idea of change needs to be identified in the first place (Rogers, 2003). Secondly, organizations then need to communicate the actual change or innovation and persuade those implementing the worthiness of the innovation. In education, information in this stage will clarify the expectations of the change so that teachers understand what
the specific policies consist of and how they apply to their teaching (Waugh & Punch, 1987; Yates, 2004). Next, before implementation can take place the organization must adopt or reject said innovation. Finally, there must be confirmation that their decision, preferably the adoption of the innovation, was the right choice by all parties involved. Confirmation from one’s peers is a good indicator that the innovation has merit.

Ellsworth (2000) explained that communication during a change must be an ongoing flow from the change agent to the change adopter and will reduce the amount of resistance during the change. When all the stages of change have been executed diffusion is the outcome (Rogers, 2003; Waugh & Punch, 1987; Yates, 2004).

**Common Core State Standards**

Drawing from the literature on the diffusion of curricular innovations, it would appear that the diffusion of curricular mandates such as diffusion of CCSS in teaching practices requires the organization to provide the time and structure for implementation to occur. Teachers will need time, support and the tools to make CCSS successful in the classroom (ASCD, 2012). Hung-His Wu, professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of California, Berkley predicts that CCSS will fail if teachers are not fully prepared with intensive staff development (Sawchuk, 2012). Professional development that is comprehensive, practical, and continuously ongoing will support teachers in their understanding of CCSS (Hirsh, 2012). Brousseau et al. (1988) concluded,

The more experience teachers have in the classroom, the more likely they are to: (a) favor a common curriculum, (b) report believing that students should be given more responsibility, (c) believe that there should be common standards for all
students, (d) agree that schools should act as change agents, and (e) reduce their
sense of efficacy. (p. 33)

Public and teacher opinions of CCSS have been recorded as implementation
proceeds. The NEA released a poll of teachers that discovered 50% of teachers surveyed
supported CCSS with reservations (Bidwell, 2013b). According to the Editorial Projects
and Education Research Center (2013), teachers do not feel prepared to instruct CCSS.
In a survey done by PDK/Gallup Poll (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014), the American public
has reservations about CCSS as well. Two of the reservations released in the poll refer to
teacher support and teacher autonomy in what they can teach.

**Statement of the Problem**

In the 20th century, the United States reigned as the ultimate sovereign leader of
the free world. Its advancements in technology were far above other countries and the
workforce became the most educated in the world (U. S. Department of Commerce,
2012). The average income of the middle class rose and continued to thrive for many
years. With the onset of the 21st century the United States has fallen deeply behind.
Other countries may not be as rich as the United States, but they have become better
educated and more technologically advanced. In order to regain their lead, Americans
are going to have to make a progressive movement when it comes to educating their

American students will need to learn the skills that will enable them to be
competitive in the global workforce. According to Partnership for 21st Century Skills
(2007), “Twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving skills,
computer and technology skills, and communication and self-direction skills into their
“curriculum” (para. 4) will need to be part of the daily curriculum. CCSS were developed and adopted by 43 states and the District of Columbia to meet those 21st-century needs (CCSSI, 2015c).

However, CCSS represents a critical shift from the standards teachers and students have been accustomed to learning under the guise of NCLB. A transformational change will need to occur as well as a change in the mindset of the main stakeholders: parents, teachers, school administrators, and students for academic success to occur and be meaningful (Bertin, 2014; Robelen, 2013). According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2010b),

The challenges of change require leaders to do three critical things to ensure success: (1) they must be willing to engage in their own personal change process to shift how they think, lead, and relate; (2) they must engage stakeholders earlier in the change process and to a greater extent; and (3) they must overtly set up the change process to welcome and respond to rapid course correction along the way. These actions are in addition to the guidance that traditional change and project management offer. (Kindle Loc. 571)

To ensure teachers are implementing CCSS in the context in which they were designed will depend on how the teachers actually perceive their success once implementation has taken place. Teachers will need to be given the appropriate training over time and be allowed to learn how to teach differently so that they will not give up and revert back to previous instructional practices (Hirsh, 2012).

Like technology, information on how teachers perceive CCSS changes daily as the implementation process continues to take place. Since the adoption of CCSS began
in 2010 and full implementation began during the 2014-2015 school year, few studies have actually occurred to examine teachers’ perceptions of CCSS for either English/language arts or mathematics.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of intermediate, middle, and high school teachers regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study investigated two high schools, two intermediate, and one middle school in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

**Research Questions**

In assessing teachers’ perceptions of the Common Core State Standards, the foreshadowed research questions were studied:

1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?
2. What do teachers think about CCSS?
3. How do teachers gain their knowledge about CCSS?
4. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?
5. How do teachers adapt their teaching to incorporate CCSS?
6. How do teachers describe their decision making in using CCSS in their teaching?
7. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?
8. How useful has the ongoing staff development of CCSS been for the teachers to support their acquisition of CCSS?
Significance of the Study

The CCSS is a transformational change from the previous curriculum movement under NCLB. While CCSS is federally supported, the responsibility of the implementation of CCSS falls on the states and school districts (McLaughlin, Glaab, & Hilliger Carrasco, 2014). To prepare students to be academically competitive for the 21st-century global community, a radical shift in “culture, behavior, and mindset” of our educators and educational leaders will need to occur in order to implement CCSS successfully and sustain it in the years to come (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010a, Kindle Loc. 1438).

The greatest challenge states and districts face is implementation and will require support from all stakeholders involved, especially the teachers. According to McLaughlin et al. (2014), teachers are “uniformly enthusiastic about CCSS” (p. 3), but with that enthusiasm comes a level of anxiety about implementation. Teachers are concerned with curriculum development, technology, and staff development (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2014). Choppin, Davis, Drake, and Roth McDuffie (2015) stated that teachers are being exposed to CCSS while expecting to teach it. As implementation continues it is important that teachers have the time, support, and the necessary tools to make sure CCSS “comes alive in the classroom” (ASCD, 2012, p. 28). It is also important that teachers perceive they are getting the opportunity to learn how to use CCSS in the classroom.

This study will provide a greater understanding of teachers’ perceptions of CCSS and how CCSS affects instructional practices. This study will contribute to the literature of innovation and curricular diffusion by exploring facilitators and obstacles affecting
implementation of CCSS. This study will provide information that is important to
determine the actual success and failures that have occurred during the implementation
process. The results could potentially provide school districts guidance as they continue
to prepare their teachers for the implementation of CCSS.

Definitions of Terms

**AVID:** AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination, a program
run by a “global non-profit organization that is dedicated to closing the achievement gap
by preparing all students for college and success in a global society” (AVID, 2016, para. 1).

**California State Standards:** Standards that were written for all content areas and
were implemented in 1997 (CDE, 2011).

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS):** A set of “high-quality academic
standards in mathematics and English/languages arts”. These standards were formulated
to ensure that all students could apply critical thinking and problem solving to real-world situations (CCSSI, 2015a).

**Critical thinking and problem solving:** The ability to apply, synthesize, and
analyze information gathered from text (Scriven & Paul, n.d.).

**Informational text:** “A subset of the larger category of non-fiction and whose
primary purpose is to inform the reader about the natural or social world” (University of
Maine, n.d., para. 1).

**Professional development:** “A comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach
to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement”
(Learning Forward, n.d., para. 3).
**Professional learning community (PLC):** “a group of people working interdependently toward the same goal” (DuFour, n.d., para. 1).

**Reflexivity:** “Refers to the researcher’s rigorous self-scrutiny throughout the entire qualitative research process” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 490).

**21st-century skills:** A set of skills and tools that optimize the way a student thinks (Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills, 2009-2011).

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries that have been clarified in a study (Joyner, Rouse, & Glatthorn, 2013; Roberts, 2010). Delimitations of this study include the following:

1. This multiple-case study combines data from 21 open-ended questions given to the teachers and individual interviews. If more data are needed, follow-up questions will occur after the interviews take place.

2. Although CCSS are in 43 states, this study only includes school districts in the Antelope Valley area of Southern California.

3. The central point of the research is focused solely on the perceptions of middle and high school teachers in the Antelope Valley.

4. The research focus is on the first full year of implementation of CCSS.

5. The study was delimited to 14 teachers within three districts that had a minimum of 9 years teaching experience.

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.
Chapter I included a background of the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose, and significance of the study, the research questions that guided the study, and the definitions of terms.

Chapter II is a literature review for the study relating to the background of CCSS, the reasons why California chose to adopt these standards, the ability to obtain resources, and applicability of the professional development designed for effective implementation of CCSS.

Chapter III outlines the method used for this qualitative multiple-case study and how the data were collected; it reviews the purposes of the study, the research questions, and the analysis of the data.

Chapter IV describes the findings of the data collected, which were guided by the research questions of the study, and is a summary in general terms of the results obtained.

Chapter V presents the significance of the study, the detailed summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

By 2014, most states in the country adopted and began implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015a). Because of their widespread employment in school districts, it is paramount to understand how teachers perceive these mandated standards and their impact on instructional practices. This chapter presents a review of relevant literature to provide a conceptual background to the research questions of this study.

This chapter is segmented into three broad areas, which are further divided into subtopics. The first area covers the broad topic of teacher beliefs. The literature in this area presents research dealing with (a) where teacher beliefs originate, (b) types of beliefs teachers hold, (c) teacher education and its effects on teacher beliefs, (d) beliefs and self-efficacy, and (e) the origin of efficacy and its effects on learning. The second broad area addresses educational reform and change. This area covers the subtopics of (a) No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and A Nation at Risk, (b) stages of educational change, and (c) curriculum reform. The final broad area addresses CCSS. This is presented by discussing (a) a brief historical context of CCSS, (b) professional development/implementation of CCSS, and (c) public/teacher opinions of CCSS. The topics of this review offer information, concepts, and constructs to help provide some contextual understanding of teacher perceptions of CCSS.

Teacher Beliefs

The first area examines how teacher beliefs play an important role in preparing students to be academically successful. The literature reviews where teachers’ beliefs
Where Teachers’ Beliefs Originate and the Types of Beliefs Teachers Hold

When prospective teachers enter colleges of education, they begin to formulate a type of educational belief on how they will shape students. As they enter methodology courses, teachers reflect on how they were taught and the experiences they had during their own personal education (Johnston, 1990). If prospective teachers believed their teachers provided a fun, inquisitive way to learn, future teachers will try to emulate their predecessors. However, if their own education lacked sustenance, they will teach their students the way they had wished they had been taught, and they will plan their lessons accordingly (Johnston, 1990). Other experiences, such as family traditions, religious gatherings, and community functions play an integral part in the development of a teacher’s belief system (Lortie, 1975). With good intentions teachers establish certain belief patterns of instruction based on those previous experiences and the guidance received from their methodology courses (J. Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Johnston, 1990).

Many beliefs teachers hold about teaching come from their past personal experiences as students, from interacting with other adults after becoming a teacher, and through professional development (Lortie, 1975). Pajares (1992) asserted that understanding the importance of the belief system and how it operates will benefit how a teacher performs in the classroom. Understanding teachers’ beliefs is like a “messy construct” (p. 307). One cannot actually define a belief as each person’s belief system is different due to their different experiences and education (Pajares, 1992). According to
Calderhead (1996), teachers’ beliefs are developed as they obtain their base knowledge and understanding from their teacher preparatory classes as well as how they feel about their teaching. Teachers will need to acknowledge that their experiences and education play a key role in the belief process (Calderhead, 1996).

Kagan and Tippins (1991) maintained that experienced teachers can teach others, especially newer teachers as they consider themselves reliable experts on their subject matter. Teachers believe they are experts on student behavior especially if they are a parent or an experienced teacher. Erkmen (2012) asserted that teachers subconsciously or consciously want to project a particular image of themselves, especially when they are being evaluated.

**Teacher Education and Its Effects on the Belief System**

Teacher education and its effects on the belief system have been studied by many scholars. P. Grossman and McDonald (2008) and Hammerness et. al (2005) stated the original handbooks on teaching written by Gage in 1963 and Travers in 1974 on teaching left out research on teacher education and that today, the actual research is still at the beginning stages. In the past half-century more research has occurred that looks away from teacher characteristics, such as: enthusiasm or authoritarianism, and research has moved towards teacher behaviors, such as: teacher decision making, teacher knowledge, and teacher reflection and dispositions (P. Grossman & McDonald, 2008).

Lortie (1975) explained that even before becoming a teacher, beliefs about what makes good teaching have already been developed in the preservice teacher, teachers who are in the learning stages of becoming full-time teachers. These beliefs can also be developed during teacher preparation classes as well as through the observations of other
teachers during the student-teacher phase (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990; M. Schmidt, 2012). The student-teacher phase is the time a student is learning how to be a teacher by observing experienced teachers or serving as an intern teacher supervised by a master teacher (Dictionary.com, n.d.-b). According to Lortie (1975), there is an apprenticeship of observation where new teachers develop an understanding of teaching based on their own experiences in the classroom. Preservice teachers use their own past experiences as students in the classroom to develop ideas on how to be a teacher in the classroom (M. Schmidt, 2010). Following John Dewey’s theory of the important experience for preservice teachers, teachers gain learned knowledge in the classroom to use later, and will also utilize ideas learned from participating in real teaching experiences (M. Schmidt, 2010; Pietig, 1998). Dewey (n.d.) believed that teacher education and teacher experience can be both educative and mis-educative but cannot be directly equated to each other (Dewey, n.d.). These experiences change the teacher going through the learning process and formulate their belief system. Teachers coming out of teacher-education programs leave with higher efficacy beliefs in their capabilities than the novice teacher whose confidence decreases once in the classroom (Putman, 2012). More experienced teachers on the other hand develop more confidence and a higher sense of efficacy (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977).

Hammerness et al. (2005) found that through teacher education, teachers will formulate a series of beliefs and develop a sense of identity. The identities that emerge deal with becoming lifelong learners, developing a vision of what makes a good teacher and how they will handle student behavioral problems. Cultural identities will also
emerge as well as how to collaborate with others when needed to formulate goals and objectives for concrete classroom practices.

**Teacher Beliefs and Self-Efficacy and Its Effect on Learning**

Bandura (1977) characterized teacher self-efficacy as the degree in which teachers believe they can carry out and systematize tasks that will result in a desired outcome. Teachers’ self-efficacy is the belief that with confidence a teacher has the capacity to affect a student’s performance (Garvis & Pendergast, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). It is the measurable degree in which a teacher feels confident they can implement a task and have the power to positively affect student learning and achievement (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Goddard, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 2000).

The construct of teacher self-efficacy described in two Rand Corporation studies began in the 1970s (Armor et al., 1976; Berman et al., 1977). Both studies had similar conclusions that showed two particular relationships between teacher efficacy and student achievement. The first relationship investigated teachers’ inability to change student achievement or motivation to learn due to their home environment, family background, and parental influences (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). The second relationship was concerned with teachers’ attitude and that through effort, teachers would be able to reach those students who are not motivated. Ashton (1984) stated that beliefs and behaviors play a vital role in student achievement. Teachers who are supported by their peers and supervisors and who are given professional guidance will believe they can be effective in their tasks and hence their behaviors towards their students in regard to student achievement will be positive. According to Ashton (1984), Guskey (1988), and Garvis
and Pendergast (2011), teachers who believe they have a high sense of self-efficacy will believe they are highly effective when instructing their students, while those with a lower sense of efficacy will believe they are not effective and that student failure to learn rests with the student.

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006) also studied teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs were divided into two areas: teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and students’ academic achievement and teachers’ beliefs and job satisfaction. Their results indicated that within the actual learning environment, higher self-efficacy is more likely to create learning environments conducive to student achievement. Teachers with high efficacy believed they could handle any behavioral or academic issues that were encountered (Ashton, 1984; Dembo & Gibson, 1985). High teacher efficacy was accomplished by the support of peers and other interpersonal relationships with other staff members, school community, and parents. Teachers who demonstrated higher self-efficacy were more intrinsically motivated, which resulted in both job satisfaction and student achievement. The opposite was true of teachers with lower self-efficacy (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Guskey, 1988).

Ashton (1984), Bandura (1977), Dembo and Gibson (1985), and Guskey (1988) examined teacher self-efficacy by analyzing the levels of control teachers maintained when trying to encourage student learning. In their individual studies they found that the locus of control determined if a teacher has a high level of efficacy or a low level of efficacy. Locus of control as defined by Zimbardo (2015), are the “beliefs about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation)” (para. 2). Teachers
with higher levels of efficacy will have an internal locus of control. They will be more innovative (Guskey, 2009), more likely to have high expectations of their students, feel more confident, and be willing to try new innovative ways to teach (Coladarci, 1992). Teachers who exhibited a low sense of efficacy have a more external locus of control and are more rigid when they teach. They were less likely to be creative or encourage their students to be creative when learning and were seldom receptive to changing any aspects of their teaching style. These teachers will have lower expectations of their students (Ashton, 1984; Coladarci, 1992; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Guskey, 1988).

Ashton (1984) explained that teacher efficacy can change and can be put into ongoing jeopardy. She found that teachers’ sense of efficacy was negotiated daily in their varied transactions with students, parents, peers, and administrators. There are many reasons a teacher’s self-efficacy can go from high to low. Uncertainty can occur when teachers experience frustration from a change of administration, irate parents, change of school site or grade level, or being expected to teach in a way they have never taught or been trained to teach (Ashton, 1984).

In summary, the literature on teacher beliefs suggested teachers will be highly effective if they believe they have the support of their administrators and colleagues (Ashton, 1984). A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy will often determine how effective they believe they can be in regard to student achievement. There is a range known as the locus of control that can determine the level of efficacy a teacher has (Ashton 1984; Bandura, 1977; Dembo & Gibson 1985; Guskey 1988). When teachers believe they know what is expected of them and understand how to carry out those expectations, they will believe their students will be academically successful. As changes in the mandated
curriculum occur, teachers’ beliefs and how they deal with these changes can affect how these changes are implemented (Bandura, 1977; Berman et al., 1977; Goddard et al., 2000).

**Educational Reform and Change**

A second domain to be reviewed explores the history of educational change in the United States, the stages of educational change, the diffusion theory and how it relates to educational change and curriculum reform.

**Educational Reform: K-12 Education in a State of Crisis**

The United States Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) in 1965 (Crawford, 2011). ESEA was designed as an effort to combat the “War on Poverty” (p. 1) and to ensure educational equity in the classroom. The purpose of ESEA was to help the schools in the United State offer support to the special education needs of educationally deprived children (Crawford, 2011; House Republicans, 2013).

**NCLB and a Nation at Risk**

ESEA was amended by Congress in 2002 and reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). According to Oldham (2013), President Reagan found that the educational system in the United States needed a major overhaul in order to preserve the nation’s future in the “world.” Reagan and the authors of Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education saw “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people” (Oldham, 2013, para. 1).

NCLB was created to relate educational funding with requirements such as the installment of content standards that were aligned to mandated assessments. Schools
were to be held accountable for students’ progress in core subject in the areas of math, English language arts, and social studies and science at certain grade levels. This effort was an attempt to close the “achievement gap” between the various student groups and to ensure highly qualified teachers would utilize research-based instructional programs (Crawford, 2011; House Republicans, 2013; Myers, 2013).

Oldham (2013) asserted that while educational gains for low-socioeconomic and minority students have occurred, NCLB was not perfect. The high school dropout rate surged to 50% and 30% of students in the United States failed to graduate in the expected 4-year plan. Other countries outranked the United States in college degrees and outperformed American children on international tests (Oldham, 2013). If the United States is going to address the current discrepancies in education, transformational changes in what students must learn and what they want to learn will need to occur (Warren & Manthey, 2011).

**Stages of Educational Change**

Yates (2004) and Waugh and Punch (1987) stressed the complexity of implementing change in the different stages. In order for an innovation to spread over time or diffuse throughout an organization the idea of change needed to be identified. Secondly, organizations needed to communicate the actual change or innovation and persuade those implementing the worthiness of the innovation. Information in this stage will clarify the expectations of the change. During this stage, teachers will begin to understand the specific polices and how they will apply the change to their teaching. Before implementation can take place the organization must adopt or reject the innovation. The concluding stage would be the confirmation that the adoption of the new
innovation was the right choice by all parties involved. Confirmation from one’s peers is a good indicator that the innovation has merit. When all the stages have been executed, diffusion is the outcome (Waugh & Punch, 1987; Yates, 2004).

**Diffusion of Innovations**

Rogers (2003) stated, “Diffusion is a special type of communication concerned with the spread of ideas” (Kindle Loc. 974). According to Rudd and Watts (2008), the diffusion of innovations model depicts the change process within a social system and provides the framework for the implementation process of the innovation by the members of the social system. Change occurs over time when all groups of an organization adopt and implement the proposed change (Rudd & Watts, 2008; Yates, 2004).

In the diffusion of new ideas, Rogers (2003) established four elements. The first is the innovation, or the idea, which can be perceived as something new at the time of adoption. The rate of adoption of the innovation can be determined by its attributes which include: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Reinvention of an innovation occurs when the innovation has been changed or modified while in the process of adoption or implementation (Rogers, 2003).

The second diffusion idea that Rogers (2003) described is the communication channel that conveys information from one party to another. Most information takes place between groups with similar or homophilous attributes, which can to lead to more effective communication as compared to those individuals with different or heterophily attributes. This group during the diffusion process can face problems with effective communication of ideas.
Time is the third diffusion idea (Rogers, 2003). The time element encompasses three areas: the innovation-decision process, the innovativeness of adoption, and the rate of the adoption series. The decision process has five steps to the adoption of the innovation which include: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. From here it is decided whether to adopt or reject the innovation.

Innovations such as curricular reform are not adopted by all the participants in the school system at the same time (Rogers, 2003). Instead, adoption comes in a sequence. According to Rogers (2003) and Yates (2004), there are five groups involved in the change process. The first group is the actual innovators who are not only eager to try new ideas but also willing to be risk takers. They often develop the new ideas. The innovators usually make up 2.5% of the adopting group.

The next group makes up 13.5% of the adopting group. They are called the early adopters and represent the leadership of the organization. As leaders they are the first to adopt the change and the change innovators or change agents will seek the early adopters to assist in the implementation process. The next two groups are called the early majority and the late majority. They make up 34% each of the adopting group. Although they are not necessarily leaders, the early majority will usually adopt prior to the average person. The late majority are more adversarial and skeptical. They will most likely adopt from social or peer pressure. Finally, there is the last group of adopters known as the laggards. They make up the final 16% of adopters. The laggards are even more skeptical than the late majority. In addition, the laggards are very conservative when it comes to change and are likely to be suspicious of the reasons change needs to occur. In education these could be the teachers who have been teaching for a long time and have seen curriculum
reform take place before. They will conform only when it is absolutely necessary (Rogers, 2003; Yates, 2004).

Finally, the fourth element is the social system comprised of interrelated participants who come together to achieve a common goal when implementing an innovation (Rogers, 2003). Advocates for change are ones who bring innovation into a society or to an organization (Havelock, 1973). In order for change to occur, certain conditions as identified by Ely (1999) must exist:

1. There must be dissatisfaction in the current status quo, a need to change the existing environment.
2. Sufficient knowledge and skills must be delivered from those implementing the innovation.
3. To support the innovation, a good amount of resources must be made available.
   These could include money, tools and materials, and training.
4. Time will be needed in order to build sustainability. Those involved will need time to learn the innovation, time to process, and then adapt and integrate as well as time to reflect on the process.
5. Those involved will need to be rewarded in some way. Providing both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards can promote and encourage participation in the implementation.
6. Allowing those who will ultimately participate in the implementation the ability to communicate their thoughts and views will not only encourage involvement in the decision-making process but will provide a sense of ownership.
7. This ownership will then pave the way for those involved to demonstrate commitment towards the innovation. This evidence must be visible in the implementation.
8. Finally, with any transformational change, such as curriculum reform, the leadership must be available to offer support throughout the entire implantation process.

Ellsworth (2000) stated that during any change effort communication must be an ongoing flow from the change agent and from the intended adopter who will go on to implement the change. Communication cannot be a linear interaction but must be two-way or a circular rotation between the initiator of change; the change agent; and the recipient of change, the intended adopter. This will reduce the amount of resistance that occurs during any transformational change.

Guiding change is a systematic process with three important components (Ellsworth, 2000). The first component is the importance of the seeing each separate part. The next is the connection of components to prevent isolation. Finally, when all components work in a synergetic manner they will be more effective than if they worked in isolation. In educational change the involvement of all the stakeholders is as important as well as the expected change to be made. It is important that these stakeholders understand the change and the process of the change (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 1993).

Time needs to be set aside for all stakeholders to plan, to learn and to process the change, and this time needs to be built into the workplace (Fullan as cited by Joyce, 1984). Fullan (1993) stated that change is a process where the stakeholders involved in the change; adjust the way they think and what they do. Rogers (2003) developed his diffusion framework as a realization that:

Getting a new idea adopted, even when it has obvious advantages, is difficult. Many innovations require a lengthy period of many years from the time when they become available to the time when they are widely adopted. Therefore, a
common problem for many individuals and organizations is how to speed up the rate of diffusion of an innovation. (Kindle Loc. 331)

Similarly, Schlechty (1990) described five essential functions that must be fulfilled in order for change to occur. The first function is the conceptualization of the change. Those involved in instigating change will need to envision all the problems that could occur during the change process and the possible solutions. The marketing function sees that those not originally involved with conceptualizing the change process are made aware that change will occur. The developmental function allows feedback whenever possible and appropriate by those implementing change. The fourth function would be to bring about a positive-cultured environment in order to motivate people in the direction of change. Finally, the service and support function is to provide in-depth staff development and ongoing support for those who are expected to implement the change (Hanrahan, 1995; Schlechty, 1990).

Curriculum Reform

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), change occurs when there is dissatisfaction in the current system to the extent it reaches a breaking point. Transformational change occurs when the organization comes to the realization that the old way of doing things no longer works. As the stakeholders proceed in the change process, a level of trust must incur and the understanding that the change in mindset, behavior, and culture will play a key role in its success (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010a). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) described change as the investment of professional capital. They stated, “Professional capital is about communities of teachers
using best and next practices together” (p. 51). This capital must have ongoing skill development in order for teachers to be the very best at their profession.

In an interview by Crow (2009), Michael Fullan explained that there needs to be a collective capacity of participants to educate each individual child. Teachers in a collaborative school will be concerned with the learning of the students in their classroom, and in every classroom throughout the entire school. The same mindset applies to the principals of each school within the same district and for superintendents in different districts (Fullan as cited by Crow, 2009).

Shirley and Hargreaves (2006) stated that in American education being data-driven under the pressure of the federal No Child Left Behind Act has forced teachers, especially those in struggling schools, to focus on specific students, specific grade levels, and specific subjects in order to find quick solutions to raise test scores. Instead of getting to know the individual child and his or her individual needs, teachers have been studying the data results to try and figure out how to meet their goals given to them by their state department of education (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2007).

Sahlberg (2011) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explained that the country of Finland has been able to obtain some of the best achievement results in the world because the teaching profession is revered. Once considered one of the lowest academic performing countries in the world, Finland is now one of the leaders due to their investment in their teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Sahlberg, 2011). Teachers in Finland are treated with trust and professional autonomy in their teaching according to how they were educated. Success comes from teachers being allowed the time to
accomplish goals while being given the opportunity to perfect their craft (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011).

Cline and Small (1994) and Clark and Astuto (1994) stated educational reform has been unsuccessful in the United States as schools and teachers have been punished for not producing high-achieving test scores. Local educators will not make the effort to improve unless they are offered institutional incentives. Clark and Astuto (1994) asserted that expecting schools to implement national achievement tests that have a common core of knowledge skills tends to show a lack of trust and the belief that teachers and principals must have their professional lives externally controlled.

In summary, change in education occurs when the current polices and expectations are no longer effective and students are not achieving at a level needed for the future of the United States (Ely, 1999). Mandated changes can be more successfully implemented when teachers fully understand how to implement these changes Ellsworth (2000). For a successful implementation of a new innovation, such as curriculum reform, resources such as training and money; time to learn and implement the change; communication and participation in the decision-making process; and extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are needed (Ely, 1999).

**Common Core State Standards**

The final area to be reviewed focuses CCSS. The literature describes a brief historical background of CCSS in the United States, the professional development and implementation of CCSS, the public and teacher opinion of CCSS, and how CCSS has been implemented in California.
**Brief Historical Background of CCSS in the United States**

Prior to the development of CCSS was the creation of the College, Career, and Ready (CCR) Standards in English/language arts and mathematics. According to the National Education Association (2010), as students enter postsecondary education or the workplace, they need to possess the skills necessary to be competitive and successful. With comments and concerns taken into consideration from many teacher organizations, including the NEA, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), The International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and approval from the states, CCR anchor standards were established (NEA, 2010). After approval of CCR, the development of CCSS came from the acknowledgement of the skills needed for students to be successful in both college and career (NEA, 2010).

CCSS were developed when the state governors and state school chiefs recognized the need for clear academic goals for students in kindergarten through 12th grade (CCSSI, 2015a). CCSS materialized as a result of the dedicated work of a diverse team of experts that included teachers, parents, administrators, researchers, and state leaders throughout the United States (CCSSI, 2015c). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) pledged continuing commitment to work with these organizations in the participating states in the development of CCSS (Benchmarking for Success, 2008).

As of 2014, 43 states and the District of Columbia have fully adopted CCSS (CCSSI, 2015d). Minnesota adopted only the English/language arts standards.
In order for CCSS and curriculum to be successfully implemented a transformation from the traditional way of teaching needs to occur. According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2010b) transformation must be “crafted, shaped, and adapted as it unfolds” (Kindle Loc. 558). In the United States implementation of CCSS occurred in different stages. The first began in 2011, in grades K-2. Assessments, however, took place in Grade 3 through high school (CCSSI, 2015d; Scott, 2012).

Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education asserted in August 2013 that despite great intentions for NCLB, the law created numerous ways for the educational system to fail in the form of the “adequate yearly progress” under which a rigid accountability system determined how all the subgroups of students must demonstrate academic achievement (California Department of Education [CDE], 2012; Crawford, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

CCSS emphasized increasingly complex-centered nonfiction informational text (E. Hiebert & Grisham, 2012). CCSS differs in the area of English/language arts from previous curricular standards as there is a stronger interdisciplinary emphasis of literacy skill integration in the areas of social studies, science as well as math in order to be more aligned with attaining college and career readiness and expectations. The application of knowledge through higher-order skills lessons will be designed using informational, nonfiction genres (E. Hiebert & Grisham, 2012; McKnight, 2011).

School districts began testing CCSS in the content areas of mathematics and English/language arts in the spring of 2015 (Heintz, 2013). The first year will be considered a baseline judge for students and teachers (Lu, 2014).
A two-state consortium has been preparing the yearly assessments for CCSS. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium ([SBAC], n.d.) and the Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) will be assessing over four million students in the content area of mathematics and English/language arts (CCSSI, 2015c). These students will be the sample case/baseline judge for students and teachers. These assessments will provide comparison evaluations of individual states. In the spring of 2015 most of the states began actual CCSS assessments. However, some states are beginning to back away and withdraw from using these assessments in lieu of other alternative assessments that the states design themselves (Lu, 2014). Quality education is enhanced by having high quality teachers (Y. Cheng, 1996). To improve schools, the skills and abilities of the teachers will need to be improved (Guskey, 1994).

**Professional Development**

The key to teachers’ progress and professional growth and subsequently the success of their schools remains in the professional development they receive. Professional development leaders must learn how to critically evaluate the effectiveness of professional development in student learning (Guskey, 2009). Effective professional development consists of six factors: (a) professional development must match the teachers’ needs exactly, (b) professional development must match the schools’ needs exactly, (c) teachers share in the actual design and planning, (d) opportunities for active participation, (e) they include long-term engagement, and (f) they include high-quality instructors (Bayer, 2014).

According to Kober and Stark Rentner (2012) and Hirsh (2012), professional development is a major challenge to the successful implementation of CCSS. There are
now transformational shifts from the way teachers are traditionally taught to present subject matter. Professional development that is comprehensive, practical, and continuously ongoing will support teachers in their understanding of CCSS (Hirsh, 2012). CCSS has a focus on real-world applications and today’s teachers will need to integrate critical and creative thinking, collaboration, problem solving, research and inquiry, and presentation and demonstration skills within their instruction (Hirsh, 2012).

Wu (as cited in Sawchuk, 2012) predicted that CCSS will fail if teachers are not fully prepared with intensive staff development. Since utilizing informational texts has not been the practice of primary teachers in the past, they have to find nonfiction books that can tie into fairy tales. Content areas are overlapping while vocabulary-enriched lessons are being designed “to create an experience that builds pupils’ knowledge” (Sawchuk, 2012, para. 6).

**Implementation of Common Core**

Kentucky was the first state to fully implement CCSS in 2011. Eleven percent of the states began full implementation in 2012 and the majority of the adopted states, 65%, began in 2013. California was part of the last 21% to fully implement in the 2014-2015 school year (CCSSI, 2015d). Assessments will take place in Grades 3 through high school (Heintz, 2013).

Shear and Anderson (2009) suggested that implementation of CCSS with an open mind and with the utmost fidelity to its designed purpose will ensure teachers are providing learning experiences that will guarantee growth one grade level at a time. According to Berkowicz and Meyers, (2013), “The only way in which to implement the
Common Core with this type of fidelity is to provide the structure it needs to flourish” (para. 6).

As implementation has occurred, teachers and other members of the educational community have been provided with various amounts of training in CCSS. These trainings vary from state to state (Cohen, Barber, & Cox, 2012). One resource for supporting teachers in understanding how to implement CCSS are the professional learning communities (PLCs) that occur at school sites (Ermeling, 2013; Killion, 2013). Structured PLCs provide a cohesive and productive support system in order to ensure an opportunity to close the achievement gap that currently exists in American schools (Ermeling, 2013).

Much like the previous state standards teachers were being required to follow, CCSS must be broken down in order for the learning targets to be achieved. Deconstructing, or unpacking what students need to know, understand, or be able to do is still relevant. However, Hank (2011) stated, “You cannot teach the Common Core Standards, you must teach the skills inside each of the standards by formulating ‘I can’ statements” in order for the students to understand their learning objective/goals (p. 1).

When working with CCSS, there are four broad components that must be understood as well as unpacked. These are long-term transfer goals; overarching understandings; overarching essential questions; and a set of recurring Cornerstone Tasks (McTigue & Wiggins, 2012). So long as the unpacking of these standards does not promote repetitive drill of discrete skills but are structured on higher level thinking and application, the teacher will be able to have more of an impact on student learning (McTigue & Wiggins, 2012).
Public and Teacher Opinion of the Common Core State Standards

The NEA, which is the nation’s largest teachers’ union, released a poll conducted in 2013 that showed that three quarters of teachers supported the adopting of CCSS in mathematics and English/language arts. Twenty-six percent supported them completely while 50% supported them with some reservations. However, many of these teachers feel they are not prepared to teach CCSS because they are not properly trained and they are concerned they do not have all the necessary resources to fully implement the standards successfully (Bidwell, 2013b). According to Bidwell (2013b), “In order to fulfill the standards worthy goal we need an equal commitment to common sense implementation. . . . We owe it to our students to provide teachers with the time, tools, and resources to get it right” (para. 9).

Another national survey conducted by the Editorial Projects and Education Research Center found that while teachers do feel that implementing CCSS will improve their own teaching skills and classroom practices, they do not feel they are completely ready to teach it to all student groups, such as English-language learners (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013). The majority of teachers also believe that their current curriculum materials and textbooks are not aligned to be properly utilized for CCSS. However, teachers did agree that more cooperative planning time, aligned curriculum, and a thorough understanding of the expectations of what students are to achieve, would be most beneficial to the students they are teaching (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013).

According to Choppin et al. (2013) a strong majority of middle school math teachers also agreed that the CCSS for Mathematics (CCSSM) assessments will influence
the way they teach. The general desire here is that more communication and problem solving with an emphasis on teaching more conceptually must take place if CCSSM is to be aligned with the assessments. A number of surveys were conducted in 2013 examining math teachers’ perceptions of CCSSM. In many middle schools, math teachers do not feel that their textbooks are aligned with CCSSM (Choppin et al., 2013). In this survey understanding how to implement these standards was vital if students are going to succeed. According to W. H. Schmidt and Houang (2012), “State standards are only stated intentions. Their effect on student achievement is essentially indirect, influencing districts, schools and teachers in terms of what content is actually covered in the classrooms” (p. 305).

Bushaw and Calderon (2014) reported that in a PDK/ Gallup Poll, the American public has reservations about CCSS. Areas addressed in the poll included (a) A 56% preference to local school boards having more influence in what is taught in public schools, (b) A 60% opposition to CCSS as it limits teachers’ autonomy to what they teach for the benefits of their students, (c) A 70% support for charter schools as they are independent and free of regulations, (d) A 54% belief that standardized testing is considered unhelpful to teachers instruction design, (e) Local schools have a higher rating compared to national schools, and (f) The president had a lower performance rating in support of public schools (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014).

The PDK/Gallup poll also reported stronger opinions about CCSS are being formed as over 80% of Americans are becoming more knowledgeable about the standards. Americans who participated in the poll are concerned that teachers have not received the needed support to make the proper adjustments to their instruction in order
to make their lessons more rigorous. A small percentage (33%) is in favor of CCSS because it will prepare their children to go to any school (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014).

**California and the Common Core State Standards**

California adopted CCSS for both English/language arts and mathematics on August 2, 2010 (CDE, 2014a; CCSSI, 2015a). California chose uniformed standards consistent with other states in order to help students obtain a strong education, whether they change school districts or if they leave the state. The board of education ensures that schools are preparing their students to meet CCSS (CDE, 2014a).

The teachers play a pivotal role in student achievement. Therefore it is very important that the teachers are prepared to meet those achievement expectations (Borko, 2004; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Petrie & McGee, 2012; Sawchuk & Keller, 2010). According to Boyle, While, and Boyle (2004) and Hirsh and Killion (2009), preparing teachers can take place in a number of ways, such as ongoing professional development, PLCs, and utilizing teachers as decision makers.

Implementation of CCSS will be more successful provided the teachers doing the implementation will be professionally supported. This support is in the form of ongoing staff development, paid time within the work day to learn with colleagues, and participation in the decision making of the curriculum to be used (Borko, 2004; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Petrie & McGee, 2012; Sawchuk & Keller, 2010).

On March 7, 2012, California’s CCSS Systems Implementation Plan was presented to the California State Board of Education by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and on March 19, 2012 it was presented to Governor Jerry Brown and the state of California (CDE, 2014a). Implementation in California took
place in three phases: (a) The Awareness Phase is the introduction to CCSS and the plan for implementation and establishing collaborations; (b) The Transition Phase involves the collaboration between all stakeholders, the implementation of needs assessments, and provisions for professional staff development; and (c) The Implementation Phase sees the continuation of professional learning support, the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments as the standards are integrated throughout all content areas (CDE, 2014b).

Before CCSS was developed, the CCR Standards were created (NEA, 2010). CCSS blossomed from the partnerships of several teacher organizations, parents, administrators, researchers, the NGA, and the CCSSO (CCSSI, 2015c; NEA, 2010). Forty-three states have since adopted CCSS (CCSSI, 2015c). Understanding the needs of teachers and the school and providing ongoing and effective professional development are two of the ways CCSS will be successfully implemented (Bayer, 2014; Borko, 2004; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Petrie & McGee, 2012; Sawchuk & Keller, 2010). In 2010 California adopted CCSS and by 2012 had a three phase implementation plan in action (CDE, 2014b). National surveys have been conducted questioning professional development, curriculum, assessments, and teacher support in regard to the implementation of CCSS (Bidwell, 2013b; Bushaw & Calderon, 2014; Choppin et al., 2013; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013; W. H. Schmidt & Houang, 2012).

**Literature Review Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of research literature related to the questions of this study. Teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to facilitate the standards and their
perceptions of the elements of CCSS will determine the level of their students’ academic preparedness to compete in the 21st-century global economy. The literature looked at three areas: teacher beliefs, educational reform and change, and CCSS.

Teachers’ beliefs come from a variety of areas: personal parental and educational experiences. These experiences have been developed as a youth and through experiences obtained when the teachers began their own teacher education. As these beliefs develop, a sense of positive or negative self-efficacy will determine how effective a teacher is on their students’ learning and subsequently on their academic success (Bandura, 1977; Hammerness et al., 2005).

In the area of educational reform and change, a brief history of educational change in United States, the reasons for change, and how change is adopted and implemented was presented. Change occurs when the current status quo no longer works for an organization (Ely, 1999). Curriculum reform began with educational equitability during the “War on Poverty” and continued through the development of state content standards with academic expectations in the authorization of NCLB. For transformational change in education to be successful, communication, shared decision making, professional development, and support from leadership will reduce the amount of resistance. Change will be implemented more successfully when all stakeholders involved are informed and understand the reasons as well as the benefits behind the change (Ellsworth, 2000; Ely, 1999; Fullan, 1993).

The final area the literature review addressed was CCSS. As of 2014, CCSS was adopted by 43 states (CCSSI, 2015b). These standards were adopted to address the deficiencies in education and the need for students to become more college and career
ready. CCSS was developed to address English/language arts and math content areas, eventually building upon the other content areas (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d.). CCSS is a paradigm shift from previous curriculum reforms, and the literature further points to the need for ongoing professional staff development and support as implementation takes place (Activate the Mind, 2014; Bellanca, Fogarty, Pete, & Stinson, 2013). The state of California adopted CCSS in 2010 and developed a three phrase implementation plan: (a) awareness; (b) transition; and (c) implementation (CDE, 2014b).

Teacher and public opinions of CCSS have been mixed since adoption has occurred. Teacher autonomy to what they teach and the assessments to be given are in question (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014).

A literature review synthesis matrix which relates to this study is found in Appendix A. It correlates and organizes the literature resources used by the researcher.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III presents the methodology used to address the research questions of this study. This chapter includes the purpose statement, research questions and the research design of this study. The population and sample are identified and described. The types of data used in the study and are presented along with a discussion of validity and reliability. The types of data that were gathered included interviews, observations, and relevant artifacts. The data collection and data analysis process is outlined in detail and the limitations of the study are identified.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of intermediate, middle, and high school teachers regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study investigated two high schools, two intermediate, and one middle school in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

Research Questions

In studying teachers’ perceptions of the Common Core State Standards, the following foreshadowed research questions were explored:

1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?
2. What do teachers think about CCSS?
3. How do teachers gain their knowledge about CCSS?
4. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?
5. How do teachers adapt their teaching to incorporate CCSS?
6. How do teachers describe their decision making in using CCSS in their teaching?

7. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?

8. How useful has the ongoing staff development of CCSS been for the teachers to support their acquisition of CCSS?

**Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design. Case studies are used when an organization or group of organizations are to be studied in detail over a period of time using different resources within the setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Yin, 2009). According to Stake (2006), “Qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation” (Kindle Loc. 492).

This multiple-case study took place over approximately a 35-day time period during the winter of 2015/2016. In this study, the multiple bounded systems or cases were the perspectives of the teachers regarding CCSS at each school site (Creswell, 2013).

Multiple-case studies are beneficial when the design uses the rationale of replication as the researcher replicates the procedures for each case (Yin, 2009). In this study, the researcher examined the perceptions of CCSS in three districts with a foreshadowed line of inquiry into the areas of knowledge acquisition, thought processes, shared decision making in regard to CCSS, instructional adaptation, teacher training and preparation, and the overall experience of CCSS implementation. As the goal is to design a good case study by collecting, presenting, and analyzing data fairly, the researcher
used, as Creswell (2013) described, an “interpretive, naturalistic approach that informs the study of research problems by collecting data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under the study” (Kindle Loc. 1084).

**Qualitative Research**

This study followed a qualitative line of inquiry. Qualitative research is described as a holistic perspective which gives the audience or evaluators who analyze the data a 360 degree view or idea of what the participants are actually saying, seeing the whole as “greater than the sum of its parts” (Patton, 2002, p. 59). Qualitative research is used when an organization wants to analyze a problem or concern in great detail or when the use of quantitative research will not be specific or detailed enough (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research is used when a researcher looks through an interpretive, theoretical lens involved with studying human or social problems. Through this lens what will develop are a set of patterns and themes that can show the interrelationships of the people involved (Creswell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative research provides the context to capture what people have to say in their own words while describing their experiences in depth (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research looks at the individual in his or her natural settings, through observations and discussions. It focuses on the “quality” of the individual’s life and how each socializes with those around them and deals with the individual’s thoughts and feelings (McMillan & Schumacher 2010; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research emphasizes on the details through the eyes of the individuals involved (Patton, 2002).

Within an educational setting, qualitative research can answer several questions such as: what is happening, who are the members involved, what are the values of the
actions experienced by those involved have on the school setting, how are these actions organized by those involved, are the actions interrelated to the whole of the social system (school, parents, community) and how do the daily activities of the school system compare to the activities of other systems within the community (Erickson, 1985)?

Four philosophic assumptions have been identified in qualitative research. These four assumptions are beliefs about: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Creswell, 2013).

Ontology is the nature of reality when the evidence collected is put into themes by reporting the actual words and perspectives given from the individual respondents. Epistemology describes the knowledge that is learned through the experiences of those participating in the study. Axiology is what value the researcher will bring to the study including whatever bias there will be. Finally, the methodology is the process by which the research is being conducted (Creswell, 2013).

**Rationale for Selecting This Methodology**

The researcher used a qualitative multiple-case study to understand the meanings of the teachers implementing CCSS. In this case study the teachers’ personal beliefs, characteristics, perceptions, reflections, and experiences that are associated with their receptivity to CCSS were studied. This type of study will as McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described, “increase the understanding of the lived experiences . . . and promote a better understanding of a practice or issue and facilitates informed decision making” (p. 338).

This multiple-case study explored the social contemporary, real-life circumstances of CCSS implementation and teachers’ reactions to this implementation
was studied (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The groundwork for this study was the researcher’s belief that when new teaching curriculum is mandated, teachers’ beliefs differ from one another. A foreshadowed hypothesis of this study is that individual attributes, experiences, and working conditions would determine teacher response and receptivity to this new instructional model, CCSS. In this multiple-case study, artifacts, interviews, and observations were used to characterize the perceptions, feelings, and behaviors through the experiences they have had since the implementation of CCSS (Creswell, 2013).

**Population**

A population can be defined as “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). According to the California Department of Education ([CDE], 2015), school districts in the state of California will implement CCSS in Grades 1-12 which is stated in the California Educational Code. Currently, there are 10,366 public schools in California and of that number, 1,658 are intermediate, middle, and high schools (CDE, 2014c). The target population or sampling frame is the actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected (Creswell, 2013). The target population for this study was intermediate, middle, and high school teachers from districts in the Antelope Valley (AV) and the Acton/Aqua Dulce areas, northern regions of Southern California. Table 1 displays the data from 2013-2014 representing the number of the public schools housing sixth- to 12th-grade students and teachers in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas.
Sample

A sample is “the group of individuals from whom data are collected” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). This study utilized purposeful and convenience sampling methods to identify those individuals who were the most knowledgeable in implementing CCSS. These types of sampling methods were determined to be the best means of obtaining sufficient information to address the research questions. Convenience sampling was used because the participants would be “potentially accessible or available” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 486) as their location is relatively close to the researcher.

Table 1

Public Schools in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of school</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate/middle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community day school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total schools</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data from Dataquest, California Department of Education, 2013, retrieved from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/

Convenience sampling is used in qualitative research because specific individuals and sites are chosen that would best benefit the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful and convenience sampling methods were used because specific individuals and sites are chosen that would best
benefit the research problems and allow exploring real-life multiple bounded systems (cases) over time (Creswell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Districts were chosen based on two factors: location and size. The three districts were located in the Antelope Valley and in the Acton/Aqua Dulce area of Southern California. Two of three districts were in the top 100 of the largest districts in California (Niche, 2015).

The first step in this study was to send an invitation letter to superintendents to request permission to do the study in their districts (Appendix B). After approval to participate from the superintendents, the researcher requested their assistance to determine which schools would best be suited to participate in the study. After the schools were chosen, interviews with the principals of the schools took place to inquire which teachers would be the most information rich on CCSS and who would be most beneficial to this study. A diverse group of individuals were interviewed from the selected school sites for a total of 23 participants, 14 teachers, five principals, one curriculum director, two superintendents, and one deputy superintendent. The superintendents, deputy superintendent, and the principals assisted the researcher in choosing the best schools and teachers for the study, while the curriculum director provided some of the artifacts from one of the districts. Diversity as defined by Dictionary.com (n.d.-a) is “the inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation, etc.” In this study the teachers participating were of different cultures, different sex, different age groups, teaching a variety of subjects, different years of experience, and at different stages of implementing CCSS (Boser, 2014; National Education Association [NEA],
Two teacher participants as well as two PLC meetings were observed in two of the districts. Initially, it was the intent of the researcher to interview 18 teachers, six from each district. At the time of the data collection, only one teacher, a middle school teacher from district C, agreed to participate even after extensive requests were made to that district. To provide more reliability to the study, the researcher was able to enlist another intermediate teacher from district A.

Table 2 shows the number of actual participants that were selected from five schools within three school districts located in the Antelope Valley and the Acton/Aqua Dulce areas of Southern California. The following criteria were used for the selection of teachers to participate in this study:

1. Implementing CCSS since 2013
2. Participants willing to participate through the full length of the study
3. Principals’ suggestions of teachers who were information-rich. Principals were encouraged to suggest teachers, from their perspective, who were early and late adopters of CCSS, representing varying proponents of CCSS teaching.

**Instrumentation Used in the Research**

The key part of research is determining the valid and reliable instruments used to collect data (Joyner et al., 2013; Roberts, 2010). In this study the researcher collected data using artifacts, open-ended interviews, and observations.

**Artifacts**

During the entire data collection process, information about each district’s school board policy pertaining to CCSS, staff development, and implementation was reviewed. Information from these districts was gathered from district websites and included district
brochures, PowerPoint presentations, materials provided by those being interviewed, and any public relations information regarding how CCSS was implemented. Protocol for analyzing each artifact established for this study is located in Appendix C.

Table 2

*Schools Participating in the Multiple-Case Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Teacher sample pool</th>
<th>Teacher sample for study</th>
<th>School principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A1</td>
<td>Intermediate school with teachers in grades 7-8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School A2</td>
<td>Intermediate school with teachers in grades 7-8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B1</td>
<td>High school with teachers in grades 9-12</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B2</td>
<td>High school with teachers in grades 9-12</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C1</td>
<td>Middle school with teachers in grades 6-8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of possible participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Interviews**

A list of questions and interview protocol was included by the researcher (Appendix D) and sent to each of the 14 participants prior to the actual interviews. The researcher documented all e-mails, phone calls/text messages logs, transcripts of the personal in-depth interviews, and transcripts and notes taken from the interviews. When text messages or phone calls were used to set up meetings or clarify questions, a phone
log and notes of the calls was documented, transcribed, and sent to respondents for verification. As part the preparation for the interviews the researcher sent out initial e-mails to the potential respondents and posed two questions to obtain preliminary background information. Questions were given to each teacher in advance, allowing them time to prepare their responses. The interviews were open ended and recorded and no longer than 60 minutes each. Recordings were done on an iPhone digital recorder. A second digital recording was done on an iPad to serve as a back-up in the event the primary recorder failed. The researcher sent the transcripts of the interviews to the participants to verify their accuracy (Chenail, 2009; McNamara, n.d.; Turner 2010). Only two of the participants added or changed some of their responses.

Documentation of all data collecting procedures was used to corroborate any information that had been given. The interview questions were aligned to the research questions to ensure that data obtained would answer the proposed research questions (see Appendix E). E-mail correspondence of any follow-up questions was included.

Interviews were conducted with the use of an interview guide. An interview guide was used to ensure that the interviewer asked similar questions to each participant that led to other probing questions. From that guide, the interviewer could, as Patton (2002) stated, “spontaneously word the questions to establish the conversation within a particular subject area” (p. 343). The interview guide helped to make the best use of the limited amount of time that was available for each interview (Patton, 2002).

**Observations**

Observations took place in respondents’ professional learning communities (PLCs) meeting sessions and in classrooms. A total of two classroom observations and
two observations of PLCs took place. With written consent from the respondents, observations were recorded. By observing participants, the researcher gained a better perspective of the research phenomenon or problem while in the actual setting. Observations occurred for no longer than 1 hour. The researcher observed one teacher in the classroom and the PLC meeting sessions they were associated with in two of the school districts. A sample of the observation protocol is included in Appendix F.

In the literature on implementing new mandated curriculum, such as CCSS, there is considerable evidence that teachers’ perceptions towards implementation will determine the level of effectiveness that will occur (Bandura, 1977; Berman et al., 1977; Goddard et al., 2000). According to McLaughlin et al. (2014), “The adoption and implementation of the CCSS coincides with the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)” (p. 1). With the LCFF, local schools and districts will incur the responsibility and accountability for the implementation process. This paradigm shift means that the understanding of CCSS and the actual implementation process may differ from district to district. Teachers’ perceptions of how their districts are preparing them for implementation may also differ. These potential differences could determine the success of the implementation process (McLaughlin et al., 2014). Further information regarding teachers’ beliefs, perceptions, and the implementation process of CCSS is found in Chapter II and the Literature Synthesis Matrix in Appendix A.

Field Test

Roberts (2010) explained that “any time you create your own instrument . . . it must be field tested. The people selected should not be involved in the study” (p. 154). The interview instrument was tested for reliability with one teacher interviewee and one
teacher observer. The interview took place on Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at 12:45 p.m. and ended at 1:15 p.m. Prior to the interview a text message was sent to four teachers who would not be part of the study, and a request to field test the interview questions was made. Two of the teachers agreed to participate, one as the interviewee and one as an observer of the interview who reflected on any bias of the researcher, item clarity, and presentation of questions. Interview questions were sent prior to the actual interview in accordance with interview protocol to allow the interviewee an opportunity to prepare their responses as well as to offer feedback on the questions asked.

The interview was recorded and transcribed and sent back to the interviewee to ensure accuracy of data provided. The interviewee suggested another question to be used in the study. The observer gave comments on the presentation, and the researcher made the appropriated modifications based on the feedback from the teacher interviewed in the field test. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described the reliability of the interview procedures, expressed as a coefficient of agreement. These agreement procedures determine if the interview protocol set up by the researcher is consistent. McMillan and Schumacher stated, “When two or more observers or raters independently observe or rate something, will they agree about what was observed or rated?” (p. 182). The field test did reflect the agreement of the participants; therefore, the researcher proceeded to use the interview protocol that had been designed for the study.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity determines if a study has credibility and if the researcher and the participants agree on the same course or concept of the study. In this study, the actual participant language was transcribed, creating verbatim accounts of the
interviews as a means to increase validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Terminology used in the interview questions was concise and was thoroughly explained and defined by the researcher when it appeared that a question’s wording led to any misunderstanding or misinterpretations. Audio recordings provided accuracy, at the same time giving the respondents copies of the transcripts of their responses added more accurate accounts of the data. Participant member checking took place during the actual interviews, observations, and via e-mails (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Finally, field logs were used to document the days and times the researcher met with the participants. A reflexive journal was maintained by the researcher throughout the data collection process to address any potential biases or prejudices. To add to validity, the researcher incorporated the triangulation of data sources to uncover any reoccurring patterns or themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Comparing the data obtained in the artifacts, interviews, and observations strengthened the validity of the research. Strategies used in this study to address validity are displayed in Table 3.

**Reliability**

Reliability occurs when the data collection process is consistent each time and documented as such (Ali Bapir, 2012; Golafshani, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Reliability relies on the standardization of the protocol used when conducting open-ended interviews and observations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2002). In this study, reliability of the data collected was addressed as the researcher conducted all interviews and observations. Participants were given the opportunity to read
transcripts of the taped recordings, allowing the researcher and the participants the ability to discuss any ideas about the responses or to add further information.

Table 3

_Strategies Used to Address Validity_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field test of interview procedures</td>
<td>Researcher will conduct a field test of the interview questions and will have an observer comment on presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant language and verbatim accounts</td>
<td>Researcher will give clear definitions of terminology used, and the information obtained will be in the participants’ words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanically recorded data</td>
<td>Recording via digital tape recording on one iPhone and one iPad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checking</td>
<td>Check with participants for accuracy during interviews or through inquisitive e-mails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant review</td>
<td>Participants will be given a copy of the transcript to review researcher’s synthesis or interpretation of interviews with each participant for accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field logs/reflexive journals</td>
<td>Researcher will keep a record of e-mails, meetings, and observations listing dates and times. Researcher will also reflectively journal personal ideas and reactions throughout the field work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Researcher will compile information in the form of school district website information regarding CCSS, board agenda items, professional development schedules, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Researcher will triangulate all data sources then converge the findings to determine regularities and themes that reoccur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each participant was given the same questions with the same format and protocol (Ali Bapir, 2012; Golafshani, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2002). Effort was made to word the questions in the simplest of understandable terms, and the amount of time to answer the questions was given to each participant. Procedures of all interviews and observations were given to each participant prior to meetings in both hard copy and verbally at the beginning of each contact (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

**Intercoder Reliability**

To strengthen reliability and reduce bias, the researcher utilized an intercoder reliability procedure. Intercoder reliability according to Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Campanella Bracken (2002), engages at least two independent coders to evaluate data in the attempt to reach the same conclusion. The researcher used a peer researcher to check the defined codes in order to determine accurate reliability and validity. The researcher used this peer researcher to double code 10% of the data collected to ensure a coding agreement of at least 70%. Lombard et al. (2002) stated, “Percent agreement is the percentage of all coding decisions made by pairs of coders in which the coders agree” (p. 590). The values of the percentage range from .00 which is no agreement to 1.00, which is perfect agreement. After the data were coded, the 70% threshold was established; the actual percentage of agreement was the 85% level.

**Data Collection**

Following approval from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB), all data were collected from interviews and observations obtained during the fall of the 2015-2016 academic calendar year. Cover letters describing the purpose of the study were sent via e-mail to three superintendents to provide information of the study,
the background of the study, and a request to contact the principals at each school site to ensure participation (Appendix B). Following approval from the superintendents, the researcher requested their assistance to determine which schools would best be suited to participate in the study. Based upon the superintendent’s recommendation, an e-mail with the same cover letter was sent to the principals at the six selected school sites to determine if they would be interested in having their teachers participate in the research study. At the time of data collection, only five of the six principals responded and were in agreement to have their schools participate in the study.

The researcher shared the following criteria of desired participants to help the principals suggest the most information-rich teachers.

1. Implementing CCSS since 2013
2. Participants willing to participate through the full length of the study
3. Principals’ suggestions of teachers who were information-rich. Principals were encouraged to suggest teachers, from their perspective, who were early and late adopters of CCSS, representing varying proponents of CCSS teaching.

Directly following meetings with the principals, an e-mail with the same cover letter was sent to each of the teachers at the six school sites inviting them to participate in the research study. Within this initial e-mail, the researcher explained formal written invitations would be sent out on the same day following their acceptance. All e-mail consents were printed, documented, and filed for reference.

A formal invitation was then sent to each of the 14 teachers willing to participate in the research study. Included with the formal invitation were an informed consent form and a self-addressed stamped envelope requesting that it be returned within 7 calendar
days. On the 4th day of the written request, a follow-up e-mail was sent to all participants to check on the status of participation as well as to offer any further clarifying information or to answer any additional questions. A copy of the formal letter of request of participations is located in Appendix G. A copy of the informed letter of consent is located in Appendix H. The privacy of all participants was protected and only the dissertation chair and committee members were privy to their identities.

The researcher complied with individual Internal Review Board (IRB) of districts that have their own Internal Review Board. Participants were assured their identities and the information given would be kept in strict confidence and that all digital recordings would be locked on password-protected devices that would only be available to the researcher, the dissertation chair, and the committee. Confidentiality was also applied to the names of the schools and the districts involved in the research.

To strengthen the multiple-case study, the researcher used a triangulation method to collect and analyze the data. Through interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts pertaining to CCSS from the three districts in the study, the researcher investigated teachers’ perspectives, personal views, and receptivity towards the new curriculum reform, CCSS. Using multiple ways of obtaining evidence allowed the researcher to discover common patterns and themes regarding the history of teacher perceptions and belief systems as they implement CCSS.

Interviews and the observations were digitally recorded and transcribed for accuracy. During the recording process, notes were taken by the interviewer. These notes were not verbatim but were focused and strategically written, including key details regarding to how the teachers perceive CCSS through their implementation. Analysis of
the data revealed particular quotes that were important to use and having notes can preserve data in the case of recording malfunctions and erasures during transcriptions. The interviews were recorded digitally using a recorder on an iPhone. The researcher also used a recorder on an iPad as a back-up in the event the iPhone stopped recording.

Notes taken and then transcribed from the observations were evaluated with the same protocol as individual interviews. The observations took place on the same day or within 2 weeks following the individual interviews and did not last more than 1 hour. In this study, the researcher observed the teachers interacting with peers during the PLCs and with students during class time.

**Data Analysis**

Following the multiple-case design, the researcher developed a single-case summary for each of the six schools in the study (Yin, 2009). The six case studies were analyzed for similarities and differences. The unit of analysis for each case study was teacher perceptions of CCSS at six schools in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas of Southern California. Data were analyzed during and after the data collection period. The researcher conducted an analysis to identify categories, patterns, and themes. To assist in the analysis, the researcher used the theoretical framework of Rogers’s (2003) diffusion theory. The researcher analyzed the data and described how the four elements of diffusion—innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system—play a factor in the implementation of CCSS in all three districts (Rogers, 2003).
Coding

The researcher began with analyzing the data by taking each research question and identifying the evidence that addresses the question (Yin, 2009). Coding of the responses was used to organize the narrative text into the patterns and themes. Coding provided the researcher the ability to discover patterns not easily seen when analyzing large amounts of data.

Yin (2004) reported that in the case of curriculum reform, a case study can begin with some hypothesized patterns, such as mandated implementation, standards-based curriculum and instruction, the redesign of assessments to match the new curriculum and staff development geared towards the implementation of the new reform. From that point as new themes emerge, current codes will be redefined and new codes will be made and organized. In the case of multiple-case studies, similar replication logic should be applied to each case in the study (Yin, 2004). When needed the researcher used the computer–assisted tool, NVivo 11 coding software (QSR International, 2014) to assist in organizing the data received from multiple sources. Transcriptions of the open-ended interviews, artifacts, and observations were also uploaded into the software.

In this study the researcher took the informational text and aggregated it into smaller categories and labeled the codes. The researcher looked for emerging themes. Such themes were divided into three categories, information that was expected to occur prior to the start of the study, information that came as a surprise to the researcher, and information that came across as unusual or interesting to the researcher (Creswell, 2013).
Reflexivity in Qualitative Research

Throughout the interviews and observations, the researcher kept a reflective journal of personal reactions to the interview process. The researcher was cognizant of potential prejudices and biases that may present themselves during collection and analysis. The researcher was attentive to personal actions, values, and perceptions during the research process to help better understand the situation that is being studied. The researcher attempted to place herself into the mindset of the participants to bring trustworthiness to the findings (Cutcliffe & Mckenna, 2001; Kingdon, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pillow, 2010).

The researcher attended to all the evidence collected in the investigation. The analysis addressed any rival interpretations. The researcher of this multiple-case study was reflexive about any effect or impression she had during the collection process and disclosed any biases that may have impacted the data collection process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009).

The researcher provided a rich descriptive account of the observable occurrences of the study which promoted credibility to the data. As suggested by Patton (2002), the researcher was respectful of the participants’ “cultural, political, linguistic, social, and ideological origins” as well as her own in order to authenticate the information that had been gathered (p. 65).

In conclusion, the data analysis was presented in a narrative text that shows the patterns and themes that are grounded from all the data collected in the study. All interviews and observations were recorded, transcribed, and then reviewed by the participants.
Limitations

Limitations are the elements of a study that the researcher knows “may negatively affect the results or [the] ability to generalize . . . as there are areas over which [the researcher has] no control” (Roberts, 2010, p. 162). The first limitation to this multiple-case study was the narrow sampling of those who participated in the study. Only teachers from three school districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas were chosen to participate, and that may not have depicted the views of other teachers within the same districts, within other districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce, or larger sampling areas (Simon & Goes, 2013). Such a narrow geographic sample size may affect the generalizability of the study to other districts (Roberts, 2010).

The second limitation pertains to the accuracy of the answers that are given by the participants. Interviews could be distorted due to anxiety, emotional state, or lack of awareness by the interviewee (Patton, 2002). The third limitation deals with the potential bias of those who participated in the study and the bias of the researcher. The fourth limitation is the relationship between the researcher and the participants during the data collection process. The interviewee is a participant in the research and could shape the course of the interview as he or she responds to the questions. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher made every attempt to address all limitations by respecting the participants’ time and information given.

A final limitation pertained to the sample size of the third district. At the time of the data collection, only one teacher out of three from the middle school or 16% from the entire district agreed to participate in this study. While the information that was obtained
from this one teacher was good, the size of the sample will limit its ability to be
generalized.

Summary

Chapter III provided an overview of the methodology for this multiple-case study.
This chapter provided an explanation of the rationale for using this methodology. The
chapter presented the purpose and research questions of this study. The researcher
included a description of the research design including the population and sample, the
procedures for data collection, and data analysis. Finally, the researcher addressed the
limitations of the study.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

With the onset of the 21st century many changes have occurred in education. As the world is expanding and the United States attempts to keep up with the global community, education has also experienced a paradigm shift. In an effort to prepare America’s youth to be competitive in this global community, a set of college readiness standards known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed by the National Governors Association for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) with feedback from several public and private organizations (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015a). Teachers play a pivotal part in the implementation process of CCSS as they are a major stakeholder in preparing today’s youth to be college ready. Teachers’ perceptions of CCSS and the implementation process are presented in this multiple-case study.

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose statement, the research questions that guided this study, the research methodology, and the data collection and data analysis procedures. This chapter includes a synthesis of the data collected from 14 interviews within three school districts, observations, and artifacts. An analysis of the data collected, presented in tables and in a narrative format, and the themes that emerged from the study is included. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of intermediate, middle, and high school teachers regarding the Common
Core State Standards (CCSS). The study investigated two high schools, two intermediate, and one middle school in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

Research Questions

During and after data collection, it became apparent that the initial eight foreshadowed research questions listed in Chapters I and III generated similar information, and the researcher consolidated the eight questions into four Therefore, the following research questions were studied:

1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?
2. What do teachers think about CCSS?
3. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?
4. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The researcher conducted a qualitative multiple-case study to understand the perceptions of the teachers implementing CCSS. Intermediate, middle, and high school teachers participated in both face-to-face interviews and interviews via e-mail. Artifacts were obtained via participants, district curriculum specialists, and school district websites. Observations of class instruction and professional learning communities (PLCs) were conducted in person. Protocols for the interview questions, artifacts, and observations developed by the researcher were utilized during the data collection process. The interview protocol was field tested with a teacher and observed by another teacher, not affiliated with this study. The field test was used to obtain feedback on the interview
protocol designed by the researcher. One question was suggested by the teacher interviewed and was added to a list of scripted questions.

Schools chosen were recommended by the district superintendents, and teacher participants were recommended by the school principals based on three criteria:
1. Implementing CCSS since 2013
2. Participants willing to participate through the full length of the study
3. Principals’ suggestions of teachers who were information-rich. Principals were encouraged to suggest teachers, from their perspective, who were early and late adopters of CCSS, representing varying proponents of CCSS teaching.

Population

The target population for this study was intermediate, middle, and high school teachers from districts in the Antelope Valley (AV) and the Acton/Aqua Dulce areas, northern regions of Southern California. An introductory e-mail was sent to superintendents of three school districts with an overview of the study and an explanation of why their districts were chosen to participate. Included in the e-mail was a copy of the participant letter, participant’s bill of rights, informed consent, and the BUIRB approval from the researcher’s university. Subsequently, follow-up phone calls and one face-to-face meeting with the superintendents took place to determine which schools would best fit the study.

Participant Sample

Five schools, with a teacher sample pool of 301, agreed to participate in this study (Table 2). From these five schools, 14 teachers responded to the e-mail participation letter. As this was an anonymous study, each district was assigned a letter and a number
with each teacher also assigned a number. The teachers’ years in service ranged from 9 to 33 years. The first school district to participate was a K-8 district where the researcher interviewed seven teachers at two intermediate schools. The first school and teachers were assigned the numbers A1.1, A1.2, and A1.3. Two of the teachers were male and one was female. All three taught English/language arts. Two of them taught a second subject as well. The second school and teachers from the first district were assigned the numbers A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, and A2.4. Three of the teachers were female and one was male. Two of the female teachers taught a single subject: one math and one English/language arts. The other two teachers taught math and science. The second school district was a high school district, and each of the participating schools and teachers were assigned the following numbers: B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2, and B2.3. The first high school teachers comprised two females and one male, all math teachers. The second comprised two female English teachers and one male math teacher. The third district was a K-12 school district, and only one middle school teacher, a female, agreed to participate and was assigned the number C1.1. Each of the three districts have been implementing Common Core but at different stages. Information regarding the implementation of CCSS within these five schools along with the longevity of the principals is found in Table 4.

E-mails were sent to each of the willing participants to introduce the topic of the study along with a formal invitation to participate, informed consent form, and participant’s bill of rights. Once interview times were set up, a follow-up e-mail including a set of 17 scripted interview questions was sent to each participant. The interview questions were aligned with the four research questions. Participants were
assigned a participant number based on school district, school site, and chronological order of the interview. For the convenience of the participants, the majority of interviews took place in their classrooms. Two of the interviews were done via e-mail. The rest of the interviews were held at various locations suggested by the participants. Table 5 displays participant information for the 14 participant teachers. Upon receiving the informed consent form, the interview took place at the convenience of the participants. Observations took place at two of the school sites, one intermediate and one high school. Artifacts were collected during interviews, during observations, via e-mail, and from the districts’ websites.

Table 4

*School Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School number</th>
<th>Principal’s longevity</th>
<th>Years implementing CCSS per site</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>District type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3 (English) 4 (math)</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years taught</th>
<th>Subject taught</th>
<th>District type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1.1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>English/lang. arts/math</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1.2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>English/lang. arts/SS</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1.3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>English/lang. arts</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Math/sci.</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Math/sci.</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>English/lang. arts</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Math/computer sci.</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1.1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Math/computer sci.</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the Data and Findings

The findings presented in this chapter were the result of a triangulation of the data collected from one-on-one interviews, observations, and artifacts. In qualitative studies a triangulation of data is a cross-validation technique that incorporates several data collection resources, methods, and theoretical schemes (Creswell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).
Interview Procedures and Analysis

Each of the one-on-one interviews, except for two, was digitally recorded using two products, the researcher’s iPhone and iPad. Using two products provided a backup should one not record properly. Each interview was transcribed and returned to the participant for quality check. The last two interviews were done via e-mail for the convenience of the participants. Once the transcribed interviews were completed, follow-up questions were sent via e-mail for clarification. Phone calls and text messages were also utilized when other questions arose, and these finding were written in the researcher’s field notes.

This section presents a synthesis and analysis of the 17 scripted question responses as aligned with the eight original research questions. The researcher organized the scripted questions within each research question. The researcher uploaded the transcribed interviews by research question into NVivo 11, a software program for qualitative data analysis (QSR International, 2014). Each participant was given his or her own folder. The researcher created her first set of codes titled with the research questions (See Alignment of Scripted Questions to Research Questions in Appendix E). According to Creswell (2013), codes are also referred to as categories and “can come from words used by participants, through information that the researchers expect to find before the study, or can also be surprising information that the researchers did not expect to find” (Creswell, 2013, Kindle Loc. 3551).

As the researcher organized the scripted questions, the responses from the participants repeated in several of the research questions. It was at this time the researcher determined that some of the initial foreshadowed research questions asked
similar information and therefore could be eliminated. The initial questions were consolidated into four research questions which are listed in the beginning of this chapter. These four research questions became the parent codes. From there the researcher organized the 17 scripted questions by each research question, and these became the first child codes. Four more child codes were developed from the scripted questions that emerged during the interviews. The purpose of the child codes was to make connections between scripted questions and the research questions. At this point the researcher extracted key terms to formulate codes to categorize the data for each research question.

During the coding process, the researcher utilized an intercoder reliability procedure. Intercoder reliability, according to Lombard et al. (2002), engages an independent coder to evaluate data in the attempt to reach the same conclusion. The researcher enlisted a peer researcher to check the defined codes in order to determine accurate reliability and validity. This peer researcher was experienced with CCSS. The researcher used this peer researcher to double code 10% of the data collected to ensure a coding agreement of at least 70%. The codes were then compared and analyzed, and an agreement was made on the codes used in the data analysis.

Themes, also called categories, were then developed when an extensive amount of information was gathered and funneled down to form common ideas (Creswell, 2013). The research questions, observations, and artifacts were organized by schools within each participating district.

**Research Question 1**

Research Question 1: How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?

The codes or categories that emerged from teacher responses are (a) familiarity with
CCSS, (b) reaction to CCSS, and (c) transition to CCSS. The codes, the number of participants, and references by school level are found in Table 6.

Table 6

*Codes and Frequencies for Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Intermediate school</th>
<th>High school</th>
<th>Middle school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>Number of references</td>
<td>Number of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rity with CCSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to CCSS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to CCSS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Familiarity with CCSS.** The level of understanding about CCSS by the teachers implementing the standards was represented in this code. The teachers’ familiarity with CCSS differed among the three districts but was similar per school within each district. Within the intermediate schools the level of understanding varied. Three of the teachers stated that CCSS were a set of standards, while one stated these standards are supposed to be cross-curricular. Another teacher mentioned that CCSS were a set of sequential concepts that begin in kindergarten and go through 12th grade. Participant A2.4 described it was like teaching years ago before the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and California Standards Testing (Ed-Data, 2015) began, so CCSS made perfect sense to her. It was sequential from kindergarten through 12th grade. A2.4 said,
I think that is all great. It reminds me back in the old days when I first started teaching how we basically had our scope and sequence charts. You learned from this and you moved on to the next skills and concepts at a higher and higher level. Two intermediate teachers stated that their district emphasis guides mirrored pacing guides from two other states. Participant A2.3 believed the emphasis guides were put together with limited teacher input. She was also under the impression that teachers would be teaching less, more in-depth curriculum, but this was not the case.

In the two high schools that were interviewed, three of the teachers stated that they were quite familiar with the standards and assisted with the implementation of CCSS at their sites. Two of the teachers broke it down to what their students were expected to know. Participant B1.2 stated she knew a lot about CCSS and said it was about thinking with a lot of metacognition. She explained math was no longer about using drill-and-kill skills. Students were asked to solve more real-world, real-life word problems with detailed answers. She then said she must scaffold the learning process because the students were not used to the amount of reading and writing. Participant B2.3 agreed with implementing with real-world examples and real-world teaching to the students. He explained that CCSS was about taking what could happen in the real world and learning about that.

**Reaction to CCSS.** This code represents how teachers felt about the change to CCSS. The choices that were given the teachers towards the change were either positive, negative, or both. Three of the high school teachers (21.4% of the teachers interviewed) felt the change was positive. Two of the intermediate school teachers (14.3%) felt the change was negative. Five of the intermediate teachers, the one middle school teacher,
and the remaining three high school teachers (64.3% of the teachers interviewed) felt the change to CCSS was both positive and negative.

One high school teacher and one intermediate teacher who believed the change was both positive and negative agreed that there was still too much testing. This was the negative aspect of CCSS within their districts. Participants B2.3 said he thought too much testing defeats the purpose of CCSS but emphasized CCSS has been positive because teachers have a chance to “re-create our craft.”

Of the six intermediate teachers who answered this question, four of the teachers believed the change to CCSS was both positive and negative. Participant A2.2 said students are now being allowed to think on their own which can be both positive and negative because they are not used to doing this. Participant A2.2 went on to state students were also having a hard time not just choosing a letter on a test and they need more time to master the material at a higher level.

Participant A2.3 believed all stakeholders need to change and grow “from the people right down to the classroom.” However, the negative side was taking the curriculum and pushing it down to the lower grades where developmentally the students are not ready for what is expected of them. One intermediate teacher, Participant A1.3, thought the overall change was negative. While higher level thinking skills are needed, there are missing components, especially foundational skills. Participant A1.3 went on to explain it would have been better to take the former state standards and combine them with what is desired with Common Core: “Because there you would have the foundational skills and you would have all the parts where you are trying to go.”
At the high school level, three of the teachers believed the change to be both positive and negative, and three of the teachers believed the change to be just positive. Participant B1.2 explained that the feeling was mixed due to the age of the teachers. The older teachers are not willing to change because it requires a shift in thinking, while the newer teachers who only know Common Core are more “flexible in their ideology.” Participant B1.2 went to say that some of these teachers have the mindset that kids are stupid if they cannot multiply; therefore, they will not be able to do CCSS math. However, Participant B1.2 believed, “If something is interesting and engaging, kids will try it.” Participant B2.2 had a similar view. While thinking CCSS is a positive thing, Participant B2.2 stated there are some teachers not willing to adapt to the present time and the kids of today. She pointed out that one of the newer teachers has more student engagement and understanding because she has flipped her class. She allows the students to direct the learning with discussions and group projects, while in contrast an older teacher is still pushing worksheets.

Participant B2.2 believed the change to CCSS was positive because of her administrative team. She said that her administrators recognize the stronger teachers and therefore will support their innovative ideas. She explained that the administrators want the teachers to get the kids engaged in the hard stuff and then create projects that represent those ideas. She then said if she had a district or administrator who forced her to implement their opinion of CCSS, she “would not be a fan.”

The middle school teacher, Participant C1.1, from the K-8 district also agreed the positive part of CCSS was the application to real-world problems and that the shift in the focus of learning has improved. She believed the negative part of implementing CCSS
had to do with the method rather than the content and that changing the curriculum should begin with elementary and continue through high school. “Right now, middle school and high school students are being asked to make a pretty big jump without the curricular supports provided universally” (Participant C1.1).

**Transition to CCSS.** Teachers interviewed were asked about their impression of the transition to CCSS from California Standards Tests (CSTs) within their district. In the intermediate schools one teacher felt the transition was slow but thought out. Participant A1.1 explained the transition will improve as the students get used to the assessment and the test scores begin to rise, but in the present time it will be a bit bumpy.

Three of the intermediate teachers felt the transition was rushed. Participant A2.2 stated that the teachers did not have a lot of time to prepare and there are issues with the online testing that occurs. He offered this perspective:

> We are expected to go at a speed that they think is appropriate for the students so that we could get through everything. I feel like it’s not very effective as far as the pacing guides go. So yes, I feel it was a bit rushed.

Participant A2.4 expressed it in this way: “I think it was kind of thrust upon us and a lot of people were pushed into a sink or swim position.” She went on to explain that the teachers felt very overwhelmed with the little training they had received. She said the teachers felt frustrated that they were required to instruct their students using the exact same packets of templates with the majority of their assignments, which she believed did nothing to promote student engagement.

The last three teachers felt the transition was very confusing and chaotic. Participant A1.2 said, “From what I’ve seen, what’s a good way to put it? It’s been
disorganized. They have just thrown the trainings at us. It’s like taking a handful of stuff and throwing it at us to see what sticks.” He then explained that teachers are not allowed to focus on one thing and do it well “but more like 20,000 things that they don’t ever do well. I don’t believe that is what Common Core is striving for at all” (Participant A1.2).

The high school teachers had these thoughts. Three of the teachers said the transition has been a challenge, while the other three felt the transition was just a different way to look at the previous standards. Participant B1.2 said that not everyone was doing a good job with the implementation of CCSS and that while the district was working on it, the strengths were more individually site based. She explained that while completing her masters, she spoke with other teachers and found out that not all sites were at the same implementation stage as her site. She was surprised that many had not even started implementing CCSS (Participant B1.2).

Another high school teacher, Participant B2.3, said that the idea was to teach more and test less. The real test he tells his students is taking what he has taught them and then applying that to the real world. Participant B2.2 believed the standards are almost the same as the past California standards but written better. She stated she had read the standards four times all the way through and did not understand why any teacher would not want to have their students learning to think critically.

In the middle school, Participant C1.1 believed their district waited too long to begin. She then said, “There is a lack of supplies and materials to properly teach the Common Core Standards given the lack training the teachers have received. The district is currently working on correcting this situation, but it is a slow process.”
In summary, within the three districts used in this study, all of the teachers saw the potential of what CCSS could become. At the time of this study, implementation of CCSS was still in the initial (less than 5 years) phase. Depending on the district, the transition has been challenging, confusing, and not well thought through. There were teachers from each district who described the transition to CCSS as challenging if not confusing. Other teachers believed the transition was rushed.

**Research Question 2**

Research Question 2: What do teachers think about CCSS? The codes or categories that emerged from teacher responses are (a) overall views of CCSS, (b) impact of CCSS, and (c) future teachers. The codes, the number of participants, and references by school level are found in Table 7.

Table 7

*Codes and Frequencies for Research Question 2*

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<td>Future teachers</td>
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Overall views of CCSS. This code refers to how the teachers perceive the goals of CCSS as they implement the standards in the classroom. For the most part, the teachers interviewed view the goals as a way to get students to think critically and analyze real-world situations; but without the necessary skills, support, and resources, their students will not be successful.

In the intermediate schools, Participant A2.4 stated that she loved the goals and the plan of CCSS. However, within her district she said that “the means they have been given to use is very oppressive, overly structured, and stringent and that it sucks the life out of us.” Participant A1.2 stated that he did not feel all the districts see CCSS the same way, which is the hope of CCSS: “everyone on the same page.” Participant A2.3, a math teacher, liked that reading is incorporated into everything but on the negative note stated that not every teacher is a reading teacher. She said she was frustrated with the lack of resources to present the material to students who are at different learning levels. Another intermediate teacher, Participant A1.3, believed initially the goal of having students think critically, analyze, and apply was great. He also believed CCSS still has missing components. Like Participant A2.3, Participant A1.3 agreed there have not been enough resources to correctly implement the standards. “It’s like they have taken away everything the old standards had and now we’ve got these new standards but there is nothing to support them” (Participant A1.3).

Participant B1.2, a high school math teacher, agreed with the intermediate teachers that the teachers were not given enough resources and that it fell on the teachers to figure it out:
We still don’t have a Common Core textbook, yet working on the same case of paper. Which is why I think it gets pushed back, because a lot of teachers say, I’m not going to create all my own stuff. I understand that. Not wanting to work 800 hours a week.

Participant B2.1, an English teacher, said her goal was to push her students to a higher level. She also believed the goals are misunderstood by the general population. “Because the children are being asked to think in a different way, the parents are lashing out against the standards . . . which is to think in many different ways and to be able to problem solve” (Participant B2.1).

Three of the high school teachers have a very positive view of the goals of CCSS. Participant B1.1 said he was biased and liked CCSS because he was raised in a country with an educational program similar to CCSS. Participants B1.3 and Participant B2.3 liked the fact that the students who have been instructed with CCSS will be more prepared with a real sense of the world out there. Participant B1.3 said, “I’m teaching them how to pass life, to make informed decisions, and to use their knowledge to get them paid and keep them safe.”

The middle school teacher, Participant C1.1, thought the goals of CCSS were to increase rigor while helping the students to make connections to the world. She also stated she had not done enough research to answer this question accurately.

**Impact of CCSS.** Teachers interviewed described how CCSS impacts the students they teach. Teachers compared the impact that their current students face who have only been exposed to CCSS for a few years to that of their future students who would have experienced CCSS from the beginning of their academic education.
Within the intermediate schools, teachers’ thoughts were mixed towards the impact CCSS had on their current students. Four of the seven teachers interviewed believed today’s students who are being instructed in CCSS are at a disadvantage and will struggle as they have to learn in a different way, from the previous multiple-choice or short answers. Participant A1.3 said today’s higher functioning students will be okay, but the lower/middle level students will need guidance. He also stated the same outcome will be for tomorrow’s students as well; the higher functioning students will do well, so long as foundational skills are embedded into their learning. “They need a little bit more detail in terms of basic functions of language, the basic functions of writing and taking the time and go through and work on those skills. There’s no time allotted for that” (Participant A1.3).

The other three intermediate teachers thought that today’s students will learn how to connect with teachers, analyze, and be able to explain their thinking. Participant A1.2 believed it will allow him the freedom to bring in outside materials to connect with the students, but on the other hand his district assigns certain activities with a time frame that does not excite the students. He said,

Kids can’t do one thing for 8 weeks and be excited about it usually, even if the teacher sounds excited about it. And I am not sure if it’s the district that is running it or if it’s something else, but I have not been super impressed myself. These teachers were hopeful they would see a difference with their future students who would be exposed to CCSS earlier in their academic education.

In the high schools, two of the teachers, Participant B1.2 and Participant B1.3, had a similar thought process as the intermediate teachers in that their students today will
struggle with CCSS. Both teachers agreed the struggle began with the teachers, because the teachers need to be trained and teach CCSS with fidelity. For their future students, Participant B1.2 stated, “I think down the road, it’s going to be phenomenal.” Participant B2.1 agreed with Participant B1.2 when it applied to educating not only teachers but also others. She said, “The impact will be positive if there is an organized campaign to educate teachers, parents, and students about what CCSS means.” She went on to state that the general public also needs to understand what CCSS means because “there are so many misconceptions that would be resolved if people actually looked at CCSS.”

High school teacher Participant B2.3 hopes the impact today is good but sees his wife, a kindergarten teacher, struggle with having to give too much information to her students, which could cause them to hate school. He said he liked CCSS at his level, “because it does give me a lot of those freedoms to do good teaching.” The last two high school teachers believed the impact today will demonstrate that their students have a deeper meaning of what they are learning. These teachers are seeing their students begin to think and talk about what is out there in the world. Participant B2.2 stated,

If tomorrow’s kids are doing the Common Core and they are doing the system, and it is a system, they might have an easier time. This teacher is going to want to know why this, and not this, and how about I do this. That might be easier for the kids for tomorrow.

Middle school teacher, Participant C1.1, agreed with those intermediate and high school teachers who felt their students of today will struggle for another year or two until they adjust to the new curriculum. She stated that despite the challenge the students are going through with CCSS, she felt the rigor and connections to real-world situations will
have a positive impact on them. Participant C1.1 continued with the thought that the students in the younger grades who grow up with CCSS “will do better overall because they are starting from the ground up.”

**Future teachers.** The teachers gave their views on new teachers coming into the profession with CCSS training and if they would encourage others into teaching with the current mandated curriculum. Eleven of the 14 teachers interviewed stated they would encourage others into the teaching profession if teaching was their passion. Two of the teachers had mixed feelings but would not necessarily discourage anyone from becoming a teacher. Only one teacher stated they would not encourage anyone into teaching. Participant B2.2 said that she would encourage others into teaching because of the support she gets from her administration and her department chair. She added,

> I absolutely would recommend because I know the positive side of what it can be. If I were in a bad spot with an admin who didn’t get it, or in a district that was forcing stuff down my throat, and I didn’t feel comfortable teaching, then I would say you can make Common Core a really scary process.

Participant A2.2 said he would encourage teachers more now than in the past because, he said, “I think teaching is hopefully going to become more fun and creative then it was before when we were just geared towards the test and that’s all we taught.”

In summary, the teachers interviewed for this study stated the overall goal of CCSS was to get their students to think critically and apply this critical thinking to real-world examples. There was a mixed feeling when describing the impact that CCSS had on their current students, but the majority of the teachers stated their future students should be more successful with CCSS due to the fact they would be exposed to CCSS for
a longer time period than their current students. The majority of teachers interviewed would encourage others into teaching with CCSS.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?

The codes or categories that emerged from teacher responses are (a) training in CCSS, (b) instructing with CCSS, and (c) problems with CCSS lessons. The codes, number of the participants, and references by school level are found in Table 8.

Table 8

Codes and Frequencies for Research Question 3

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<td>Number of participants</td>
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<td>Instructing with CCSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with CCSS lessons</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Training in CCSS. The teachers described the type of CCSS training they have received in order to implement the standards. Teachers also expressed their thoughts about the effectiveness of that training. From the responses it was determined that all three districts have had some form of CCSS training. The type of training and amount of training varied.
In the intermediate schools the teachers expressed different views of the CCSS training they had received. The intermediate math teachers talked about having some training with a math specialist/consultant that the district hired. The training occurred three to four times a year for a couple of years. The teachers looked at CCSS math standards and did a brief amount of unpacking the standards. They did a few activities, and towards the end according to Participant A2.3 the training tapered off. She said, “It started off fabulous. . . . It was kind of one of those things that people sort of knew what it was going to be, but didn’t really know what it was going to be, and so they were guessing.” Later the training pertained to an hour or two of activities then a planning time. According to Participant A2.3, this was not beneficial because the teachers met during PLC time at work. Participant A2.1 believed her previous AVID training (Advancement Via Individual Determination) was more Common Core training than any training she had received so far from the district. She believed AVID began implementing CCSS before anyone had. She also went on to add she thought “her district had no idea how CCSS was being implemented in the classrooms.” She believed CCSS skipped the foundational skills that students needed in order to actually do CCSS as it was designed. Participant A2.2 said he wished the training had been more “extensive.” He went on to say that he felt blind to what to teach the students.

Most of the intermediate English teachers described their training as being limited and not very helpful. The teachers felt the district did not know how to present CCSS. Participant A1.3 described it this way: “It’s lacking; it’s more of this is what you have to do, these are the standards. I would describe it as like a showroom, an automobile showroom, a sales pitch.” He later went on to say there was little support so it was up to the
teachers to figure it out for themselves. Participant A1.2 seemed to think he had a lot of training but that each of the trainings replicated the previous, and he wanted to know what else to do; it was like “just filling the time.” Participant A2.4, who prior to this year had been a teacher on special assignment at a different school site, said she had received some extensive CCSS training. This was due to the fact that that school had an improvement grant. This grant provided CCSS training once a trimester for 2 days. As a teacher on special assignment, she also received extra training in order to help the other teachers. She didn’t believe her current school had been given the same training. Participant A2.4 went on to say she thought the training was interesting, as CCSS teaches the students how to move from a lower level to a higher level.

The high school teachers had a different perspective on their CCSS training. The math teachers stated they had extensive training. While some of it was through the district, most of it was on site and consisted of deconstructing the standards and applying different strategies. Participant B2.1 said he was assigned to his current site during a turnaround process for school improvement with the purpose of leading the CCSS professional development for the math department. He stated he provided three-hour professional development 12 hours a month the first year, and each year after the training went down to 8 hours a month. Participant B2.1 said at first it was hard to change the mindset of the teachers to move them away from how they used to teach math. He said, “It was a struggle for them to break away from skills-based teaching to CCSS.” Participants B2.2 and B2.3, also math teachers who taught at the same school, believed their on-site training to be helpful, removing the isolation of teaching with a good foundation for understanding CCSS.
The math teacher and the two English teachers at the other high school also agreed their trainings were very good and in-depth. Participant B2.3, the math teacher, said his staff development was not only good in preparing them to implement CCSS, but also “the best professional development out of all the high schools.” Like the one intermediate math teacher, Participant B2.3 also thought the strategies used with CCSS were AVID-type strategies. The two high school English teachers thought the in-house training was amazing. Participant B2.1 was the English department chair and was among the first to be trained in CCSS in her district. She explained it was so she could be a trainer of teachers. Participant B2.3 acknowledged that her principal was good at making sure all of the departments were getting the support and training needed to implement CCSS.

Participant C1.1, from the middle school, explained that there had not been very much training in her district, as the district did not begin looking at CCSS until 3 years ago. The implementation process within the district began 2 years ago. She described the training as a basic introduction. “There were three, 2-hour meetings taught by the administrator who trained themselves using online materials available from the state along with one 2-day training from the Los Angeles Office of Education for CCSS math.” She mentioned her school had not adopted any CCSS textbooks yet, leaving the teachers to find supplemental materials to meet the standards.

**Instructing with CCSS.** This code pertained to how teachers have adjusted their teaching with the implementation of CCSS and how it compares to teaching with the previous California State Standards. Two of the teachers, one English teacher and one
math teacher from two different intermediate schools, both stated that foundational skills that the students still needed were lacking from CCSS.

Participants A2.4 and A1.1 enjoyed using close reading activities with their students along with having the students make claims and provide evidence to support their claims. Participant A2.3, a math teacher, said there was not much difference using CCSS. Participant A2.2, also a math teacher at the same school site, stated the student assessments required more constructed, written answers as opposed to multiple-choice answers they used before CCSS. He said with CCSS there were more writing activities built into the math curriculum. Participant A1.2, an English teacher, enjoyed the novels his students read because they were current and excited his students.

Much like Participant A1.2 from the intermediate school, the two high school English teachers utilized more novels rather than state-adopted textbooks with their students. Participant B2.2 expressed a great freedom to choose which novels to engage her students. Participant B2.1 explained the biggest change she had to adapt to was including a greater percentage of nonfiction texts into her teaching. She said her English department works together to “use several different formulas for lesson plan creation to make sure to include nonfiction, fiction, multimedia, and writing elements in every unit.” Participant B2.1 stated the English teachers have incorporated performance tasks in their lessons similar to those the students will experience with the Smarter Balance assessments.

Problems with CCSS lessons. Teachers discussed how they overcome the challenges they have incurred when implementing CCSS lessons. Teachers also addressed if CCSS within their districts provided differentiated instruction. Some of the
challenges the intermediate teachers have experienced included students lacking basic skills and having the students answer problems with sentences and not just the letters A, B, C, or D. Participant A2.2 stressed he had to retrain the students to think for themselves and express those thoughts in writing, which is a requirement of CCSS. He stated because students “are lacking in a lot of areas and so that is the problem . . . they are lacking skills they should have gotten, it’s hard to get them to think on their own, to do discovering type activities.” Participant A2.2 explained that CCSS were more products driven and less multiple choice and that even if the students were given several choices, they would need a higher level of thinking to determine the correct choice, unlike the process of elimination which worked under the former standards.

Three of the intermediate teachers described different ways of front-loading by looking at the particular standard they are presenting. Participant A1.3 explained he builds up their knowledge base using their background information to lay a foundation of the lesson. Then he presents the lesson, slowly releasing the students to work together, then on their own. Participant A2.1 front-loads with group work when going over homework. Utilizing AVID instructional strategies by doing a homework seminar each morning, she has the students look at each other’s work and help each other to fix mistakes (AVID, 2016). She explained this promotes buy-in as the “students communicate with each other working on solving their error analysis.”

Both Participants A1.2 and A2.2 stated that they addressed students’ problems by re-teaching. Participant A2.2 explained she looks at a standard, determines what the students need to know, and backward plans her lessons. This includes having daily
questions at the beginning of each period to keep up skills. If this is unsuccessful, she re-teaches parts of the lesson.

One of the high school teachers, Participant B1.2, found a similar problem with her students as intermediate teacher, Participant A2.2. She stated it took a lot of patience to develop purposeful questions to elicit answers without having to tell them what to do. This is a paradigm shift from simply following steps A, B, C, and D to come up with the correct answer. She believed it was important to support the students through their struggles. Participant B1.2 explained that her students think they are failing because they are struggling, when in essence they were supposed to struggle; it is part of the process.

Participant B1.3 plans her lessons around her students collaborating more and determining the answer based on the facts they uncover and then defending the answer they have chosen. By doing this, the students take ownership in their learning. This was a similar method used by Participant B2.2 as she endeavored to get the students “to become independent of their own education.” Participant B2.2 had the biggest issue with working with incoming freshman. She believed there has been a disconnect between the intermediate schools and the high schools. Her students do not understand what a deadline is when completing their work.

Participant B1.1 pointed out that many of the students’ problems come from the fact the teacher may not understand the scope of content of what the kids are supposed to do. He said this issue will guide the professional development that the teachers will have. Then as a department, come up with the right “activities to help this concept or course.” When presenting a lesson, Participant B2.3 used a three-step process. “Too steep a gradient, the misunderstood word, and lack of mass.” He has used this process before,
during, and after each lesson to predict its success. Too steep a gradient means the speed in which he presents a lesson; if he goes too fast he will lose his students. The misunderstood word occurs when there are several ways to not understand something correctly. To cover the lack of mass, he would come up with a problem that the students would get because they would have plenty of resources to use.

When it came to providing differentiated instruction to students who are at risk, English learners, or simply those who were having a difficult time adjusting to CCSS, the teachers interviewed had various opinions. All 14 teachers believed CCSS incorporates differentiated instruction, but each district promoted it differently.

In the intermediate school district, the teachers said there was no real time for differentiated instruction within the regular class time. Participants A2.3 and A2.4 explained that by teaching the students how to think and how to write, all students benefit. When preparing lessons, they think about the students’ levels and those who do not speak English. They focused on key words or phrases or had the students use their computers to research the topics in their language. Participant A2.4 had all her students keep vocabulary journals and provided time for the students to use the Chromebook during class time to look up the definitions. For her deaf student who could lip read, she made sure that she faced the student when she spoke.

Participant A2.1 stated there were no intervention programs at her school site but offered extra help to her students before school and during her lunch time. She expressed her disappointment that most of her students do not take advantage of it because the students will pass with the current district grading policy that starts at 55%. She said, “There is no holding them back, not incentive to try. We are enabling them. That is all
we are doing.” Participant A2.3 wanted to do more differentiation but stated that the pacing/emphasis guides that had to be followed did not provide the time.

The high school teachers also agreed CCSS provided an outlet for differentiation. The teachers explained they had the support from their administrators and the district to be creative when designing their lessons. Participant B1.3 provides an after school intervention program for students. Participant B2.3 described his frustration with retraining his students to work as a producer and not a consumer. He stated students needed to learn to think for themselves and not be “spoon fed” the answers.

In the middle school, Participant C1.1 explained that differentiation was discussed by her district but that the teachers needed a clearer understanding of what that looked like. She felt the district needed to provide professional development to help the teachers implement it.

In summary, the teachers interviewed in this study had different views on their professional development in CCSS. The intermediate school teachers and the middle school teachers stated they had some training, but it was not in-depth and it left them wanting more. The high school teachers believed their trainings were excellent and had prepared them to implement CCSS in the method it was designed. When it came to implementing CCSS in their districts, the teachers focused on instructing their students to think for themselves and use writing to demonstrate a higher level learning. When preparing their CCSS lessons, the teachers explained that to prevent possible problems, they would front-load information and backwards plan the possible problems that could occur. When that did not work, the teachers would re-teach. All of the teachers believed CCSS allowed for differentiated instruction. In the intermediate and middle schools,
some of the teachers felt there was not enough time or training to implement it with the current district requirements, while others tried to incorporate it within their daily lessons. The high school teachers explained that their district and current administrators provided the support that allowed them to be creative with their lessons plans in order to meet the needs of their students.

**Research Question 4**

Research Question 4: What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum? The codes or categories that emerged from teacher responses are (a) creativity with CCSS, (b) collaboration, and (c) decision making. The codes, the number of participants, and references by school level are found in Table 9.

Table 9

*Codes and Frequencies for Research Question 4*

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**Creativity with CCSS.** Teachers interviewed described the level of creativity as well as the amount of autonomy they are allowed when developing their CCSS lessons.
The intermediate teachers had different definitions of creativity and autonomy and creativity in how they present CCSS. Participant A2.2 explained that the creativity he had dealt with the way he presented his lessons in order to “address all modalities.” He said he no longer had to teach merely with just “direct instruction” or with a specific curriculum, and therefore he had more choices. Participants A1.3 and A2.4 believed their ability to be creative remained, but they felt stifled by the material the district gave them to instruct with along with the timeline in which to complete these tasks.

Participant A1.3 expressed it this way:

In terms of our district, there is no autonomy. It’s like they want everybody on the same page on the same day at the same time and there doesn’t seem to be any flexibility in terms of allowing us to adjust based on our students’ needs.

Participant A2.3 stated it did not change her instruction. Her lessons are not all CCSS because she felt her students are not ready for CCSS. She teaches to her students’ needs and looks towards the future when her students have had more experience with CCSS in the previous grades. Participant B2.1 said CCSS has not allowed her to be creative at all because she has “to work harder to fill in the gaps” with her students. She then went on to say that with CCSS there were more discipline problems.

Five of the six high school teachers interviewed specifically said that CCSS has allowed them to be more creative, but it was their district and current administrators that supported their creativity. Participant B2.2 stated that while the teachers are still held accountable for student achievement, they have the autonomy to choose how to instruct their students in CCSS as well as choosing the materials to use in order for their students to be successful. Participant B2.3 said that he felt it had “given him more of chance to
fall flat and recreate myself versus being worried about what is the percentage of my scores.” Participant B2.1 liked being able to choose different types of reading materials which would not have worked with the previous standards. She also stated she no longer had to worry about the overuse of multiple-choice tests and that was a nice change.

Participant B1.3 said she did not have to feel bad or feel the need to justify spending a whole period on getting her students to “guess how many paper clips in the envelope.” She also enjoyed providing simulations on computers for her students and getting them to program, which was something that would not have occurred previously. Finally, Participant B2.1 expressed creativity as bringing “a deeper understanding of mathematics to the teaching and learning of mathematics.”

Middle school teacher, Participant C1.1, stated that CCSS has not yet allowed her to be any more creative with her instructions. She said this being the first year her students were exposed to CCSS, she saw that they had many gaps in their learning and were not prepared to work with the level of depth that is required with CCSS. She believed her students would get there but “the transition to more depth and rigor has had an impact on them.” At this point she felt she has not been able to try any new creative ideas.

**Collaboration.** This code pertained to the relationship the teachers have with their team teachers in either a PLC or grade-level department. Teachers discussed how their departments work towards implementing CCSS. In the intermediate schools the teachers meet in the form of PLCs. Formally, they meet every week. According to the teachers interviewed, their students have early release every Wednesday. Teachers then meet in their PLCs following their weekly staff meetings.
Some of the teachers met informally without compensation to plan the week’s CCSS lessons or discuss any problems with student achievement, according to Participants A1.2, A2.1, and A2.2. Staff development occurs twice a month in lieu of the teachers’ staff meetings. Participant A2.3 explained that those teachers who are multiple subject will meet with both departments once a month. Participant A2.4 said that in her PLCs the team members are very supportive. She stated that the only time her PLC receives extra pay is when they are grading essays for the district benchmark.

The high school teachers meet on an early release day with their subject departments. The teachers explained that these meetings usually are only once a month. Most of the teachers belong to more than one PLC, as the schools have different academic departments such as AVID, Health Careers, STEM, Literacy, Honors/AP; and Agriculture. Participants B2.2 and B1.2 stated all the schools have PLCs/departments that meet to do cross-curricular collaboration. According to Participants B2.3 and B1.1, PLC meetings were held on student early release days and compensation was built into teachers’ regular salaries. When the high school teachers met on different days they received extra pay for these meetings and for their staff development.

Participant B2.1 explained that during their meeting, the teachers often create CCSS lessons. Participants B2.3 and B1.2 said that a few times a year they will have student free days to discuss the Smarter Balance Assessment preview test and then determine what interventions are needed for their students. They have also had days to review the previous spring Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments to help design their programs for the next school year. All of these days are paid beyond their regular salary. According to Participant B2.2, her English department
was paid during the summer time to meet and learn CCSS. They spent weeks learning the standards while collaborating on CCSS lessons.

Middle school teacher, Participant C1.1, does not have an official PLC. Instead she described her meetings as merely “faculty meetings that are business oriented rather than planning or collaborating.”

**Decision making.** Teachers explained what part of the decision-making process they have or have been involved in within their districts and school sites in regard to the implementation of CCSS. Eleven of the 14 teachers interviewed stated that they currently held or did hold some sort of leadership position at their school sites. Two of the teachers, one intermediate teacher and one high school teacher, were part of district teams that helped with the implementation of CCSS within their district. Five of the high school teachers interviewed held more than one leadership position at their school, and all six of the high school teachers were coaches to other teachers on their school site. The middle school teacher from the third district held eight lead positions at her school. Participants A2.1, B1.2, B2.3, and C1.1 were on the district textbook committees representing their school sites.

At the intermediate schools the teachers described their part in the decision-making process to be limited when it comes to the implementation of CCSS. Participant A1.3 said that with the current standards the decision-making process is more “top down” with little input from the teachers. He stated that it “seemed like the district wants us to be at a certain spot at a certain time with doing the curriculum.” Within their PLCs, Participant A2.1 said there “was very little tweaking” to what they did the previous year when she joined them; but if the students were not performing well, the teachers would
add more to their daily review. Participant A2.4 had a similar view as Participant A1.3 that the teachers had to follow a scripted curriculum guide that the district borrowed from other states and tweaked. Participant A2.3 believed her current administrator was “receptive” if she needed anything, but since joining that staff 3 years ago, the other teachers thought they were the “PLC experts” and were not as open.

Within the high schools those teachers who were department or grade-level chairs explained they would include other members of their PLCs/departments when making decisions. Several of the high school teachers reiterated that their current administrators were very supportive of their ideas and the autonomy that they were allowed to have with the implementation of CCSS. Participant B2.3 said he wanted all the stakeholders (teachers) in his department to look at the textbooks before he offered the district his choice. Participant B2.2 acknowledged that her principal was receptive to any recommendations of trainings for her department. She also mentioned that within her department of English teachers, each grade level divides up the work and then meets to discuss and get feedback from each other. In the middle school, Participant C1.1 will pilot two different textbooks from two different publishers and then give her views to the district about which resource to adopt.

In summary, the majority of teachers interviewed held some sort of leadership position at their school site. There were different views about what part of the decision-making process was given to them within their districts. The intermediate school teachers described the implementation process to be more scripted, with limited choices of how to present the curriculum. The high school teachers believed they had more autonomy with which to implement CCSS. The middle school teacher explained that
there were too many gaps with her current students to allow her to be creative. All of the teachers believed CCSS encouraged differentiated instruction but it was a challenge to implement in the early stages of CCSS. Retraining the students to become thinkers and no longer test takers was a priority.

**Observations Procedures and Analysis**

Four observations of PLCs/grade-level department meetings and classroom instruction were conducted during the data collection phase of this study. Only two districts provided opportunity for the researcher to conduct these observations. The researcher sent out e-mails to the prospective participants and made the request to perform the observations. Upon receiving approval, the researcher set up observation dates and times. To record the content and protocol used during each observation, the researcher used the observation protocol form created for the study (see Appendix F) along with field notes from postobservation discussions with the teachers being observed. During three of observations, the researcher did not interact with the participants until the observation was complete. During one PLC observation, the researcher took the role of a participant observer. After each observation was complete, a follow-up discussion occurred with the participants involved.

To conduct the first observation, the researcher traveled to intermediate school A.1. The researcher first observed Participant A1.3 as he taught an honors English class. The observation occurred at the end of the first semester in December of 2015. The physical setting of the classroom was recorded with pictures. The classroom contained an interactive white board (Smart Board) in the front of the classroom. The room was very organized with positive posters that not only encouraged students emotionally but
also reminded them to be responsible for their learning. In the front of the classroom the teacher had posted the daily objectives and Common Core standards to be addressed that day for each of his periods. On the students’ desks were Chromebook laptops. After the observation, Participant A1.3 explained that the Chromebook implementation was new to his district and that he was being trained on how to use them with his students. During the observation the students were using a program called *Front Row* for English/language arts. The teacher had the free version application on his iPad, with which he was able to monitor his students’ work progress. Later he explained that this program incorporated the Common Core Standards with different applications. During the observation the teacher was having the students take a comprehensive exam that was similar in design to the SBAC assessment the students would take in the springtime. Later explained that the program had collaborative features similar to Google Docs in order for the students to work collaboratively on projects. The teacher appeared to have a good rapport with his students. He joked with the class before they began the test and encouraged struggling students to stay focused.

The second observation occurred on the same day, an early student release day, in the same classroom with Participant A1.3’s PLC. On the day of the observation three English/language arts/social studies teachers were attending the social studies PLC, and the other single-subject English teacher was out of town. In attendance were Participant A1.3, the department chair, and one other single-subject English teacher. It was at this time the researcher, a former intermediate school teacher, assumed the role of participant observer with the permission of the two teachers. There was no agenda, and norms were not discussed but implied. The teachers discussed the next quarter’s emphasis guide.
Participant A1.3 gave a copy to the researcher to follow in order to be able to participate in the discussion or to ask questions. The remainder part of the discussion between the English teachers dealt with the district benchmark essays. The meeting concluded after 1 hour.

The third and fourth observations were conducted at high school B.1 on separate occasions. The third observation was a grade-level math department meeting on the student early release day. The researcher was only an observer. The meeting took place in the department chair’s classroom. The room was very worn out, as the school is very old. In front of the room to the left of the teacher’s desk is a very large Promethean interactive white board that was donated by the local aerospace companies in the Antelope Valley. Every math and science room at the high schools in this district had these white boards. The teachers also had remotes that students could use to answer questions with.

The tone of the room was relaxed. The department chair had brought a huge bag of chocolate for the teachers. Jokes were made at the expense of the late teachers and a couple of the younger teachers. In attendance was a brand new math teacher who was going to begin teaching at the school the following week. The researcher discovered this teacher was 23 years old. Participant B2.2 was assigned to be her intern coach. There was a written agenda at the observation, and norms were listed but not reviewed. The group appeared to be a well-organized, supportive team. Topics that were discussed included incorrect student placement in math classes, student support classes, after school intervention, protocols for students who do not pass attending summer school, book review of possible CCSS textbook, community forum to discuss local control
accountability plan (LCAP), welcoming incoming freshman at Open House, and the temporary classrooms for math teachers displaced due to molding and asbestos issues. The meeting concluded after 1 hour.

The fourth and last observation was conducted 2 weeks later in Participant B1.2’s temporary classroom. She had been relocated because her previous room had mold and asbestos. She was missing her interactive white board but had a document camera and projector to work with. The room was clean and well organized. This was an Algebra 1 class. The teacher had a student assistant in her room and he took attendance and graded and filed student work. Teacher rapport with the students was very upbeat and relaxed. The teacher was firm, but it was apparent that there was mutual respect.

On the board was a warm-up lesson that reviewed basic skills. Students were allowed to use calculators to complete problems. After 10 minutes, the teacher directed the class to explain the problems and how they came up with the answers. Students were chosen with the use of equity numbers. Within 10 minutes, the review was finished and the main lesson began. This lesson was on deviation and standard deviation. The students were given a worksheet with a real-world example about a possible summer job working in the quality control department of a computer company. The students were engaged and while some of them struggled, the teacher guided them to work with a partner and come up with the answers. The students had to explain in writing the reasoning behind the choices of parts to invest in with evidence provided on the worksheet. Then students were chosen to read their answers. If they did not have a complete sentence, the teacher had them go back and write one.
In summary, when comparing the observations of the PLC/grade-level department meeting, the researcher was able to gain insight into the relationships between the teacher/team members and the content of their meetings. The researcher also gained deep insight on the level of support the teachers had with each other and with their administrators. During the intermediate school observation, the teachers were pleasant with one another, yet the researcher did not observe a sense of real team camaraderie. The teachers did have similar views when discussing their dislike of the current unit of study. However, when observing the teachers in the high school, the teachers’ rapport was more collegial. The teachers were very friendly, supportive, and excited to be together. The high school teachers appeared to be happy with each other and with the school environment in which they worked. When comparing the classroom observations, the researcher observed teachers implementing CCSS at different levels while using different types of technology to engage the students. Both the intermediate and the high school teachers displayed excitement and a lighthearted discourse with their students in order to keep the students engaged with the content of the lessons. When organizing the data from the observations, the researcher discovered that the data could be integrated with several of the identified codes used in the interviews. Specifically, the codes or categories that emerged from the observations were familiarity with CCSS from Research Question 1; overall views and impact of CCSS from Research Question 2; instructing and problems with CCSS from Research Question 3; and creativity, collaboration, and decision making from Research Question 4.
Artifact Procedures and Analysis

The researcher collected a variety of tangible artifacts from various resources, including district forms from the participants who were interviewed, from the curriculum director of the high school, from the front office of the high school, and from the districts’ websites. A comparison list of artifacts is found in Table 10. The researcher used the artifact protocol form designed for this study to analyze each document (see Appendix C).

In summary, when comparing the artifacts from the three districts, it was apparent to the researcher that each district had begun the implementation process of CCSS. In the intermediate school the emphasis guide was an example of the lack of autonomy when developing CCSS lessons that many of the teachers mentioned in the interview process. The researcher proceeded to go into that district’s website and found similar emphasis.

Table 10

Artifacts Collected From the Three Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermediate schools</th>
<th>High schools</th>
<th>Middle school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 8th grade English standards emphasis guide</td>
<td>B Parent/student flyers school programs</td>
<td>C Teacher school website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD agenda</td>
<td>B Student/parent online portal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/student class syllabus</td>
<td>B Common Core literacy targets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th-grade PLC agenda with minutes</td>
<td>B District 21st century article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th-grade English/language arts writing rubric</td>
<td>B CCSS information article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS information article</td>
<td>B Math lesson/worksheet on deviation/standard deviation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B CCSS parent informational packet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B K-8 California CCSS parent handbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
guides that demonstrate scripted programs throughout the district. The information article was one of several that teachers could access from the district website. It provided the teachers and staff opportunities to learn more about CCSS. The high school district provided artifacts that described how CCSS was incorporated through all the subjects and the activities that the students could get involved in. The lesson document on deviation/standard deviation developed by the teacher who was observed demonstrated a creative example of implementing CCSS in the classroom. Artifacts from the third district obtained from the district website gave insight to the researcher that the district was making strides at informing the community of the district’s progress in implementing CCSS. Twenty-first century applications used by the teachers in district were posted on individual teacher’s websites. After reviewing the artifacts obtained from the three districts, the researcher organized the data and coded or categorized the artifacts per district and aligned them with the research questions. For the intermediate school the codes that emerged are familiarity with CCSS and transition to CCSS from Research Question 1, training and instructing with CCSS from Research Question 3, and collaboration and decision making from Research Question 4. For the high school the codes that emerged are familiarity with CCSS and transition to CCSS from Research Question 1 and decision making from Research Question 4. For the middle school the codes that emerged are familiarity with CCSS and transition to CCSS from Research Question 1. One other code emerged that pertained to each district but was not part of the interview process: parental and public information with CCSS. Each district presented information for their parents as well as the general public via handouts and through their websites.
Emergent Themes

The data were organized by research questions and by codes. These codes were later sorted into three emergent themes from the data collected: Theme 1: CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn; Theme 2: Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation; and Theme 3: Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning.

Theme 1. CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn. The teachers who were interviewed believed that once students had more experience with more real-world activities they would become more motivated to learn. First, the students would need to be taught how to think critically after years of just determining which letter, A, B, C or D, was the best answer. Second, the students would have to work collaboratively to solve problems and then be able to defend their choice with evidence. Finally, students would be motivated when they enjoyed the subject matter. Teachers who provide real-world activities which students could relate to will promote engagement and subsequently raise academic achievement. Teachers implementing CCSS will need to make meaningful shifts in the way they instruct today’s students in order to prepare them not only to be successful with the current CCSS assessments but also to work in the real world of the 21st century (Wiggins, 1991).

Theme 2. Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation. Teachers interviewed want substantial professional development that will help them effectively implement CCSS. This training would need to be more than a “sales pitch” as stated by Participant A1.3. Professional development should be ongoing, paid, and provided by individuals who are fully qualified to give
strategies for appropriate implementation. Teachers who were not themselves educated with CCSS would need the time to learn and unpack the standards. Teachers collaboratively working together in PLCs, sharing knowledge with each other, and offering support will be more successful in implementing CCSS than those teachers unwilling to shed the “old ways” of teaching. According to Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007), professional development affects student achievement via a three-step process and should be applied to classroom instruction: “Step one: Professional development enhances teacher knowledge and skills. Step two: Better knowledge and skills improves classroom teaching. Step three: Improved teaching increases student achievement” (Yoon et al., 2007, p. 4). Achievement occurs when teachers implement what they have learned, supported by ongoing support, collaboration, and follow-up consultation with experts. The teachers in this study had mixed views of their professional development. While the high school teachers reported their professional development and support were strong, the intermediate school teachers and the middle school teacher reported their trainings lacked the important construct needed for successful implementation.

Theme 3. Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning.

The interviews and observations conducted in this study revealed a different format of instruction and training for the teachers in the intermediate schools and the teachers in the high school and middle school. In the intermediate schools the teachers reported limited time to learn CCSS and were given scripted emphasis guides with specific books and articles that had to be used in the implementation process. A limited amount of autonomy on what materials they could choose to supplement with was reported by
several of the intermediate teachers. The high school teachers described the implementation process as the opportunity to choose the materials with which to instruct CCSS. The teachers explained that they were given the opportunity to learn the standards and subsequently the autonomy to choose how to implement them using real-world activities. The middle school teacher explained that her district is very small and that there were no adopted textbooks that were aligned with CCSS at the time of the interview. She also explained the school and the district was still at the beginning stages of the implementation process. She has had the opportunity to choose activities to help her students learn. According to Goldstein (2008), “In the wake of NCLB teachers have lost many of their curricular and instructional freedoms” (p. 451). Much like the teachers in her study, the teachers in this study did not welcome the district’s interference on how to implement CCSS. For most of the intermediate teachers the lack of autonomy was especially felt and limited their ability to be creative when implementing CCSS. The high school teachers stated they enjoyed the level of creativity when choosing materials to implement CCSS.

**Analysis of Findings**

The analysis of findings was a synthesis of the data gathered through one-on-one interviews, observations, and artifacts. The question responses were presented in a narrative format in order to visualize the perspectives of the participants interviewed (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). The responses from the interviews were transcribed and coded, and the field notes from observations and the artifacts were coded for common categories and themes. The software program NVivo 11 (Digital Social Science Center, 2016) was used to help organize the data and the emerging categories and themes
developed by the researcher. The researcher established both parent and child codes from the data. Parent codes are the top codes representing the largest amount of data, whereas the child code is a subset of the parent (Digital Social Science Center, 2016). The data from all three data sources were then synthesized to generate the findings and conclusions.

Drawing implications from the work of Rogers (2003), the researcher used diffusion theory to help understand the implementation process of CCSS in the schools of this study. Using diffusion theory as an explanatory tool to help understand CCSS implementation, the following processes emerged: informing all stakeholders that CCSS will take place; ensuring there is a continuous open dialog between teachers, administrators, and the district that ensures a mutual understanding of expectations that will strengthen the opportunities for student achievement; providing time for teachers to understand CCSS and how to implement it in the classroom; and including all stakeholders’ (community, board members, cabinet, administration, staff, parents, and students) involvement for the successful implementation of CCSS within their district (Rogers, 2003).

**Research Question 1**

*How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?* The data collected from the one-on-one interviews with the 14 teachers, the four observations, and the artifacts obtained from the three districts described the experience these teachers have had since CCSS was implemented within their districts. The number of responses based on the common themes for Research Question 1 is found in Table 11.
At the time of this study, two of the districts had been implementing CCSS for 3 to 4 years, while one district had only been implementing CCSS for 2 years. The teachers’ understanding of CCSS varied from school to school and district to district based on the time allotted to learn the standards. The majority of teachers, approximately 64%, interviewed from all three districts thought the change to CCSS was both positive and negative within their districts. Approximately 21% of the teachers interviewed felt the change to be positive, while approximately 14% felt the change was negative. These views encompassed the new format in which students would have to demonstrate their learning and the transition in curriculum format and learning objectives expected by the three districts since implementation began. While some teachers welcomed CCSS and the higher level thinking and analysis their students would be engaging in, other teachers expressed more apprehensive thoughts due to excessive testing and the rushed, unprepared feeling they had towards their districts in regard to the transition to CCSS.

Table 11

*Research Question 1: Common Themes and Patterns in Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Common theme</th>
<th>Number of responses indicating theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?</td>
<td>A. CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

*What do teachers think about CCSS?* The data indicated that teachers believe CCSS has the potential to get their students to think critically and apply those critical thinking skills to real-world situations. These skills would then prepare them not only for college but also for career and life opportunities in the 21st century. The number of responses based on the common themes for Research Question 2 is found in Table 12.

Table 12

*Research Question 2: Common Themes and Patterns in Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Common theme</th>
<th>Number of responses indicating theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. What do teachers think about CCSS?</td>
<td>A. CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the teachers perceive CCSS will encourage more rigor in students’ learning objectives with less drill-and-kill skills, several teachers expressed the need for foundational skills in order for their students to be academically and emotionally successful. Teachers explained the impact that CCSS had on their current students would be challenging, because these students were not used to learning and responding in this type of critical thinking format. The teachers agreed that their future students who have had more years with CCSS will feel more at ease learning with this format and
subsequently will be more successful. The teachers interviewed agreed that being a teacher was about having a passion to help others learn regardless of the program. The majority of teachers would encourage others into teaching with CCSS. These teachers believed that new teachers who experienced CCSS in their own education would be more comfortable with implementing CCSS in their classrooms.

**Research Question 3**

*How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?* The data described how well prepared the teachers were to implement CCSS within their districts. The number of responses based on the common themes for Research Question 3 is found in Table 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Common theme</th>
<th>Number of responses indicating theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?</td>
<td>A. CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each district had a different view of the type of staff development needed in order to implement CCSS in the way it had been designed. The intermediate teachers explained they had some training, but it was not substantial and not enough was provided by facilitators who understood how to implement CCSS. The high school teachers
described their training as excellent, thorough, and ongoing. The high school teachers were satisfied that their district understood what was needed to implement CCSS. They believed their principals gave them the time and support needed to learn CCSS in order to properly implement in the way it was designed. The middle school teacher from the third district had neither a positive or negative view on the training in her district but explained her district was still at the beginning stages of the implementation process. At the time of this study, she had little staff development in CCSS. When it came to instructing with CCSS, the teachers expressed mixed views. There were areas of CCSS that all the teachers enjoyed, especially when it came to having their students think critically as well as the different types of reading material the students were now being exposed to, which included more informational text. The math teachers enjoyed bringing real-world activities to their lessons in order to engage their students. They embraced collaborating with their peers. During the interview process the teachers described the problems they had to overcome when instructing with CCSS. The teachers explained that many of the students were having trouble transitioning from the previous format under the past California Standards Test, when it was just necessary to choose the correct answer by eliminating the wrong answers. Now students were expected to explain and defend their choice of answer in a sentence format. In order to make the transition into CCSS more comfortable for these students, teachers front-loaded pertinent information and strategies along with adding background information to lay the foundation of the lesson. Many of the teachers used AVID strategies by developing purposeful questions to draw out answers from their students. Others had their students use technology and peer
collaboration to help students find the answer. The teachers explained they incorporated skills into lessons without making the lesson completely skills based.

**Research Question 4**

*What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?* The data indicated what part of the decision-making process the teachers have as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS within their districts. The number of responses based on the common themes for Research Question 4 is found in Table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Common theme</th>
<th>Number of responses indicating theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS?</td>
<td>A. CCSS has the potential to motivate students to learn</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Professional development and ongoing support is needed for successful implementation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Teachers desire autonomy in decision making and lesson planning</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the intermediate and high school districts have some sort of PLC that has been established to provide support for teachers. The middle school is part of a very small district and has not yet begun using PLCs. Those teachers participating in PLCs met minimally once a week. Others met with other PLCs during the week and did cross-curricular collaboration. While all of the teachers received pay for meeting, only the high
school teachers received extra pay for meetings and staff development. The intermediate teachers and the middle school teacher were paid as part of the regular salary. In the intermediate school district the majority of teachers did not feel a sense of autonomy when being able to choose the materials with which to implement CCSS in their classrooms. They described their instruction to be mostly scripted with some allowances for supplementing the materials. The high school teachers, however, believed they had the freedom to use whatever materials necessary to implement CCSS and felt greatly supported by their principals and district to have the opportunity to do this. The middle school teacher believed that further into the implementation process her school and district would provide the support that allows creativity when implementing CCSS. There were teachers from each district who were leaders at their schools and participated in making decisions regarding CCSS, by being on the textbook committees, as coaches/department heads, or designing district pacing guides. Only the teachers from the high school district believed they had autonomy when being able to design the materials with which to implement CCSS to which it was designed. The intermediate school teachers confirmed that their district had more constraints on what was to be used when implementing CCSS in their classrooms. At the time this study took place, the middle school teacher was only concerned that there was no CCSS textbook for her to use to implement in her classroom.

Summary

This section presented a multiple-case study from the perspectives of teachers who were implementing CCSS. The 14 teachers came from two intermediate schools, two high schools, and one middle school in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce
communities of Southern California. Most teachers in this study stated similar beliefs in their perspectives of the implementation process of CCSS within their districts. All of the teachers agreed that their current students needed to be retrained on becoming independent critical thinkers and collaborate with other students to solve real-world problems. All of the teachers were hopeful that future students would be more comfortable with and better prepared to analyze real-world problems because they would have been exposed to CCSS beginning in their early academic years. However, there was a vast difference among the teachers in how teachers were provided training in CCSS and with the amount of autonomy they would be given when developing their CCSS lessons.

Chapter V offers conclusions and implications that can be drawn from the findings, resulting in recommendations for further research. Finally, the researcher concludes her study with insights from the research process of this study as well as personal reflections of her doctoral journey.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter presents a brief summary of the purpose statement, the research questions, methods, population, and sample. The chapter continues with a summary of the results of the one-on-one interviews, the observations, and the artifacts. In addition, the major findings associated with each research question are presented along with the unexpected findings that emerged from the data collected. Next, the conclusions are presented based on the findings and the review of literature. Finally, the researcher presents recommendations for further studies and implications for action. The chapter concludes with closing remarks and reflections with regard to the research study.

Summary of the Study

Research Problem Studied

John Dewey once said, “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow” (Hare, 2016, expression 12). At one time the United States led the world in the field of education, especially in college completion ( Achieve, 2005). In order for the United States to have a competitive edge over the rest of the world in the 21st century, it must determine the best way to educate its youth (Obama, 2010). In 2009, state leaders along with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) came together along with parents and educators to formulate a set of college- and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade, known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; CCSSO, 2010). As of 2014, CCSS had been adopted by 43 states (Minnesota only adopted English/language arts (ELA) standards), the District of
Columbia, and two U.S. territories (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015d). This transformational change has been a paradigm shift from previous educational practices with the sole purpose of narrowing the achievement gap and ensuring that every student in the United States will graduate from high school prepared for college, work, and life in the 21st century (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; Wagner, 2011). The goal of CCSS is to educate students of the 21st century to think critically, solve real-world type problems, and develop analytical skills needed to be successful in the competitive world (CCSSI, 2015e). Teachers will be required to prepare their students to demonstrate these skills with assessments that have the students explain and defend why they chose a particular answer, cite the sources they used, and provide a substantial analysis of the information (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

In order for teachers in the 21st century to successfully implement CCSS in the way it was designed will require a change in mindset and moving away from the way they previously taught students. Ongoing, comprehensive professional development would need to be provided to assist teachers in this change (Dessoff, 2012; Hammerness et al., 2005; Robelen, 2013). Teachers would also be more receptive to change and have a high self-efficacy when they see their students are academically successful (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977; Dewey, n.d.; Guskey, 1988; Lee et al., 2013).

In California, teachers have taught students how to take a multiple-choice test at the end of each year (California Department of Education [CDE], n.d.-b). With CCSS, teachers will need to instruct their students to utilize critical thinking skills and provide more than a letter (A, B, C, or D) or a one-word answer (CDE, n.d.-a). For their current students who have not been exposed to learning with CCSS, academic success may or
may not take place, and this could make the implementation process more difficult (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013). Teachers could be resistant to implementing CCSS in the way it was designed if they are not provided support or given the autonomy to decide what curriculum they can use in the classroom (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of intermediate, middle, and high school teachers regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study investigated two high schools, two intermediate, and one middle school in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative multiple-case study utilized a triangulation design as data were collected concurrently to address the purpose of this study. As stated in Chapter IV, the researcher determined after organizing the data collected from the interviews that the original eight foreshadowed research questions asked similar things and therefore could be consolidated into four research questions. The following research questions were developed to explore teachers’ perceptions of CCSS as it is being implemented within their districts.

1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?
2. What do teachers think about CCSS?
3. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?
4. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?

**Research Methodology and Data Collection**

A qualitative multiple-case study was employed to study teachers’ perceptions of CCSS. Multiple-case studies are beneficial when the design uses the rationale of replication as the researcher replicates the procedures for each case (Yin, 2009). This approach allowed the researcher to investigate 14 teachers currently implementing CCSS at five schools in three districts. In this study, the researcher examined teachers’ perceptions of CCSS with a line of inquiry into the areas of knowledge acquisition, thought processes, shared decision making, instructional adaptation, teacher training and preparation, and the overall experience of CCSS implementation.

A triangulation design was used to obtain the data. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and artifacts. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed by the researcher and was used to collect specific, personal information from each of the 14 teachers. Twelve of the interviews were conducted in person and recorded, and then the interviews were transcribed verbatim and returned to the teachers for accuracy or if the teachers had further information to share. The other two interviews were done via e-mails. The interview protocol was field tested with two elementary school teachers not connected to this study. One teacher was interviewed, while the other teacher observed the process; and both teachers offered feedback on both the questions and the procedures of the interview. Each teacher was assigned a participant number based on school district, the school, and chronological order of the interview. The
transcribed interviews were uploaded and organized into NVivo 11, a computerized data organizing program for qualitative research.

The researcher also developed an observation and artifacts protocol. Four observations took place concurrently with the interviews. Two of the observations were held at one of the intermediate schools and the other two at one of the high schools. No observations took place at the middle school. Two of the observations were of professional learning communities (PLCs) or subject department meetings. The other two were classroom observations of two of the teachers who were interviewed. The researcher took field notes during the observations. Artifacts were obtained from different resources in each of the districts. Some of the artifacts came from the teachers who were interviewed, other artifacts came from the district’s websites, and the rest of the artifacts came from the high school district’s director of curriculum.

Population. The target population for this study was intermediate, middle, and high school teachers from districts in the Antelope Valley (AV) and the Acton/Aqua Dulce areas, northern regions of Southern California. At the time of this study 2,046 teachers from 49 schools in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas were eligible to participate.

Sample. This study utilized purposeful and convenience sampling methods to identify those individuals who were the most knowledgeable in implementing CCSS. These types of sampling methods were determined be the best means of obtaining sufficient information to address the research questions. Districts were chosen based on two factors: location and size. The three districts were located in the Antelope Valley and in the Acton/Aqua Dulce area of Southern California. Fourteen teachers were
interviewed from five schools within three school districts. The researcher interviewed seven intermediate school participants from the K-8 school district, and the researcher interviewed six teachers from the high school district.

**Major Findings**

This study analyzed the perceptions of 14 teachers as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS. These teachers were from five different schools within three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas of Southern California. During the time frame of this study, the participating teachers had been implementing CCSS between 2 and 4 years. The teachers in this study shared their experiences about the implementation process of CCSS in their districts. The teachers also shared their feelings and beliefs about how their districts were encouraging them to implement CCSS, the level of training and support they had been provided, and what level of the decision-making process they had participated in. Their responses provided a window into their personal experiences and views of CCSS. A summary of the findings from this study were organized by each research question and linked to the review of literature and research with respect to the goals of CCSS.

**Research Question 1**

*How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?*

Change, especially transformational change, such as the case with the adoption of CCSS can be a difficult process for all stakeholders involved. In order to implement CCSS the way it was designed, teachers needed to understand the elements of CCSS through a variety of resources. Teachers would then need time to learn the standards to be able to process the change, as well as receiving ongoing support from their peers, their
administrators, and their district (Rogers, 2003). The data collected from the one-on-one interviews with the 14 teachers, four observations, and the artifacts obtained from the three districts described the experience these teachers have had since CCSS was implemented within their districts. At the time of this study, two of the districts had been implementing CCSS for 3 to 4 years, while one district had only been implementing CCSS for 2 years (Table 4 in Chapter IV).

The teachers’ understanding of CCSS varied from school to school and district to district based on the time allotted to learn the standards. The majority of teachers, approximately 64%, interviewed from all three districts thought the change to CCSS was both positive and negative within their districts. Approximately 21% of the teachers interviewed felt the change to be positive, while approximately 14% felt the change was negative. These views encompassed the new format in which students would have to demonstrate their learning and the transition in curriculum format and learning objectives expected by the three districts since implementation began. While some teachers welcomed CCSS and the higher level thinking and analysis their students would be engaging in, other teachers expressed more apprehensive thoughts due to excessive testing and the rushed, unprepared feeling they had towards their districts in regard to the transition to CCSS. As shown in Table 4 (in Chapter IV) each school district is at different stages in the implementation of CCSS within their districts. This type of transformational change occurs over time and is a process which involves two-way communication among all the stakeholders involved in the implementation of CCSS in order to “reach a mutual understanding” (Rogers, 2003) and to reduce the amount of uncertainty or confusion that might take place.
Research Question 2

*What do teachers think about CCSS?*

Transformational change, such as the implementation of CCSS, occurred when the educational system realized the old way of doing things no longer worked (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). There needs to be a collective capacity of all participants to educate students with CCSS (Fullan as cited in Crow, 2009). The data collected from the one-on-one interviews with the 14 teachers, four observations, and the artifacts obtained from the three districts described the perceptions the teachers had towards CCSS since implementation began within their districts. All of the teachers interviewed in this study stated their belief that CCSS had the potential to help their students think critically and apply those critical thinking skills to real-world situations in order to prepare them not only for college but for career and life opportunities in the 21st century. While the teachers perceive CCSS will encourage more rigor in students’ learning objectives with less drill-and-kill skills, several teachers expressed the need for foundational skills in order for their students to be academically and emotionally successful (Hank, 2011).

Teachers explained the impact that CCSS had on their current students would be challenging because these students were not used to learning and responding in this type of critical thinking format. The teachers agreed that their future students who have had more years with CCSS will feel more at ease learning with this format and subsequently will be more successful. More exposure to CCSS with the time to learn how to analyze real-world problems would ensure the academic success of students (Ely, 2009; Rogers, 2003).
The teachers interviewed agreed that being a teacher was about having a passion to help others learn regardless of the program. The majority of teachers would encourage others into teaching with CCSS and believe that new teachers who have been educated with CCSS to be more comfortable with implementing CCSS in their classroom. If CCSS is to be implemented in the format to which it was intended, there must be a level of trust among all stakeholders involved as well as a change in mindset, behavior, and culture (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010b).

**Research Question 3**

*How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?*

Professional development is a major challenge to the successful implementation of CCSS. Professional development needs to be comprehensive and practical and needs to be ongoing (Hirsh, 2012; Kober & Stark Rentner, 2012). The data collected described how well prepared the teachers were to implement CCSS within their districts. Each district had a different view of the type of staff development in order to implement CCSS in the way it had been designed.

The intermediate teachers explained they had some training, but it was not substantial and not enough was provided by facilitators who understood how to implement CCSS. Teachers who have not been fully prepared with comprehensive training in CCSS will not successfully implement CCSS in the format it was designed (Wu, as cited in Sawchuk, 2012). The high school teachers described their training as excellent, thorough, and ongoing. The teachers were satisfied that their district understood what was needed to implement CCSS. They believed their principals gave them the time and support needed to learn CCSS in order to properly implement in the
way it was designed. The middle school teacher from the third district had neither a positive nor negative view on the training in her district but explained her district was still at the beginning stages of the implementation process. At the time of this study, she had little staff development in CCSS. Teachers would need to be properly trained and have all the necessary resources to fully implement CCSS successfully (Bidwell, 2013b).

When it came to instructing with CCSS the teachers expressed mixed views. There were areas of CCSS that all the teachers enjoyed, especially when it came to having their students think critically. The teachers enjoyed using the different types of reading materials, which included more informational text. The math teachers were enjoying bringing real-world activities to their lessons in order to engage their students while collaborating with their peers. During the interview process the teachers described the problems they had to overcome when instructing with CCSS. The teachers explained that many of the students had trouble transitioning from the previous state testing format. Students no longer chose a letter for an answer but now had to explain and defend their choice of answer in a sentence format. In order to make the transition into CCSS more comfortable for these students, the teachers front-load information and strategies along with adding background information to lay the foundation of the lesson. Many of the teachers used AVID informational strategies by developing purposeful questions to draw out answers from their students (AVID, 2016). Others had their students use technology and peer collaboration to help them find the answer. The teachers explained they incorporated skills into lessons without making the lesson completely skills based.
Research Question 4

What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?

Experienced teachers can teach each other as they see themselves reliable experts on their subject matter. This can be especially helpful to newer teachers or teachers who are hesitant to change (Kagan & Tippins, 1991). PLCs or grade level-department teams could offer the support that today’s teachers would need for successful implementation of CCSS (Ermeling, 2013; Killion, 2013). The data collected from the one-on-one interviews with the 14 teachers, four observations, and the artifacts obtained from the three districts described what part of the decision-making process the teachers have as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS within their districts. Both the intermediate and high school districts have some sort of PLC that had been established to provide support for teachers. The middle school was part of a very small district and had not begun using PLCs. Those teachers participating in PLCs met minimally once a week. Others met with other PLCs during the week and did cross-curricular collaboration. While all of the teachers received pay for meeting, only the high school teachers received extra pay for meetings and staff development. The intermediate teachers and the middle school teacher were paid as part of the regular salary.

There was great opposition to CCSS by some of the teachers. They had a limited amount of autonomy when being able to choose materials with which to implement CCSS in order to benefit the needs of their students (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014). Many of the teachers, especially in the intermediate schools, did not like their district’s interference on how to implement CCSS. In the intermediate school district the majority
of teachers did not feel a sense of autonomy when being able to choose the materials with which to implement CCSS in their classrooms. They described their instruction to be mostly scripted with some allowances for supplementing the materials. The high school teachers, however, believed they had the freedom to choose materials necessary to implement CCSS and felt greatly supported by their principals and district. As the implementation process continues, the middle school teacher believed that her school and her district would support her creativity when designing CCSS lessons.

There were teachers from each district who were leaders at their schools and participated in making decisions regarding CCSS. Teachers were on the textbook committees, they served as coaches/department heads, or took part in designing district pacing guides. Only the teachers from the high school district believed they had autonomy when being able to design the materials with which to implement CCSS to which it was designed. The intermediate school teachers acknowledged that their district had more constraints on what was to be used when implementing CCSS in their classrooms. At the time this study took place, the middle school teacher was only concerned that there was no CCSS textbook for her to use to implement in her classroom.

**Unexpected Findings**

There were three distinct, unexpected findings which emerged from the data. The first was the varying understanding of CCSS, and the second was the level of autonomy and support with regard to the implementation of CCSS; and the third was in regard to vertical teams between the high school district and the intermediate school district. While it was not expected that each of the three districts would be at the same place in the implementation process of CCSS, what was unexpected was the level of understanding of
CCSS within each district. Each of the districts had different approaches to preparing their teachers for implementing CCSS. With these approaches excitement or distaste for CCSS emerged. Teachers who were given extensive paid time, such as in the high school district, to learn and process CCSS gave the researcher the idea that CCSS was not only welcomed in their district but was well desired. The teachers who felt their training was not substantial and rushed were not as positive to the opportunities that CCSS could provide their students.

The second unexpected finding was in the amount of autonomy and creativity that the high school teachers had as well as the amount of support they felt came from both their administrators and their district. These teachers participated in extensive ongoing staff development and explained that each of them had a coach and was a coach to others, all of which provided extra pay. The high school teachers who participated in this study were excited about what they were able to do with their students despite having to retrain their student to learn in a different way. The high school teachers were given the opportunity to take the standards and create lessons using materials that they had found to be interesting to students, because the students could either relate to the content personally or the content dealt with current real-world situations.

The third unexpected finding pertained to the teachers from the high school and intermediate school districts. Many of these teachers expressed a desire to vertically team with the other district. They believed this would prepare the students transitioning to the high school with all the foundational skills necessary to be successful. Vertical teaming would cultivate a forum between the teachers and districts and generate a common vision for student achievement (Center for College Readiness, n.d.). One high
school teacher and one intermediate teacher even mentioned that they heard it was supposed to occur, but it hadn’t and believed it was because the other district did not want to do it. That told this researcher that these two districts, the intermediate school which is a feeder school to the high school district, need to communicate more. This researcher also discovered that one of the schools offered its intermediate feeder schools the opportunity to participate in their staff development for CCSS.

Conclusions

If the United States is to regain its global competitiveness, it will have to invest heavily in the education of its future citizens and leaders (Young & Hobson, 2014). Twenty-first century education lies within the rigor of critical thinking, problem solving, and analyzing real-world situations in order to prepare the future citizens and leaders to thrive in the competitive workforce (CCSSI, 2015e; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). The transformational change provided by CCSS will be implemented more successfully when all the stakeholders involved are informed and understand the reasons as well as the benefits of the change (Ellsworth, 2000; Ely, 1999; Fullan, 1993).

Teachers’ Beliefs

When teachers believe they are well prepared they will develop a higher self-efficacy and their students will be more academically successful; they will even reach the hardest to reach student (Bandura, 1977; Hammerness et al., 2005; Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2006). Teachers not only need to be excited about what they teach, but also be masters of this knowledge.

It was clear from this study that teachers who believe that they have been provided the necessary tools to do their job, in this case implement CCSS in the format in
which it was designed, not only will have a sense of high self-efficacy but will also strive to ensure they are working at their full potential (Hammerness et al., 2005). Teachers, who have been instructing in a particular format a long period of time because that was the norm, are now expected to instruct and engage their students differently and will need the time to transition. Teachers will need ongoing support from their peers and especially their superiors to build confidence and ensure that they are progressing in the right direction (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977; Lortie, 1975).

Educational Reform and Change

When the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act came into effect with NCLB, it was to address A Nation at Risk (1983). Funding for education had strong ties to mandated assessments, so teachers began to instruct students how to take multiple-choice tests and there was little critical thinking involved other than eliminating the wrong choices (Crawford, 2011; House Republicans, 2013; Myers, 2013). Now with CCSS, teachers will move away from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction where the students will not only interact equally with their teachers but also collaborate on problem solving with other students. Students will direct their own learning, and teachers will have to learn to give up their internal locus of control for a more external locus of control by allowing students to guide their own learning (Zimbardo, 2015).

In order for this transformational change to occur successfully, teachers will need to accept that CCSS is the correct format in which to instruct their students. There will need to be ongoing, open communication between teachers, administrators, parents, and students to eliminate any miscommunications or confusion to the expectations of what
the student learning outcomes are. All stakeholders involved will need time to understand the critical thinking, higher level learning aspects of CCSS and how it is different from the previous standards. Finally, all stakeholders will need to work in unison to ensure that the implementation process not only follows the format in which it was designed but also that it guarantees positive outcomes (Ely, 1999; Rogers, 2003).

Common Core State Standards

It is clear in this study that the transformational change in the shift to CCSS must be “crafted, shaped and adapted” as it continues to unfold (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010b, Kindle Loc. 558). Teachers will need to adapt their previous literature-based lesson plans and embrace using more complex-centered, informational text in their lesson plans than was previously expected under the former standards (Hiebert & Grisham, 2012). As stated by Participant B2.1, “The biggest change is that I include a much greater percentage of nonfiction texts in my teaching. In addition, my department uses several different formulas for lesson plan creation to make sure to include nonfiction and fiction, multimedia and writing elements in every unit.”

When implementing CCSS, teachers and students will need to learn how to use different forms of technology with which to address real-world problem-solving strategies as well as demonstrating their knowledge through online assessments. Teachers will need ongoing training and support from peers, administrators, and support staffs to safeguard all protocols are in place (Guskey, 1994).

Preparing teachers to implement CCSS as it was designed will take extensive, ongoing professional development to allow the teachers not only to understand what the standards are but also to implement them correctly in the classroom. It will take time,
resources, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, and shared ownership for today’s educators and today’s students to understand CCSS in order to effectively see a positive result (Ellsworth, 2000; Ely, 1999; Rogers, 2003). As discovered in both the research and the data from this study, teachers must receive effective professional development that meets their needs. The professional development should be given by those who fully understand CCSS. Teachers will need to be provided support systems either with peers or trained coaches to address any concerns or difficulties the teachers might face in the implementation of CCSS (Guskey, 2009). Teachers need time, resources, and the right tools with which to properly implement CCSS (Bidwell, 2013b).

As teachers implement CCSS, administrators and district supervisors will need to provide teachers the channels through which to communicate their thoughts and views to be able to share ideas and to allow them to be part of the decision-making process. This will make certain that teachers will feel a sense of ownership and establish a commitment towards CCSS. With that commitment the academic success of their students will emerge. Providing teachers the opportunity to make decisions regarding the materials they use to implement CCSS will develop the sense of ownership and acceptance of CCSS (Ely, 1999). Participant B2.1 explained it this way:

As an employee of the state the decision was made for us. However, I do have a great deal of autonomy in my class and if I did not find the CCSS valuable I could potentially go in my own direction. I believe CCSS for ELA and literacy is very progressive.

Teachers in California or in any of the other 42 states that have adopted CCSS will be more successful if they are supported professionally. Ongoing professional
development, paid time to learn with their colleagues, shared participation in the
decision-making process, especially when it comes to the materials they use in their
classrooms, will ensure CCSS is implemented in the format in which it was designed
(Borko, 2004; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Petrie & McGee, 2012;
Sawchuk & Keller, 2010).

**Implications for Action**

This qualitative multiple-case study resulted in eight implications for action. The
data obtained in this study can assist all teachers, administrators, and districts as they go
forward and implement CCSS within their districts. This study verified that good
comprehensive staff development with ongoing support from colleagues and
administrators will prepare teachers to implement the current mandated curriculum,
CCSS. Allowing those who will ultimately participate in the implementation to
communicate their thoughts and views will not only encourage involvement in the
decision-making process but will provide a sense of ownership. This ownership will
pave the way for those involved to demonstrate commitment towards the innovation (Ely,
1999).

1. In order for teachers to prepare their students to meet the demands “of the growing
   complexity of the world and the 21st century workforce” (Achieve, 2016, para. 1),
   teachers will need to be provided with comprehensive staff development that is
   focused on the standards, how to unpack them, and how to incorporate foundational
   skills when needed (Brousseau et al., 1988; Hirsh, 2012). Staff development should
   include how to write CCSS lesson plans (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014). CCSS has
   provided a gateway to increasing text complexity as students are expected now to
think critically, analyze, strategically comprehend, and apply more complex informational text to real-world problems than under the previous states’ standards (CCSSI, 2015c).

2. CCSS are what guides instruction, not the textbooks districts purchase. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2015c), the standards establish what the students need to learn, but the teachers will construct their own lesson plans and curriculum to meet the needs of their students. While it will be most useful to provide teachers with textbooks that have been aligned to CCSS, it is important to understand that textbook companies and editors are also new to CCSS. It would be beneficial if districts supported teachers with comprehensive training on CCSS before adopting any new textbooks and encourage teacher input when choosing curriculum that has been aligned with CCSS (Hirsh & Killion, 2009), and then grant the teachers the opportunity to make changes or supplement the curriculum when needed in order for them to implement CCSS in the format in which it was designed and ensure the engagement of their students would be taken into consideration (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014; Hirsh & Killion, 2009).

3. Professional development should not stop with the teachers being involved in implementing CCSS. Providing administrators the opportunity to have the same comprehensive staff development as their teachers would give the administrators the opportunity to learn, practice, and support their teachers (National Education Association [NEA], 2010). This staff development could either occur with other administrators and/or alongside the teachers at their school site, as they will be the ones evaluating the implementation process. Administrators, once fully trained in the
standards, should be given the opportunity to practice by writing CCSS lessons and be able to demonstrate how to instruct CCSS in the classroom in order to provide extra support to teachers who might struggle with any of the concepts or how to deliver CCSS lessons in the classroom.

4. Teachers and administrators should be provided with comprehensive staff development in technology. Teachers and administrators need to know how to use different types of technology that will be used in the classroom. Extensive training should be given on the software that districts purchase along with extensive training on how to take and how to give the required state testing that is done online and any online assessments the district provides. This will ensure students who were exposed to pre-CCSS online assessments have adjusted to online programs and perform to the best of their abilities as well as prepare teachers for future students (Schulten, 2013).

5. District cabinet members as well as school board members should also take part in comprehensive trainings in order to be able to determine if the implementation of CCSS is actually occurring when they visit classrooms or when they have been made aware of any issues teachers might have with curriculum or the implementation of CCSS (Cohen et al., 2012; Horan, Casserly, Duvall, & Corcoran, 2013).

6. All teachers should be provided paid time out of the classroom to visit other classrooms of teachers who feel comfortable teaching CCSS (Y. Cheng, 1996; Guskey, 1994).

7. Teachers should be provided paid time out of the classroom to coach other teachers, similar to the findings from the high school district in this study (DuFour, n.d.). This
could require districts to hire more teachers to split the workload or hire specific substitutes who would be required to work with specific teachers on a regular basis.

8. From the data collected both intermediate and high school teachers would like the opportunity to vertically team in order to make the transition to high school more successful (Center for College Readiness, n.d.). This could also be useful with elementary and intermediate school teachers.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The intent of this study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of middle school and high school teachers regarding the implementation of CCSS. The scope of this study was limited to intermediate, middle, and high school teachers from six schools in three districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce area of Southern California. To determine if the findings from this study are consistent from all demographics, expansive examination must take place through further investigative research. The following recommendations have been identified to extend the research of teachers implementing CCSS that was provided in this study:

1. As CCSS are still in the early stages of implementation in the United States and there is little data on state assessments, it is too early to determine if CCSS has been implemented successfully. California adopted CCSS in 2010 and began full implementation during the 2014-2015 school year. Therefore, a replication of this study with the same three districts 5 years from now would provide insight if the implementation process has changed or remained the same and if student achievement has progressed.
2. An alternative replication of this study with a different geographic location, different demographics, and different socioeconomic status could also provide information not found in this study.

3. A third replication of this study could be done with teachers with the same demographics as this study but who were trained in their teacher preparation programs through the university with CCSS.

4. A fourth study could include future teachers who were themselves educated in the K-12 school system with the CCSS curriculum.

5. A fifth study could be conducted and expanded to include elementary school teachers.

6. California has been ranked one of the lowest performing states in the country. It also ranks low in per-pupil spending in the country, yet it was the first state to implement comprehensive finance reform (Carroll, Krop, Arkes, Morrison, & Flanagan, 2005; Walters, 2014). California has more students in the K-12 system than any other state and has the highest proportion of children who live with a parent who has not graduated high school (Williams, 2008). California also educates more than one third of the country’s English learners; and in 2006, it ranked first in the country of having nearly 50% of its children who speak a language other than English at home (Williams, 2008). With these statistics, preparing students to be academically successful to enter college as well as becoming globally competitive with the rest of the world will be extraordinarily challenging even for the best trained teachers. A study could be done with a similar low academic performing state with similar demographics, socioeconomic variables, with a high number of English learners, a
high percentage of parents who have not finished high school, and with a high percentage of children who speak another language at home.

7. Further studies will be needed to determine if the teachers in the state of California have been provided the right kind of comprehensive staff development needed to implement CCSS, when statistically the odds are not favorable that student achievement will grow substantially. In this study teachers in both the high schools and intermediate schools stated that while CCSS had the potential for preparing their students to enter college, for many of the students foundational skills were still needed. The majority of teachers in this study expressed positive thoughts that their future students who will have been exposed to CCSS longer than their current students might have a better experience with the curriculum as long as they have a good foundational base on which to lean.

8. Finally, a study could be done to determine if teachers have received enough staff development on giving online assessments similar to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) or the Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Teachers who have been trained and understand how these assessments are to be taken are better equipped to train their students to feel more comfortable and more at ease when maneuvering through any online assessment.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

At the time of this study, 43 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories adopted CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015d). With this initiative, the United States has made a commitment to preparing its future citizens to be
college ready and globally competitive in the 21st century. CCSS represents a transformational change that this country has not experienced for some time. While it takes a village to raise a child (Marschhausen, 2014, para. 1), it takes the entire community to educate it. With that said, it is the teacher who is the primary community member who will have the greatest impact on that child, as it is the teacher who spends the most educational time with the child. So isn’t it crucial that the community would want to make sure its teachers were prepared and supported as well as included in the decisions on how those precious children should be educated? How will we know if the teachers believe they are ready to undertake such an important task? We need to ask them.

The intent of this study was to describe and analyze perceptions of middle, intermediate, and high school teachers regarding implementing CCSS. The scope of the study was limited to 14 teachers from five schools, within three school districts. After teaching sixth through eighth grade for some time, I decided to teach primary grades where CCSS was first introduced in my district. To eliminate as much bias as possible, I chose to interview only teachers in intermediate, middle, and high school. I had felt reasonably comfortable implementing CCSS, because as an intermediate teacher I had taught the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) elective program (AVID, 2016) which offered extensive training in preparing the low- to middle-academic level students to think critically. However, not every teacher in my district has been AVID trained or have experienced teaching the AVID elective. Fortunately, my district has been making a valiant effort to correct this, as AVID is now available for kindergarten through 12th grade. Many of the teachers I have worked with who have had AVID
training but have not taught the AVID elective class do not see how AVID and CCSS are very similar. I believe it is because the AVID elective allows for a lot of creativity and autonomy when presenting the lessons.

In the beginning of this study I had a foreshadowed hypothesis that the individual attributes, experiences, and working conditions would determine teacher response and receptivity to CCSS, and my findings supported this hypothesis. In this study, the teachers in the high school were allowed to choose the curriculum with which to implement the standards, and they had been given the paid opportunity to understand how the standards work. The high school teachers were provided coaches to support their teaching. From my perspective, at this time after talking with the six teachers, the investment in the high school teachers to implement CCSS was very successful. Of course, I had learned that not every teacher at one of the high schools was on board with CCSS. Could it be that this resister chose not to take advantage of the comprehensive staff development or could it be they were still struggling with comprehending CCSS and felt uncomfortable asking for help? Could it be they have been teaching one way for a long time and refused to adopt CCSS? These questions would have to be addressed if true implementation would be successful at the high school level. I did find myself wanting to go and apply at the high school district where I did my interviews. The excitement of the teachers I interviewed gave me hope, because despite the struggles their current students were having at this time, they loved being a teacher in 2016.

As I interviewed the intermediate teachers, the overall belief was that there was little if any autonomy when it came to choosing the materials or with the lesson designs with which to implement CCSS. They were expected to use specific materials which
they felt did not meet the needs of their students. The majority of these teachers did not believe their administrators or district supported them as compared to the high school district. The intermediate teachers expressed a real need for good staff development by those who understood CCSS as well as incorporating more foundational skills, especially for their current students. Only two of the teachers seemed genuinely happy implementing CCSS. These were English/language arts teachers, one who had extensive training the year prior as an out of class teacher and decided to go against the scripted emphasis guides and present the lessons as she saw fit for her students. The other teacher was just excited about the novels he could read with his students. From these interviews, these teachers were not inspired or excited about CCSS.

As I read over the answers from the interview with the middle school teacher, I saw the possibilities that this district would be more like the high school district, once the teachers had been trained in both CCSS and in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

I remember when I first became a teacher before Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and the California Standards Tests (CSTs) began in 1998 (Ed-Data, 2015). Much of the way we taught was similar to CCSS in that we did teach our students to analyze problems and think critically, but we also taught the basic foundational skills that were needed. We had a lot more autonomy back then when it came to choosing which materials to implement instruction. While we tested students to see their progress, the amount of district assessments was not as extensive as it is today. Teachers in both the high school and intermediate school agreed there was too much testing and not
enough time to learn what was expected. The teachers believed the extensive amount of testing was detrimental to student engagement.

I am truly grateful for all of the teachers who were willing to give up their time to help me with my study. I am also grateful to the three districts who participated. I only hope that the districts that participated take a good look at what their teachers had to say and how they perceived implementation was going within their districts. I hope that other districts will read my study and gain insight on the importance of comprehensive staff development for teachers, provided by those who understand CCSS, like those who have trained teachers in the AVID program. Providing teachers the opportunity, the time, and the financial support to know and understand how to teach with CCSS will ensure implementation will be done in the method in which CCSS was designed. It is hoped that districts will remember teachers play the most vital role in the education of this country’s future leaders.

I loved being a teacher for these past 26 years. I have enjoyed teaching kindergarten as much as teaching eighth grade. I have strived every day to be the best teacher possible. Like the intermediate teacher, Participant A2.4, who had been teaching for 28 years said to me, “I’ve always enjoyed learning things; knowledge is power. As a lifelong learner I thought it was fascinating to be able to take apart a standard to use it, and I love the language.” I too, do not believe it is too late to learn how to be a better teacher. I believe all teachers, no matter how long they have been teaching, could learn to love teaching with CCSS if the circumstances were right. I have realized that many experienced teachers do not want to learn different ways of teaching no matter how good the staff development is. I was reminded of this when I interviewed high school teacher
Participant B2.2. She told me, “There are teachers and there are those who just come to work for a paycheck.” I knew what she meant—that there are teachers who are lifelong learners and will put in more time than they get paid because they have a passion for learning and a passion for helping their students to learn. Sadly it seems like there are teachers who like the status quo or have gone through several curriculum overhauls and are just waiting to retire.

Continued research on teachers’ perspectives of teaching mandated curriculum cannot be overemphasized, especially in this global economy. Like Paulo Freire (2000) explained in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, if we keep our people ignorant then we keep them oppressed; they are not free. In Latin, there are two words that mean education, *Educare* and *Educere*. Educare means to train and to mold, while educare means to lead out (Craft, 1984). If the United States is going to strengthen its global competitiveness in the 21st century and beyond, it will need to invest deeply in the education of its teachers. This investment in turn will be a greater investment in the education of its future citizens.

As educators and as citizens of the United States, we must believe in the growth mindset that all students and teachers can learn and achieve great things—teachers who will go into their classrooms each and every day with the type of passion that I saw in the teachers I interviewed. Teaching is a great profession. After all, “Teaching is the profession that creates all other professions”—*unknown* (Hare, 2016, expression 13).
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## APPENDIX A

### Literature Review Synthesis Matrix

**Topic: Teachers’ Perceptions of the Current Mandated Curriculum Reform: The Common Core State Standards**

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<td>Opinions of CCSS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

E-Mail Request for Superintendents’ Approval

Dear Superintendent_________________: 

My name is Ruth Hirsch and I am a doctoral student at Brandman University, and have been a teacher for 25 years. I have completed the course requirements for a doctoral candidate and I am currently working on my dissertation. As of 2013 your school district has begun full implementation of the Common Core States Standards. Implementation and staff preparation is still in the beginning stages. Based on this, I am asking for your district’s input for my research study.

My dissertation topic is Teachers’ Perspectives of Mandated Curriculum Reform: Common Core State Standards. The purpose of this multiple-case study will be to analyze the perceptions of middle school and high school teachers regarding their view of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study will investigate three high schools and three middle schools in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

My objective is to answer the following research questions:

1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?
2. What do teachers think about CCSS?
3. How do teachers gain their knowledge about CCSS?
4. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?
5. How do teachers adapt their teaching to incorporate CCSS?
6. How do teachers describe their decision making in using CCSS in their teaching?
7. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?
8. How useful has the ongoing staff development of CCSS been for the teachers to support their acquisition of CCSS?
I would like to formally request permission to contact your director of curriculum who will recommend a school that would best fit my study. I would then like permission to contact the principal of the recommended school, who could then recommend teachers who would be willing to participate in the study.

I look forward to hearing from you and I look forward to working with your school district. If you have any questions or concerns, it would be my pleasure to address them. I can be contacted at (661) 433-7414 or through email at hirs5201@mail.brandman.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruth Hirsch
APPENDIX C

Artifacts Analysis Protocol

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<tbody>
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<td>Description of the artifact:</td>
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| Intended audience: |                                              |

| Purpose: |                                              |
**APPENDIX D**

**Interview Protocol**

<table>
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<th>Title:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
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<td>Time:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening:*

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of the completion of my doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University in Irvine, California, I am interviewing certificated teachers who have been implementing the Common Core State Standards. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences and your perceptions of the implement process within your school district. All information that you provide is kept confidential and you will be provided with a transcription of the data you provide. Permission to record this interview is also noted.

*Initial Questions (can be asked via email prior to one-on-one interview):*

- How many years as a teacher do you have?
- Schooling: personal educational experience (degrees/certificates held):
- Current grade level/subject:
- Positions - lead positions held at school:

*Experience Questions (Recorded on both an iPhone and iPad)*

- What is your familiarity with CCSS? (How long have you been implementing CCSS?)
- Can you describe the training, staff development you have had in regard to CCSS? What are your thoughts regarding the professional development you have received for CCSS?
- Do you belong to a Professional Learning Community? If so how often do you meet and do you get paid? Do you get any other paid compensation in regard to CCSS?
- What are your thoughts about collaboration during PLCs in regard to common lesson plans, planning units and commative formative assessments?
- Explain your role in the decision-making process regarding implementing CCSS at your school.
- How do you plan and present CCSS activities and cope with any problems that might occur in the classroom?
In your experience can you describe how you have adapted your curriculum or teaching since the implementation of CCSS?

What is your impression of the transition to CCSS from CSTs in your district?

Can you explain if CCSS has allowed you to be more or less creative with your instruction?

What are your perspectives on how curriculum and instruction specifically have been altered due to CCSS?

Has the overall change to CCSS been positive, negative, or both. Explain

Describe the time you spend preparing for CCSS? How does it compare to preparing students for the CSTs?

What are your beliefs about the goals; your overall views of CCSS?

Do you believe the students instructed in CCSS be more prepared to enter college or be career ready upon high school graduation?

Would you encourage others into teaching today with the current mandated curriculum?

What kind of impact do you believe CCSS will have on your students today and for your students of tomorrow?

Do you believe the implementation plan of CCSS in your district allows for differentiated instruction?

*Thank you for your continued participation in this study.*
## Alignment of Scripted Questions With Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Scripted Questions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would teachers describe their experience with CCSS?</td>
<td>What is your familiarity with CCSS? (How long have you been implementing CCSS?)</td>
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<td>What is your impression of the transition to CCSS from CSTs in your district?</td>
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<td>Has the overall change to CCSS been positive, negative, or both. Explain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Describe the time you spend preparing for CCSS? How does it compare to preparing students for the CSTs?</td>
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<td>What are your beliefs about the goals; your overall views of CCSS?</td>
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<td>Would you encourage others into teaching today with the current mandated curriculum?</td>
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<td>2. What do teachers think about CCSS?</td>
<td>What is your impression of the transition to CCSS from CSTs in your district?</td>
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<td>Can you explain if CCSS has allowed you to be more or less creative with your instruction?</td>
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<td>What are your perspectives on how curriculum and instruction specifically have been altered due to CCSS?</td>
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<td>Do you believe the implementation plan of CCSS in your district allows for differentiated instruction?</td>
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<td>3. How do teachers gain their knowledge about CCSS?</td>
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<td>Do you belong to a Professional Learning Community? If so how often do you meet and do you get paid? Do you get any other paid compensation in regard to CCSS?</td>
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<td>What are your thoughts about collaboration during PLCs in regard to common lesson plans, planning units and formative assessments?</td>
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<td>How do you plan and present CCSS activities and cope with any problems that might occur in the classroom?</td>
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<td>In your experience can you describe how you have adapted your curriculum or teaching since the implementation of CCSS?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind of impact do you believe CCSS will have on your students today and for your students of tomorrow?</td>
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<td>Response</td>
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<td>4. How well prepared are teachers to implement CCSS?</td>
<td>Can you describe the training, staff development you have had in regard to CCSS? What are your thoughts regarding the professional development you have received for CCSS?</td>
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<td>Explain your role in the decision-making process regarding implementing CCSS at your school.</td>
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<td>What are your beliefs about the goals; your overall views of CCSS?</td>
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<td>5. How do teachers adapt their teaching to incorporate CCSS?</td>
<td>How do you plan and present CCSS activities and cope with any problems that might occur in the classroom?</td>
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<td>In your experience can you describe how you have adapted your curriculum or teaching since the implementation of CCSS?</td>
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<td>What are your perspectives on how curriculum and instruction specifically have been altered due to CCSS?</td>
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<td>Do you believe the implementation plan of CCSS in your district allows for differentiated instruction?</td>
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<td>6. How do teachers describe their decision making in using CCSS in their teaching?</td>
<td>Do you belong to a Professional Learning Community? If so how often do you meet and do you get paid? Do you get any other paid compensation in regard to CCSS?</td>
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<td>What are your thoughts about collaboration during PLCs in regard to common lesson plans, planning units and commative formative assessments?</td>
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<td>In your experience can you describe how you have adapted your curriculum or teaching since the implementation of CCSS?</td>
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<td>Can you explain if CCSS has allowed you to be more or less creative with your instruction?</td>
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<td>7. What part of the decision-making process have the teachers participated in as it pertains to the implementation of CCSS curriculum?</td>
<td>Explain your role in the decision-making process regarding implementing CCSS at your school.</td>
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<td>Can you explain if CCSS has allowed you to be more or less creative with your instruction?</td>
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<td>Can you explain if CCSS has allowed you to be more or less creative with your instruction?</td>
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| development of CCSS been for the teachers to support their acquisition of CCSS? | Community? If so how often do you meet and do you get paid? Do you get any other paid compensation in regard to CCSS?

What are your thoughts about collaboration during PLCs in regard to common lesson plans, planning units and commative formative assessments?

In your experience can you describe how you have adapted your curriculum or teaching since the implementation of CCSS?

What are your perspectives on how curriculum and instruction specifically have been altered due to CCSS? |
APPENDIX F

Analysis of Observation Protocol

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<tr>
<td>Length of activity: ___________ minutes</td>
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<td>School Site:</td>
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<td>Grade Level:</td>
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<td>Type of Observation (classroom or PLC):</td>
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<td>Participant(s):________________________________________________________</td>
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<td>Description of activities</td>
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<td>Description of individuals engaged in activities</td>
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<td>Sequence of activity over time</td>
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<td>Unplanned events</td>
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<td>Participants comments: expressed in quotes</td>
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<td>My observation of what seems to be occurring</td>
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APPENDIX G

Participant Request Letter

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study of educators who are currently implementing the Common Core States Standards (CCSS). The main investigator of this study is Ruth Hirsch, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University’s Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study because you are employed in a district that is implementing CCSS. Participation should require one hour or less of your time, an observation of a Professional Learning Community, and a possible observation of an instructional class period. Participation is entirely voluntarily and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study will be to analyze the perceptions of middle school and high school teachers regarding their view of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study will investigate three high schools and three middle schools in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview, conducted by the primary investigator either in person, or by using the online program with the Adobe Connect webinar platform, whichever is the most convenient. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. A copy of the interview protocol is included with this letter.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are no known risks to your participation in this research study. Some interview questions will ask you to describe your personal thoughts about the Common Core State Standards and the implementation process you have experienced. These questions may cause some mild emotional discomfort.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, but a potential may be that you will have an opportunity to share your expertise with other present or future educators who may benefit from your knowledge and expertise. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, consultants, district office personnel, and educators of best practices for implementing mandated curriculum reform: Common Core State Standards.

ANONYMITY: Any answers that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any person who provided any specific information for the study. This will also hold true for any school name, school district name, county, or state. You will be assigned a participant number. The recorded interview session will not
reference your name in document title or URL. During the recording, the researcher will not address you by name. Any names used by the participant during the recorded session will be edited from the transcript. The interviews and observations will be transcribed, reviewed, and maintained only by the primary investigator on a password-protected external server.

You are encouraged to ask any questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may the researcher, Ruth Hirsch, by phone at (661) 433-7414 or email hirs5201@mail.brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Very Respectfully,

Ruth Hirsch
Principal Investigator
APPENDIX H

Informed Consent Form

RESEARCHED STUDY TITLE: Teachers’ Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Reform: Common Core State Standards.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Ruth Hirsch, Doctoral Candidate;
xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx; (xxx) xxx-xxxx

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Research Participant’s Informed Consent Form

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study will be to analyze the perceptions of middle school and high school teachers regarding their view of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study will investigate three high schools and three middle schools in three different districts in the Antelope Valley and Acton/Aqua Dulce areas to investigate teacher perceptions of CCSS. In participating in this research study, I agree to participate in a in a recorded semi-structured interview, and/or observation, which will be completed in person or with the use of Adobe Connect Webinar platform.
I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research study. There may be some inconvenience with spending an hour after work hours to be interviewed. To minimize the inconvenience, the session will be conducted at a time most convenient for me and can be conducted online in the privacy of my home as long as I have internet. I understand that the investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping all personal information in a locked file drawer, or protect file on a computer not associated with my work and will be only available to the researcher.

b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help to add to the research of teachers’ perspectives of the Common Core State Standards and may offer assistance in the implementation of CCSS in future years to come.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Ruth Hirsch, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Hirsch can be contacted either by email at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx or by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

d) I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative recourse. I can also chose not to answer particular questions from this study. Also, the investigator can stop the study at any time.
e) I understand that the study will be audio-recorded, and the information I provide will not be used beyond the scope of the initial research project without my written consent.

f) I further understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use or the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_________________________________________              _____________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party                        Date

_________________________________________              _____________________
Printed Name of Participant or Responsible Party                        Date

_________________________________________              _____________________
Signature of Witness (if appropriate)                           Date

_________________________________________              _____________________
Signature of Principal Investigator                           Date