(UN)INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS’ TEACHERS

A Dissertation in
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by
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Abstract

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a key piece of current reform efforts to reshape the U.S. educational system. Critics contend that the related Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC), coupled with the authoritative power of the CCSS, will de-professionalize teachers, directing their practice from a distance. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how teachers of elementary English Learners were experiencing and responding to CCSS implementation. Few studies consider teachers to be adult learners or explore their informal workplace learning. Therefore, this study also examined the participants’ informal learning in relation to the intended teacher learning outcomes of the RPC. Combining narrative inquiry and critical discourse analysis, the study analyzed the RPC and three teachers’ narratives collected during multiple interviews. The findings revealed that prior to CCSS implementation, the participants characterized themselves as creative, effective teachers who cared about students’ personal lives. After interacting with many of the RPC’s 88 teacher learning outcomes present in their reading curriculum, the teachers described their focus as drilling skills required for standardized testing. The teachers also learned unintended outcomes such as doubting their professional effectiveness and seeing students as test scores. They learned to rely on their professional knowledge to resist when the intended outcomes conflicted with their deeply-held beliefs about helping students. The study provides evidence that Illeris’s comprehensive model of learning is beneficial for understanding teacher learning that occurs outside of formal professional development offerings. The findings also illustrate how authoritative policies are, and are not, able to influence practice.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. viii

List of Tables ..................................................................................................................... ix

List of Acronyms ............................................................................................................... x

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... xi

**Chapter 1: Introduction** .................................................................................................. 1
- Purpose and Significance of the Study ................................................................................. 3
- Background ...................................................................................................................... 5
  - The development of the Common Core State Standards .................................................. 5
  - Potential effects of a powerful policy ................................................................................. 7
- Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 8
  - Ideology .......................................................................................................................... 8
  - New Literacy Studies ...................................................................................................... 8
  - Illeris’s framework of adult learning ................................................................................. 10
- Research Questions and Methods .................................................................................... 11
  - Methods of analysis ....................................................................................................... 12
  - Data collection ............................................................................................................... 13
  - Dissertation Overview ................................................................................................... 14

**Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature** ................................................................... 15
- Ideology and Discourse ................................................................................................... 16
  - Discourse ...................................................................................................................... 17
  - Ideology in the CCSS ..................................................................................................... 18
- A Sociocultural Approach to Literacy .............................................................................. 20
  - Autonomous and ideological models of literacy .............................................................. 21
  - Discounting the dichotomy ............................................................................................ 24
  - Literacy practices and events .......................................................................................... 26
- Applying a New Literacy Studies Lens ............................................................................. 27
  - Application to the CCSS .................................................................................................. 28
    - *Autonomous model* ..................................................................................................... 28
    - *Literacy practices and events* ................................................................................... 29
  - Addressing a limitation ................................................................................................... 30
- Adult Learning ................................................................................................................. 30
  - External and internal processes ....................................................................................... 31
  - Three dimensions of learning ......................................................................................... 33
- Teacher Learning ............................................................................................................ 35
  - Defining teacher learning .............................................................................................. 35
  - Conceptualizing teacher learning ................................................................................... 35
- Researching Teacher Learning ......................................................................................... 38
  - Learning continuum ....................................................................................................... 38
  - Aspects of in/formality in learning .................................................................................. 40
Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications ............................................................. 161
Learning Informally in Practice ................................................................. 161
Formal/Informal learning ............................................................................. 162
Deliberative, reactive, and implicit learning ............................................... 164
Impulses for learning .................................................................................. 165
List of Figures

Figure 1. Learning processes. Adapted from Illeris (2007a, p. 23)................................. 32
Figure 2. Three dimensions of learning. Adapted from Illeris (2007a, p. 26)...................... 34
Figure 3. Sample “should” statements in Excel................................................................. 81
Figure 4. Section summary ............................................................................................... 82
Figure 5. TLOs; Corresponding “should” statements; Alignment with Key Shifts ............. 83
## List of Tables

Table 1. Attributes of in/formality. Adapted from Colley et al., 2003, pp. 30-31 .................................. 40
Table 2. Participant characteristics ........................................................................................................... 69
Table 3. Interview schedule ...................................................................................................................... 73
Table 4. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 1: Complex text ............................................................................... 94
Table 5. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 1: Academic vocabulary ..................................................................... 95
Table 6. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 2: Text-dependent questions ............................................................. 97
Table 7. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 2: Independent reading of texts ......................................................... 99
Table 8. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 3 ....................................................................................................... 101
Table 9. TLOs limiting scaffolding .......................................................................................................... 103
Table 10. Attributes of in/formality in participants’ learning. Adapted from Colley et al., 2003, pp. 30-31 .......................................................................................................................... 163
**List of Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS</td>
<td>Common Core State Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS-ELA</td>
<td>Common Core State Standards – English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS-N</td>
<td>Common Core State Standards Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSSO</td>
<td>Council of Chief State School Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSD</td>
<td>Clarksburg School District</td>
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<td>EL</td>
<td>English Learner</td>
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<td>ELA</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>NAEP</td>
<td>National Assessment of Educational Progress</td>
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<td>NCE</td>
<td>North Clarksburg Elementary</td>
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<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
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<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Governors Association</td>
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<td>NI</td>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
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<td>NLS</td>
<td>New Literacy Studies</td>
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<td>RPC</td>
<td>Revised Publishers’ Criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLO</td>
<td>Teacher Learning Outcome</td>
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Acknowledgements

Learning is like peeling back layers on concepts. You think you understand something until you study it in depth. Suddenly, you realize that what you thought was the entire concept is nothing but the outer shell. Looking more deeply produces a world of understanding that you did not even know existed. For me, the most disconcerting part of this Ph.D. journey was the realization that I had previously been looking at the outside layer of some concepts I thought I understood well. I honestly did not know how much I did not know. I now realize this will never change. Throughout my life, I will continue to learn, seeing the edges of new concepts that I do not understand. This dissertation represents some of the layers I have uncovered during the past three years, but it also points to the edges of many more.

Although my name is listed as the author of this work, it would not have been possible without many people. I want to thank my dissertation committee. Dr. Prins provided invaluable support throughout my coursework, research, and writing. Her relentless pursuit of tight writing has had a profound effect upon this final product. Dr. Carr-Chellman offered countless office visits to vet my ideas and discuss mind-bending concepts such as ideology. It was Dr. Shannon’s summer class that piqued my interest in the Common Core’s effects upon teachers, and I appreciated his challenging, but supportive, debriefing sessions. Dr. Staples encouraged me to think about ideas in new ways and provided encouragement throughout the process.

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Dedication

For the glory of God

For English Learners and their teachers
Chapter 1

Introduction

“How would you teach reading?” the interviewing principal asked. His question surprised and disappointed me. Surprised because the question was so simplistic. The answer was obvious, wasn’t it? I would teach reading in whatever way he wanted. The district’s guidelines, the provided curriculum, the principal’s expectations, and my fourth grade teaching colleagues would all determine how I would teach reading if I were hired. The question was also disappointing because somewhere deep inside I knew that answer would not get me the job.

Several months prior I had graduated from an accredited teacher education program with honors and several hundred hours of classroom experience. I had learned about teaching reading from skills-based programs and from a whole language perspective. So why did I want to say that I would do whatever they told me to do? Why didn’t I have a firm belief in how reading, and literacy more broadly, should be taught? I left the interview knowing I would not get the job, and I didn’t.

More than 20 years later and that answer would still not likely lead to the hiring of a candidate. However, it is a much better answer today than it was then because of the current educational reform effort’s implicit requirements for teachers. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) fore fronts today’s reform and stems from A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the iconic report that focused blame for the country’s pending peril on “a rising tide of mediocrity” in her schools. Guided by the ideology of the authors, the CCSS are designed to address the educational system’s shortcomings, attributed primarily to the ineptitude of teachers (Meyer, 2013), through high-stakes accountability measures. By defining the content students need to know and prescribing instructional practices,
reformers believe teachers’ incompetence will be reversed, and the weak link in the chain will be repaired.

Since the beginning of educational standards, powerful political groups such as governments and school districts have been able to set the goals for instruction while teachers figured out how to reach the goals (Pearson, 2013, p. 6). In 2002, No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, 2002) began to narrow teachers’ pedagogical options by increasing accountability for states, schools, and teachers. With higher stakes, teachers were either forced, or chose out of fear, to stay close to officially sanctioned curricular materials and practices (Newkirk, 2013; J. Z. Pandya, 2011; Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, Samway, & Cifka-Herrera, 2010). The CCSS claim to “define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach” (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014; What is not covered by the Standards, para. 1). Thus, they outline the intended learning outcomes, or consequences, of instruction for students. This statement seems to leave decisions about instructional practices to local classroom teachers. In addition to the standards, though, the CCSS authors also produced the Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012), which unfortunately excludes many of those practices. The RPC was “designed to guide publishers and curriculum developers as they work to ensure alignment with the standards” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1). However, the specificity of the guidelines reveal that they are “clearly curricular [and] pedagogical decisions” (Newkirk, 2013, p. 6), which could be described as an “attempt to order practice at a distance” (T. Fenwick, 2010, p. 119).

Together, the CCSS and the RPC explicitly describe learning outcomes for students and implicitly outline teacher learning outcomes (TLOs). They define the content and pedagogy every teacher should strive to implement to ensure that students are “college- and career-ready”
Thus, teachers who are willing to do as they are told by defining and teaching literacy in ways that the CCSS prescribe are considered successful (Peery, 2013; Wilde, 2013) and those who do not will suffer the consequences (Gangi & Reilly, 2013; Paris, 2000; Weiss, 2014c). Such ordering is based on a particular ideology and ignores the fundamental need for culturally relevant practices in many classrooms (Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013). Further, it de-professionalizes teachers by undermining “their ability to draw from [their own ideology] and put into practice their professional judgment” (Milner, 2013, p. 5; see also Vaughn, 2014).

This qualitative research inquiry explored how three teachers of elementary English Learners (ELs) were experiencing and responding to the CCSS’ ideologically-based attempt to order their practice. I was interested in understanding the degree to which they were, or were not, being de-professionalized or de-skilled and whether and how the CCSS were shaping their practice. Teachers are frontline implementers of policy; thus, this investigation of their experiences provided a front-row seat for understanding the influence of the CCSS on teachers and how they learn in the midst of practice.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe what the narratives of teachers of elementary ELs revealed about how they were experiencing and responding to the interaction of the Common Core State Standards – English Language Arts (CCSS-ELA) and their literacy pedagogy. Specifically, it describes what their narratives disclosed about their informal learning in relation to the intended and unintended teacher learning outcomes of the RPC and how they were affected personally and professionally.

Despite numerous studies of workplace learning in the adult education literature (Daley, 1999; Lundin & Nuldén, 2007), the K-12 teacher is rarely conceptualized as an adult learner nor
is their workplace learning explored closely. This study addressed the gap by extending adult
education theories—namely, Illeris’s (2007a) comprehensive model of adult learning—to an
under-researched group of adults. Few such applications exist and are necessary to understand
the usefulness of the model for explaining adult learning. The findings supported this model as
beneficial for understanding teacher learning because it required the examination of multiple
dimensions of learning that may otherwise have been overlooked. For example, the teachers’
emotions and beliefs played a powerful role in their learning, as did their interactions with the
CCSS-ELA. A study focused on cognitive aspects of learning may have missed these important
features. The interactions among the content, incentive, and interaction dimensions (Illeris,
2007a, p. 25) helped to explain how learning occurred in the midst of practice.

Second, studies of teacher learning in the teacher development literature typically focus
on the content teachers need to learn (Shulman, 1987) or how to design formal professional
development offerings that ensure teacher uptake of the intended outcomes (Garet, Porter,
Desimone, Birman, Beatrice, & Yoon, 2001; Hill, 2007). Few inquiries in either the adult
education or teacher development fields explore informal learning that occurs in the midst of
teachers’ practice. By using an adult education lens to explore teachers’ learning, this project
looked at the topic in a new way and added to what is already known. The findings demonstrate
that the teachers exhibited a range of learning types (i.e., deliberative, reactive, and implicit) in
practice, but that describing this learning as either formal or informal may not be necessary or
helpful. Attributes of the teachers’ learning were mapped across the continuum (Sawchuk, 2008)
and attempts to classify it as formal or informal did not help clarify their learning. Thus, this
study provides evidence that important teacher learning is not confined to what are typically
referred to as “formal” professional development offerings, and that scholars and school administrators should consider the value of teacher learning that occurs across their workplace.

Third, the CCSS-ELA is a key piece of the current reform effort intent on reshaping the educational system in the United States (Coleman & King, 2012) “at its core” (McNeil & Coppola, 2006, p. 684). As such, it is acting as a powerful, authoritative policy “address[ing] key purposes and processes…[of the educational system and] attempting to shape the behavior of” (McNeil & Coppola, 2006, p. 684) the country’s schools, teachers, and students. Effects of policies on states, districts, schools, and students are regularly explored (Ball, Camburn, Correnti, Phelps, & Wallace, 1999; Dutro & Selland, 2012; Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Segool, Carlson, Goforth, von der Embse, & Barterian, 2013; Wiese & Garcia, 2001), but the direct effects on teachers and their pedagogy are rarely addressed. Papola-Ellis (2014) provides an exception. This study shows how the CCSS, through the RPC, shaped teachers and their pedagogy. The findings help us understand how authoritative policies are, and are not, able to influence practice.

Background

The development of the Common Core State Standards. Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), educational reformers have sought to address the problems it outlined. It was believed that instituting educational standards that would raise the levels of expectation and accountability for students and their teachers was the best way to respond. This call was realized in reform efforts such as the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (Improving America’s Schools Act [IASA], 1994), which required state-level standards and aligned assessments, and NCLB in 2001 that further raised the bar on state accountability.
An additional provision of NCLB was that states would “participate in a biennial state-level National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). NAEP would allow for the comparison of states’ standards and assessments and, based upon NAEP scores, the federal government could determine which states did or did not have rigorous standards and assessments. The results were like comparing apples and oranges. States’ standards and assessments varied widely from each other and from the NAEP, resulting in assessment scores that were difficult to compare (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Therefore, “an attempt to establish a national set of unified educational goals and outcomes” (Larson, 2013, p. ix), which had been working behind the scenes since the mid-1990s (Ravitch, 1995), emerged.

Building upon prior efforts to improve performance and rigor in U.S. schools (Shannon, 2013, p. 3), the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (NGA & CCSSO) led the development of the CCSS in 2009 (NGA & CCSSO, 2012a). The proponents of the standards agree with the conclusions of the 1983 Commission that the mediocrity of the nation’s schools has led to the “risk” looming on the horizon. They contend that this risk is even greater now because of the information and technology demands of life and work in the 21st century and because of the growing diversity of the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). For example, ELs are “the fastest growing population in U.S. public schools…[consisting of nearly] 6 million” students (TESOL International Association, 2013, p. 4). This is an increase of over 80 percent since 1990 (C. Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh, 2011) and is only expected to rise (Passel, 2011).

The CCSS include standards for Math and English Language Arts for Grades K-12. Their mission is to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to
learn….reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers…. [and to position individuals and communities] to compete successfully in the global economy” (NGA & CCSSO, 2012b, para. 1). Currently, more than forty states, the District of Columbia, and four territories have adopted all or part of the CCSS – Math and English Language Arts (Achieve Inc., 2014). The federal government gave states incentives to adopt the CCSS, including waivers from some NCLB requirements (B. Williams & Luppino-Esposito, 2013). These incentives “made (and make) it difficult for state officials to ‘choose’ not to adopt” the CCSS (Shannon, 2013), essentially reclassifying them as national standards (Editors, 2013).

**Potential effects of a powerful policy.** The power inherent in policies like the CCSS is hard to miss, because they outline accountability measures for those in the educational system. Assessment results are used to judge students, teachers, and districts, and the consequences of not measuring up to pre-determined goals are substantial (Dutro & Selland, 2012; Paris, 2000; Segool et al., 2013, p. 489; Weiss, 2014a). Those who fall below set standards suffer negative sanctions ranging from embarrassment, retention, and loss of future opportunities for students to loss of funding and local control for school districts (Paris, 2000).

Most teachers chose their career because they want to make a difference in the life of another (Ingersoll, 2003). They generally care about their students and want them to be successful. Thus, when students are negatively affected by new policies, their teachers are as well. They face additional effects in a high-stakes testing culture because in many states teachers’ “evaluations will be based on their students’ [CCSS-aligned] test scores” (Gangi & Reilly, 2013, p. 8) resulting in possible sanctions, including job loss, if students do not score well. This pressure can lead to teachers’ heightened stress and anxiety (Segool et al., 2013). The standards and aligned assessments have also altered content (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang,
and instructional strategies (Burns, 2012; Jones & Egley, 2004; J. Z. Pandya, 2011; Lucinda Pease-Alvarez et al., 2010) for teachers across the adopting states. In addition to driving content and instruction and evaluating student and teacher performance, CCSS standardized assessment data have been, and will continue to be, used to guide new curricula development, teacher and administrator preparation, and professional development.

**Theoretical Framework**

For this study, I drew upon Althusser’s (1971) understanding of ideology, the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1990; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 1984), and Illeris’s (2007a) comprehensive framework of adult learning.

**Ideology.** This study employs Althusser’s conceptualization of ideology to explain how ideology was working behind the scenes of the CCSS and the teachers’ literacy pedagogy. He contends ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 1971, p. 162). That is, it depicts an individual or group’s wish for how things *should be*, disguised as a description of how things *are* (Eagleton, 1991, p. 19). Ideology works in the social world by recruiting and transforming “individuals into subjects” (Althusser, 1971, p. 174) who see themselves in the ideology being offered. It is through “the favoured vehicle” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 34) of discourse that this transaction occurs. These ideas helped me consider how the CCSS ideology was working to recruit the participants into being, or recognizing that they were, certain kinds of teachers (Althusser, 1971, pp. 174–175). However, the teachers seemed to be only vaguely aware of this recruitment.

**New Literacy Studies.** The NLS is a sociocultural approach for understanding literacy as a social practice or as an outcome of interaction processes (Collin & Street, 2014). Foundational to NLS is Street’s (1984) ideological model of literacy, which “conceptualizes literacy as a set of
practices (as opposed to skills)” (Perry, 2012, p. 53) that are “always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003b, p. 77). Therefore, literacy practices are infused with the particular ideologies of their creators and the context in which they were created (Street, 1984), meaning that “particular versions of [literacy] are always ‘ideological’, they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others” (Street, 2003b, p. 78).

This was important to the study because the supporters of the CCSS tout them as a neutral, universal approach for defining and teaching the literacy that every student needs, regardless of their social, cultural, or linguistic background. As such, the CCSS align with an autonomous model of literacy (Burns, 2012; Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013), holding that acquisition of the discrete literacy skills outlined in the standards leads, in a linear fashion, to a set of academic, social, and economic benefits. NLS helped me see beyond this narrow, skills-based approach “to recognize that a vast range of experiences contribute to literacy learning” (Compton-Lilly, 2009, p. 88).

Through the development of common standards, the CCSS attempted to control the literacy practices and events of students (Hull & Moje, 2012). The teachers were pressured to promote these standardized literacy practices, regardless of the diversity of their students. This pressure existed because of the limited set of approved pedagogical strategies in the ubiquitous CCSS-aligned curricula (Newkirk, 2013). NLS scholars point out that these instructional practices are not universally applicable, but are intertwined with the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were developed; thus, the CCSS-approved methods of teaching literacy are promoting particular ideological practices that may or may not work in the local context (Gee, 1999). By using the NLS as a conceptual lens during this study, I was aware of
how the teachers’ understanding of literacy aligned with the autonomous model and how this may have mitigated some of the negative effects they might have otherwise experienced.

**Illeris’s framework of adult learning.** Many investigations of learning focus on either the internal acquisition or the external, interaction process, and thus are incomplete (Illeris, 2009). This is also true of well-known conceptions of teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Additionally, current research about teacher learning does not explore the entire metaphorical iceberg of learning (Coffield, 2000; Livingstone, 1999). The visible portion of formal learning taking place in teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops has been explored at length. However, the larger submerged portion of informal learning is often ignored (Livingstone, 1999).

I used Illeris’s (2007a, 2009) framework of two processes (i.e., acquisition and interaction) and three dimensions (i.e., content, incentive, interaction) to get a more complete understanding of the participants’ learning. Through interviews and analysis, I determined what the participants learned in relation to the TLOs, as a result of teaching. This addressed the content dimension of the acquisition process. To understand the incentive dimension, I worked to uncover the teachers’ feelings, emotions, and motivations for learning. For example, in some instances their learning was a result of a positive desire for change, but in others it was spurred by feelings of compulsion or the desire to be viewed as a *good* teacher. Finally, I considered the interaction dimension and questioned in what ways the teachers’ interaction with the CCSS discourses led to learning.

Utilizing Illeris’s framework helped me understand the complexity of teachers’ workplace learning with a focus on how the CCSS-created sociocultural context influenced their learning. The incentive dimension was particularly interesting to me because it provided insight
into the power of authoritative policies to influence teachers’ motivations for learning and thus
direct practice.

Research Questions and Methods

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the explicit or implied teacher learning outcomes in the CCSS-ELA and related
documents?
2. What do the narratives of elementary teachers of ELs reveal about what it is like to teach
literacy in a CCSS-governed classroom?
   a. What pedagogical choices do teachers make about literacy instruction (especially for
      ELs), and what informs these choices?
   b. How are those choices related to their understandings of literacy, of ELs, or of
      themselves as teachers of both?
3. How are teachers understanding and responding to the intended teacher learning
   outcomes of the CCSS-ELA?
   a. If teachers are not taking up the intended learning outcomes, what barriers prevent
      their learning?

I explored these research questions by conducting a Narrative Inquiry (NI). As a
qualitative research approach, NI focuses on “life experiences as narrated by those who live
them” (Chase, 2011, p. 421). It is based on an epistemology that humans lead storied lives and
that it is through telling stories that we come to understand our experiences and identities, others’
actions, and the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477; Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne,
1988). NI honors lived everyday experiences “as a source of important knowledge and
understanding” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42) by listening carefully “to the [participants’] voices within each narrative” (Chase, 2011, p. 424).

The teachers’ workplace of school created a landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) for narratives of their life experiences to be constructed and reconstructed. It was here that their stories bumped up against the stories of others and the sociocultural environment (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Sociological studies are interested in “how narrators make sense of personal experience in relation to cultural discourses…[and] the relationship between people's narrative practices and their local environments” (Chase, 2011, p. 422); therefore, a sociological approach (Chase, 2011) to NI was best suited for the study. It allowed me to explore how my participants’ experiences were interacting with wider discourses, including the CCSS. The need to hear the voices of teachers and to understand their lived experiences continues to grow in the current accountability era (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Federal and state officials who are removed from the local context are making decisions about the tenure and condition of teachers’ jobs as well as the intricacies of their classroom practice. NI allowed for the study of “people’s lives as lived, people whose life experience has been lost in the search for central tendencies” (Josselson, 2007) or objective measures of accountability.

**Methods of analysis.** Critical discourse analysis (CDA)\(^1\) is both theory and method (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 16; Gee, 2014, p. 11; Lewis, 2006) and describes a range of approaches for studying language in use (Gee, 2014). The approaches share “the assumption that because language is a social practice and because not all social practices are created and treated equally, all analyses of language are inherently critical” (Rogers, 2011, p. 2; see also Gee, 1999/2014). The primary purpose of CDA is to “to see how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in the everyday, quotidian aspects of texts in use” (Luke, 1995, p. 11). The

\(^1\) CDA is used here for brevity, not in specific reference to the work of Fairclough (1989).
critical discourse analyst’s goal is to address or perhaps “intervene in institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world” (Gee, 2014, p. 9). Thus, CDA was foundational to all of the analyses in this study, but was specifically employed as method to uncover the ideology inherent in the RPC. A thematic analysis of narratives (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Riessman, 2008) was appropriate for identifying the salient features of the participants’ experiences recounted in the interviews. However, a critical perspective was carried throughout as I analyzed and coded themes in the narrative data (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007, p. 636).

**Data collection.** I conducted multiple interviews with three teachers at North Clarksburg Elementary (NCE, a pseudonym). The audio-recorded interviews followed Seidman’s (2006) three interview protocol and addressed the teachers’ past and present literacy teaching, particularly of ELs. From these data, I constructed overarching master narratives (Lyotard, 1984) that described the teachers’ collective experiences.

Documents such as the RPC and websites related to the CCSS-ELA were accessed digitally. I analyzed the RPC for the implicit teacher learning outcomes and used the other CCSS-related sources to further understand or explain the guidelines in the RPC. Photos of excerpts from the teachers’ curriculum guides were taken to help me better understand their literacy instruction and how they were interpreting the CCSS directives found there (Papola-Ellis, 2014). I also took brief field notes related to the school and the teachers’ classrooms and wrote analytic notes after each visit to NCE. These were helpful in recording relevant aspects of the inquiry as well as my narratives related to the experience. I returned to the notes many times during the analysis and writing phases to confirm or refute my findings and interpretations.
Dissertation Overview

The central argument of this study is that the power inherent in authoritative documents such as the RPC encourages teachers to learn its ideology and intended outcomes. Through a complex process involving interaction between content, emotions and beliefs, and the sociocultural environment, teachers also learn unintended outcomes related to their understandings of themselves and their students. These learning outcomes lead to changes in the teachers’ pedagogy and the way they narrate their lives. Prior to CCSS implementation, the participants characterized themselves as creative, effective teachers who cared about students personally. After interacting with the CCSS and RPC, the teachers drilled skills required for standardized testing; however, they continued to use their professional knowledge to resist mandates that challenged their convictions about helping students. The teachers’ current narratives included insecurity about their effectiveness and seeing students as test scores.

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter One outlined the purpose and significance of the study and research questions. It also summarized my theoretical framework and the research methods that guided the study. Chapter Two describes the theoretical framework, including the importance of ideology, New Literacy Studies, and Illeris’s (2007a) model of learning. In Chapter Three, I explain the research approach and detail the analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents findings related to the TLOs, which are a response to research question one. Research questions two and three are addressed in the findings of Chapter Five, where teachers’ voices about their experiences are presented. Chapter Six offers discussion and interpretation of the previous chapters’ findings and suggests implications for policy, practice, and research.
Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature

As suspected, I was not given the opportunity to teach reading, or anything else, as a result of that first interview. However, I was hired to teach third grade in a nearby small, private, suburban school. The provided curriculum guided my first year literacy instruction. Through those experiences, I learned what worked for some students, but not for others. I discovered what made my students enjoy reading (and writing) and what contributed to their literacy development. I began to cautiously include some of the ideas gleaned from my student teaching, even though they did not align with the curriculum guides. By the second year, I held less tightly to the curriculum, but I still looked to it for overall guidance of my literacy instruction.

A few years later, I was teaching fifth grade in a different private school and had such strong beliefs about literacy pedagogy that I developed a proposal, complete with student quotes for support, asking the principal to approve removing a reading workbook from the required textbook list. I knew I could supplement the reading textbook with authentic literature and literacy activities and make it work for my class, but the accompanying workbooks were not even good for teaching students how to complete workbook pages, much less important aspects of literacy. The request to eliminate the workbooks was denied, but the principal supported their limited use. My beliefs about teaching literacy were further developed and strengthened that year because of my students’ enthusiastic responses to our balanced approach of skills instruction when needed and engagement in authentic literacy practices the rest of the time.

Fourteen years after my teaching career began found me again in third grade. This time in a suburban, public school with all of the third grade ELs in my classroom. While guided by
the state standards developed under NCLB, my literacy teaching revolved around authentic uses of text that drew on my students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I despised the use of reading textbooks and workbooks, going so far as to remove those left by previous teachers completely out of my classroom.

I do not recall any formal professional development experiences that made a strong contribution to my understanding of literacy pedagogy; therefore, I think most of this learning occurred informally, in the midst of teaching. I listened as colleagues talked about their practice, I asked them questions about student literacy work I saw in their classrooms, I read books, and then I investigated the possibilities with my students. I tried a variety of teaching strategies, organizational arrangements, lesson plans, assessment methods, and genres of literature. When something was successful, I built upon it to try something new. During this experimentation, without even realizing it, I was learning about literacy, about how students learn, and about myself as a professional. Slowly this learning became a part of who I am today, and I cannot imagine not having an answer to the question, “How would you teach reading?”

Ideology and Discourse

Ideology has been described as “a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 1). For this project, Althusser’s understanding of ideology helped to show how it was at work. He contends, “ideology is the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (Althusser, 1971, p. 158). Further, ideology acts in the social world because it “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 1971, p. 162). That is, ideology depicts an individual or group’s wish for how things should be, disguised as a description of how things are (Eagleton, 1991, p. 19).
Ideology “always exists” in social institutions (i.e., ideological state apparatuses), such as the church, the family, and schools, and in their practices (Althusser, 1971, p. 166). For these social institutions to continue to exist, they must continue to enlist new members, preferably those who hold to a like-minded ideology. Therefore, “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals [in society]…or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects…[through the mechanism of] interpellation” (Althusser, 1971, p. 174). Therefore, ideology gives people new identities by hailing them and saying, “Hey, you there. Yes, you. This is who you are; the subject that you are”. If the individual ‘turns around’ and says, “Yes, that’s me!” then the ideology has taken hold, or recruited them as subjects (Althusser, 1971, p. 178).

**Discourse.** Discourse is “the favoured vehicle of ideology” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 34). Gee (1990) distinguishes between big “D” and little “d” discourse. This differentiation emphasizes the vital relationship between language form and function “and the intention of [its] speakers” (Rogers, 2011a, p. 7). Big “D” Discourses serve as identity kits. They are “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (Gee, 1990, p. 142). Little “d” discourses refer to “connected stretches of language that make sense” (Gee, 1990, p. 142) and the grammar of written and spoken language (i.e., texts). However, this distinction highlights the complexity of the concept rather than creating clear-cut definitions. As people draw upon the commonsense conventions of discourse, which “embody ideological assumptions” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 77), Discourses are created, developed, altered, or deconstructed, and ideology is transmitted. The aspect of commonsense is vital because commonsense assumptions “are implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted, not things that people are consciously aware of, rarely explicitly formulated or examined or questioned” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 77). This is important...
because “ideology is most effective [at recruiting subjects] when its workings are least visible” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 85).

Ideology can be seen in the actions, including the language, of subjects. If a subject claims to believe the ideas of their new identity, then they “must…inscribe his [sic] own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his [sic] material practice. If he [sic] does not do so, ‘that is wicked’” (Althusser, 1971, p. 168). If a person does not act in this way, then that means they have other ideas in their head as well. “The ‘ideas’ of a human subject exist in his [sic] actions, or ought to…. [These] actions [are] inserted into practices…that are governed by the….material existence of an ideological apparatus” (Althusser, 1971, p. 168). Therefore, ideological ideas are displayed in the material actions of subjects (Althusser, 1971, pp. 169–170).

Implicit ideological ideas, which are present in the actions and language of individuals or groups, can be made explicit through analysis (Philips, 1998, p. 217). Even though subjects are often unaware of their involvement with ideology, that does not mean they are perpetual slaves to it. When “one becomes aware that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities at one’s own expense, it ceases to be common sense, and may cease to…function ideologically” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 85). Thus, the purpose of making ideology explicit through analysis is “to loosen its hold on people, opening the way for other possible perspectives” (Philips, 1998, p. 222) or ways of thinking.

**Ideology in the CCSS.** The CCSS are grounded in the ideology of the groups and individuals who currently wield the most power in the educational institution and related governmental and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the Gates Foundation; CCSS-ELA authors David Coleman and Susan Pimentel; U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan), and it is tied, at least in part, to an economic foundation.
Current educational reformers believe that to address the serious risk outlined in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), they must look to a key goal of education – “the production of an efficient and marketable worker” (Larson, 2013, p. ix). Tying education to worker productivity is a hallmark of human capital theory (Schultz, 1961), which “assume[s] that our world is an educational meritocracy in which a person’s socioeconomic status [and implied academic achievement] is limited…only by his or her educational investment” (Baptiste, 2001, p. 195). Thus, reformers hold that if education is to fulfill its goal, low academic standards and resulting achievement gaps must be addressed. Few would dispute that achievement gaps exist between student groups in the US, since reports show that ELs, students of color, and those who live in poverty regularly fall below their monolingual, middle-class, White peers on standardized measures of achievement (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2010; Reardon, 2011; Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Rahman, 2009). However, others reject the claim that the current reform methods are the best way to close these gaps.

Assuming a causal link between insufficient achievement and the risk to the desired outcome of education, reformers developed the CCSS, which outline “learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level…[and are] designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit bearing introductory [college] courses…or enter the workforce” (NGA & CCSSO, 2012a; Overview section, para. 2). In essence, the intent of the CCSS is to level the playing field by “ensuring all [emphasis added] students are well prepared to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad” (NGA & CCSSO, 2012a; Overview section, para. 5).

Understanding the goal of an educational policy is important because end goals often define the approaches used to get there, and the CCSS approach of common expectations and
outcomes for all students will not only point us toward a less than ideal goal, it will also result in harm to students and teachers (Dutro & Selland, 2012; Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013) through its attempts to shape their behavior and identity. “Policies are the articulation of someone's hope for the way something should be, and they are revealed through various texts, practices, and discourses that define and deliver these values” (Edmondson, 2004, p. 419). This statement highlights the tie between ideology and the CCSS. It is through the commonsense discourses of the CCSS that its proponents desire to give students an identity of “college and career readiness” (Bomer, 2013). However, scholars warn that this set of “common” standards that define the “core” knowledge and skills students need will necessarily leave some things, and some students, out (Carter, 2006; Larson, 2013; Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013). The behaviors and identities seen as peripheral to reaching the CCSS goals may be left behind in an effort to shape students and teachers into the ideal – into subjects of the dominant ideology. Larson (2013) predicts that the culturally and linguistically diverse ways of thinking, knowing, and acting that ELs bring to school with them will be devalued, potentially “exacerbate[ing] current inequities” (p. xiii).

A Sociocultural Approach to Literacy

New Literacy Studies (NLS) is a conceptual lens for understanding what literacy is and its role in everyday life. NLS scholars define literacy broadly as “something people do; it is an activity located in the space between thought and text” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 3).

“Language and literacy…[are viewed] as social practices” (Street, 2003a, p. 79) set in a particular context with particular human actors, both of which are imbued with various ideologies and Discourses (Gee, 1999; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 1984). What counts as literacy and one’s degree of literacy depend upon the social context in which it is being used, not decontextualized definitions or assessments. Literacy is understood as complex and cannot be
described outside of the social, cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts within which it resides
(Gee, 1999).

NLS is categorized as a sociocultural approach to literacy because of its focus on “the
types of literacy being employed by people, the meanings with which they are imbued, the ways
in which literacy practices participate in larger power structures, and the ‘affordances’ provided
by literacy skills or literacy status” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 739). It has connections with other
sociocultural perspectives such as multiliteracies and critical literacy; however, it is distinct
(Gee, 2010; Perry, 2012). Although NLS contends that individuals utilize *multiple* literacies
(Bartlett, 2007, p. 52; Perry, 2012, p. 53; Street, 2003a) in their various domains of interaction
(e.g., home, school, community, Barton & Hamilton, 1998), this is different than multiliteracies,
or new literacies, which focuses on multimodal and digital or technological aspects of literacy
(Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Perry, 2012, p. 58). Critical literacy scholars investigate the role of
power relations in literacy practices and texts. Literacy as a social practice is at the heart of NLS
(Perry, 2012). Scholars investigate how people use literacy in various contexts and how the
sociocultural surroundings shape their literacy practices.

The New Literacy Studies approach to literacy encompasses two central elements: the
distinction between autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Street, 1984) and the idea of
literacy practices and events (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983) set within sociocultural
contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984).

**Autonomous and ideological models of literacy.** The field of NLS arose over the last
30 years in response to a predominantly psychological understanding of literacy (Gee, 2010).
The ‘New’ in NLS often refers to “a new paradigm for looking at literacy as opposed to the
paradigm that already existed” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 16). Psychological approaches
view literacy as an autonomous, neutral thing, which individuals either do or do not possess (Street, 1984). Literacy is understood as separate from persons or contexts. It includes a discrete set of skills, such as learning a language’s alphabet, the sound/symbol relationship between oral language and print, and the processes of decoding and encoding language that are “arrayed in a developmental hierarchy” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 739) and can be decontextualized, deconstructed and taught to those who have not yet learned to read and write printed text (Davidson, 2010, p. 247). Both functional (skills-based) and cognitive views of literacy are included in this autonomous model (Street, 1984). Functional views are often hegemonic, seeing literacy as a way to assimilate learners into social norms (Street, 1984, p. 20). This view includes rules, conventions, and the goal of drawing the author’s, rather than the reader’s, meaning from text (Auerbach, n.d.). Cognitive views of literacy also focus on the individual, but include a stronger emphasis on mental abilities and the development of skills along predetermined stages (Davidson, 2010). Learners are encouraged to pay attention to these mental processes and are expected to be able to articulate them when asked.

Once developed, literacy skills “serve as building blocks for doing other things and for accessing meanings” (Lankshear, 1999, p. 208). Thus, the seemingly autonomous nature of literacy provides individuals with access to a multitude of benefits including social status and economic mobility and productivity (Bartlett, 2008; Goody & Watt, 1963; Lankshear, 1999). Historically, literacy has been “seen as a key factor, if not the salient factor, that enables the transition from ‘primitive’ to ‘advanced’ culture” (Lankshear, 1999, p. 202), creating a “Great Divide” (Street, 1984) between societies. Even though the Great Divide Theory has been “discredited by social anthropologists and sociolinguists” (Street, 1984, p. 28), a newer version can be traced to the influential work of Goody and Watt (1963), which outlined a “distinction
between ‘literate’ and ‘non-literate’” (Street, 2006, p. 3, 1984). This strong version of the autonomous model (Street, 1984) spurred mass literacy campaigns around the world (e.g., the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Brazil) in an effort to boost nations’ prestige and ability to compete in the global economy (Kirkendall, 2010), among other goals. It is still evident in educational institutions and policies today (Bartlett, 2008; Collin & Street, 2014; Perry, 2012).

Based on a strong empirical foundation (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 3), the NLS challenge the autonomous model (Perry, 2012, p. 54) and contend that literacy is not just a neutral mental process going on in the head, but a sociocultural one occurring in society (Gee, 2010). This ideological model (Street, 1984) “conceptualizes literacy as a set of practices (as opposed to skills)” (Perry, 2012, p. 53) that are “always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003b, p. 77). Literacy practices are infused with the particular ideologies of their creators and the context in which they were created (Street, 1984) meaning that “particular versions of [literacy] are always ‘ideological’, they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others” (Street, 2003b, p. 78). Thus, because the autonomous model understands “literacy in fairly narrow terms…the incredible diversity of literacy practices [is ignored while]…certain kinds of literacy” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 738) are privileged.

Within the ideological model, outcomes of literacy cannot be predetermined since they depend upon myriad factors relating to the individual and their environment. A number of studies illustrate the ideological nature of literacy (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1995). Each of these “show that it is not literacy itself but literate practices situated in social contexts that play a determining role in deciding whether one is literate or not” (Lee, 2011, p.
Thus, literacy abilities cannot be decided based upon assessments of decontextualized skills (Bartlett, 2008, p. 738).

The distinction between these models is important because the autonomous model “disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have these benign effects” (Street, 2003b, p. 77). In addition to ideological promises of economic and social progress, the autonomous model also warns of “ideological dangers, for illiteracy signifies economic stagnation, political decay, and cultural disorder” (Collins, 1995, p. 84).

**Discounting the dichotomy.** Although the autonomous and ideological models appear to create a dichotomy from which scholars and practitioners must choose, this is not necessarily the case. Scholars (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004) contend that concepts from the autonomous (cognitive) and ideological (social practice) views can be integrated to present a more balanced understanding of literacy. This is not to suggest that the models can be fully integrated, but that they are not altogether incompatible. Instead, “a more accurate way of envisioning the relationship between the sociocultural and the cognitive is as relating transactionally in a nested relationship, with the cognitive occurring within the sociocultural context” (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). From this perspective, educators can be offered practical suggestions for teaching literacy skills that do not ignore the influence of the social practices in which they are set.

Recently researchers have begun discussing a third model of literacy that attempts to bridge between the autonomous and ideological in a different way. The interaction model (Collin, 2013) claims that both of the prior models go too far in their claims – the autonomous in saying that literacy is a neutral determining force and the ideological in saying that the meaning
of literacy relies solely on the sociocultural context. Instead, the interaction model holds that both are true, to a degree. It “begins from the premise that a society is not a closed machine whose parts fire according to a fixed schedule. Rather, a society is understood as a decentered totality, an assemblage made up of interrelated, coevolving activity spheres” (Collin, 2013, p. 33). Social relations, institutional arrangements, and technologies such as literacy (Collin, 2013, p. 33) are just three of the spheres that interact, shaping and being shaped by the others.

In this model, literacy is afforded a “thing status” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 337) with the power to act or condition other spheres. However, literacy is not seen as “an independent force but [one] conditioned by all the processes constituting social totality” (Collin, 2013, p. 34). Drawing from the ideological, or social practice, viewpoint, the importance of the cultural context is affirmed, not as the controlling factor of literacy, but as “coevolving with…dynamics of other spheres” (Collin, 2013, p. 34).

Even though the interaction model appears to combine the best of both models, it is not a final answer. Street notes that the interaction model ignores ideology, which he believes is foundational to any model of literacy (Collin & Street, 2014, p. 355). Therefore, Collin and Street (2014) propose a synthesis of the ideological and interaction models in which literacy would be defined “as the outcome of interacting processes in different spheres” (p. 358), thus retaining a measure of influence, and “the sociocultural moments of these processes [would be] positioned in the foreground” (p. 358) because they are so often neglected in discussions of education. A synthesis model such as this could help researchers better understand how local literacies are connected to sociocultural spheres as well as how change, including the introduction of new literacies, occurs (Collin, 2013, p. 31). Thus, because the synthesis model
acknowledges both the power of ideology and the interaction of literacy with other social processes to create change, it seems to be the most applicable to this study.

**Literacy practices and events.** To participate in social and cultural practices, people often use printed text. They either create written texts or they read and make meaning from the written texts of others. This interaction cannot be extracted from the sociocultural and historical contexts in which it is embedded (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981); therefore, NLS scholars view literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003a).

Literacy practices “are the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives…. [They] are what people do with literacy” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). They are “socially situated, culturally informed [and] politically laden” (Staples, 2011, p. 80) because they “are embedded in various Discourses, or ways of knowing, doing, talking, reading and writing, which are constructed and reproduced in social and cultural… interaction” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012, p. 14; see also Gee, 1990, 2001). Literacy practices include people’s understandings of what counts as literacy as well as how it is structured and used in particular contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

As a result of their connection to the ideologies and Discourses of social institutions, some literacy practices “become more dominant, visible and influential than others” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 7). Understanding literacy as practices “offers a powerful way of conceptualizing the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 6).

Literacy practices, such as constructing an argument, are abstract (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 342) and thus cannot be directly studied. Instead, they can be inferred by observing the literacy events (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Perry, 2012) “which arise from [them] and are shaped
Literacy events are “activities where literacy has a role” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 7; Street, 1993) and often involve written text, or talk about text. In composing a literacy event, people draw on practices they know or have had experiences with (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012, p. 5), thus infusing the event with the ideologies of the literacy practices and the sociocultural context. For example, a common literacy event in a CCSS-aligned classroom would include students writing argumentative essays, supporting their points from evidence within one or more complex texts. Events are subject to change depending upon how individuals interpret the expectations and literacy practices of their sociocultural context and the purposes for which they are creating the literacy event. Both literacy events and practices are dynamic. They change over time and “new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 7).

**Applying A New Literacy Studies Lens**

This study focused on how teachers of elementary English Learners were experiencing and responding to the discourses of the CCSS, specifically regarding literacy. A sociocultural lens was appropriate because I explored the ways culture, identity, and power interacted and contributed to the contexts (Perry, 2012, p. 52) in which the teachers were working. Specifically, the narratives my participants related were about their interactions with students and the CCSS. These interactions were “social practice[s] that affect the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants” (Street, 2006, p. 2). The CCSS Discourse entered the NCE context and affected the social practices as well as the literacy practices and events that resulted from them. Researchers within the literacy as social practice frame tend to focus on analyzing the written texts of literacy events (Perry, 2012, p. 54). This aligned with my
study because I analyzed the printed RPC text, which is largely focused on directing students’ facility with text through teachers’ instructional practices.

“Viewing literacy as a diverse set of contextualized practices…[allowed me to explore and] understand the full range of ways in which people use literacy” (Perry, 2012, p. 62) and the Discourses that influence those literacy practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 13). People use literacy in ways that are connected to how they view themselves (Gee, 1990), so understanding how teachers were interpreting and implementing the CCSS illuminated what they were learning about literacy, ELs, and their identities as teachers of both. A NLS perspective helped me investigate these complex relationships.

Application to the CCSS. The CCSS are based on an autonomous model of literacy (Burns, 2012; Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013); therefore, its supporters tout the standards as a neutral, universal approach for defining and teaching the literacy that every student needs, regardless of social, cultural, or linguistic background. Through the development of common standards, the CCSS attempt to control the literacy practices and events of students (Hull & Moje, 2012) and the instructional practices of teachers (Newkirk, 2013).

Autonomous model. Like much literacy education, the CCSS are “dominated by an autonomous model” (Burns, 2012, p. 94; see also Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013) of literacy in that they provide descriptions of discrete skills that all students must master. The skills are broken down by grade level and are intended to be progressive from kindergarten through high school. All students are expected to move along this trajectory at approximately the same rate and standardized assessments will measure their progression, or lack thereof. The CCSS’ mission statement claims the standards reflect “the knowledge and skills that our young people need for
success in college and careers” (NGA & CCSSO, 2012). Therefore, the autonomous nature of these skills is presumed to lead to unqualified success later in life for those who master them.

Drawing on NLS, I view this model as lacking and potentially damaging to students such as ELs. The autonomous model is flawed, in part, because literacy is more complex than this model allows (Street, 2005). The literacy skills or ‘bits’ that the CCSS define “do not exist apart from the social practices in which they are embedded and within which they are acquired…. [and therefore] cannot meaningfully be taught and learned as separate from the rest of the [social] practice” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 8). Further, the CCSS assumption that literacy is acquired in a hierarchical, universal manner has been shown by sociocultural researchers not to be true, particularly for ELs (Bartlett, 2008, p. 740). Learners use different skills to be able to read and write in different languages (Bartlett, 2008), thus the CCSS approach may be particularly problematic for ELs and their teachers.

**Literacy practices and events.** The CCSS “attempt to change the kinds of literacy practices that are taught and valued in schools” (Hull & Moje, 2012, p. 1). Reducing literacy to a decontextualized set of skills “fail[s] to do justice to the richness and complexity of actual literacy practices in people’s lives” (Street, 2005, p. 420; see also Perry, 2012). The CCSS-defined skills to be taught in classrooms are drawn from the practices of the dominant discourse, which are “taken for granted to the extent that they are almost invisible” (Hull & Moje, 2012, p. 2). Thus, because the dominant practices are “considered the norm…the culturally diverse [practices of ELs may be] judged to be deficient” (Davidson, 2010, p. 250).

In constructing students and teachers with “common” literacy practices, it is important to consider the practices that are being shut out. For example, ELs often act as language brokers for family members and other adults in their homes and communities, but these complex literacy
practices are “barely recognized” (Alvarez, 2014, p. 327) in the school setting. When the literacy practices of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds “are not recognized and built upon, they are in jeopardy of being lost or confused…strip[ping] the child of an opportunity to cultivate her/his unique set of talents, and to see herself/himself as a competent language user” (Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013, p. 60).

**Addressing a limitation.** One limitation of a sociocultural perspective such as NLS is that it is too focused on the local context (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Perry, 2012), often ignoring the sociocultural context that invariably shapes the local. The concepts of literacy practices and events “provide an answer as to where the local and the distant collide (in many everyday literacy events), but they fail to provide an answer as to how this interaction occurs” (Reder & Davila, 2005, p. 6). It is important to understand how literacy practices from other contexts are influencing local, situated literacy practices. How are those “regularly arriv[ing] from other places – infiltrating, disjointing, and displacing local life?” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 343).

I addressed this limitation by investigating the ways the CCSS discourses, which have come from outside the local classroom contexts, were affecting teachers’ understandings of literacy and their literacy pedagogy. In what ways were students and teachers being “recruited into distant campaigns through reading and writing” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 347; see also Althusser, 1971)? Recognizing the influence of these outside forces was important to developing a more nuanced understanding of the way those in the local context take up literacy practices.

**Adult Learning**

The fact that teachers are learners is often ignored in the literature of both adult and teacher development. Adult education research tends to focus on learning throughout the stages
of adulthood (Coady, 2013; Merriam & Kee, 2014; Morrice, 2012) or as it applies to specific professions such as police work (Lundin & Nuldén, 2007) and nursing (Daley, 1999). Teacher development research primarily studies the ways preparation programs are, or are not, equipping novices to be experts (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002) and the influence of teacher practice on student achievement (Arens et al., 2012; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; R. T. Williams et al., 2014). However, the learning of teachers within their workplace is rarely addressed (Bakkenes, Vermunt, & Wubbels, 2010; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Hoekstra, Beijaard, Brekelmans, & Korthagen, 2007; Hoekstra, Korthagen, Brekelmans, Beijaard, & Imants, 2009 are exceptions). By combining insights from the adult education and teacher development literatures, this study “can provide the foundation for a more productive approach to understanding…teacher learning” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005, p. 112).

Illeris (2007a) has developed a comprehensive framework for understanding learning that builds on the “best of [the traditional] constructions” of adult learning (Illeris, 2009, p. 7). The framework is based upon a broad definition of learning: “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing” (Illeris, 2007a, p. 3). To understand learning, “all the conditions that influence and are influenced by” (Illeris, 2009, pp. 7–8) the learning process must be considered. These include general biological, psychological, and social conditions, internal and external conditions specific to the learner, possible applications of learning, and the actual learning itself (Illeris, 2009, p. 8). In the framework, learning is central and consists of two processes and three dimensions.

External and internal processes. “All learning implies the integration of two very different processes” (Illeris, 2009, p. 8). The external process is an interactive one “between the learner and his or her social, cultural, and material environment” (Illeris, 2007b, pp. 86–87,
2009, p. 8). The environment includes other people, technology, and a specific culture, time, and physical location. It is illustrated with a vertical double arrow, grounded in the environment, and the individual learner at the top (see Figure 1).

![Learning processes diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Learning processes. Adapted from Illeris (2007a, p. 23).

The second process is an “internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition” (Illeris, 2009, p. 8). In Figure 1, it is depicted as a horizontal double arrow set across the individual learner end of the vertical arrow. It is balanced with two psychological processes consisting of “managing the learning content” on one end and the “incentive function of providing and directing the necessary mental energy that runs the process” (Illeris, 2007a, 2009, p. 9) on the other. The double arrow indicates that both functions of the acquisition process (content and incentive) are integrated. “Both processes [external, interaction and internal, acquisition] must be actively involved if any learning is to take place” (Illeris, 2009, p. 9). Any learning theory that addresses only one is necessarily incomplete (Illeris, 2009, p. 9). For some
adult education theorists, all of learning, except for tacit knowledge, is a conscious, intentional, rational process (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1978). However, I agree with other scholars (Eraut, 1995; T. J. Fenwick, 2000, 2003) who contend that often learning occurs even though an individual cannot reflect on and then articulate what has been learned or how it has been acquired.

Three dimensions of learning. Expanding the arrows of the diagram creates a triangle (see Figure 2). Each of the three angles “depict[s] three spheres or dimensions of learning, and it is the core claim of [this framework] that all learning will always involve these three dimensions” (Illeris, 2007a, p. 25, 2009, p. 9): content, incentive, and interaction.

The content dimension “concerns what is learned” (Illeris, 2009, p. 10)—for example, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. The content dimension is important because it is here that learners “construct meaning” (p. 10) and the abilities needed to function in everyday life.

The incentive dimension “provides and directs the mental energy that is necessary for the learning process to take place” (Illeris, 2009, p. 10). Feelings, emotions, and motivation work to ensure a continuous “mental and bodily balance” (Illeris, 2007a, p. 26) in the learner. The content and incentive dimensions interact and influence each other. For example, based upon the degree of motivation or feelings, content may or may not be learned, and the content that is available may alter feelings about the learning (Illeris, 2009).
The interaction, or social, dimension includes interaction, communication, and cooperation (Illeris, 2007a, p. 27) and “provides the impulses that initiate the learning process” (Illeris, 2009, p. 11). Perception, experience, activity, or participation can all initiate learning. This serves to spur the learner to be integrated into their surrounding context, thus fulfilling a social purpose.

Illeris (2009) says the framework is constructivist (p. 12) because of the assumption that learners actively construct their knowledge. However, it is also clear that cognition is important in the content and incentive dimensions, but that it is balanced with a Vygotskian (1978) view of the significance of the sociocultural context to which the learning is connected. The next section discusses how this framework can be mapped onto conceptions of teacher learning.
Teacher Learning

Defining teacher learning. Definitions of teacher learning necessarily grow out of general understandings of the concept based on historic orientations toward learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Many descriptions of teacher learning are grounded in behaviorism and highlight presumably visible changes in the teacher’s “knowledge and beliefs (cognition) and/or teaching practices (behaviour)” (Bakkenes et al., 2010, p. 536) that occur as a result of training. These changes are believed to result from the conscious, intentional action of the teacher and would be part of the internal process of learning, according to Illeris (2007a, 2009). A few, like Hoekstra and colleagues (2007), recognize that differing degrees of consciousness may be involved in learning, and note that the learning experiences of teachers may “comprise simultaneously behavioural, cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects” (Hoekstra et al., 2007, p. 190) that should be considered when investigating teacher learning, thus, suggesting an interaction between the content and incentive dimensions of the acquisition process (Illeris, 2009).

Conceptualizing teacher learning. In the teacher development literature, there are three prominent conceptions of teacher learning: knowledge-for-practice; knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The knowledge-for-practice conception proposes that “knowing more (e.g., more subject matter, more educational theory, more pedagogy, more instructional strategies) leads more or less directly to more effective practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 255). Thus, the goal of research is to uncover and quantify required content knowledge and best practices so that professional development offerings, both teacher preparation programs and in-service workshops, can transmit them to teachers. In the last 20 years, researchers have investigated teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman,
1987) to better understand what an effective teacher knows and does that leads to student achievement. The underlying assumption is that teachers are technicians to be trained to use knowledge generated by those outside the profession (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 259). These ideas clearly focus on the content dimension of the acquisition process (Illeris, 2007a, 2009) with an understanding of learning based in behaviorism (Skinner, 1971), in which training is the stimulus and the desired behavior is the response.

The second conception, knowledge-in-practice, focuses on “what very competent teachers know as it is expressed or embedded in the artistry of practice, in teachers' reflections on practice, in teachers' practical inquiries, and/or in teachers' narrative accounts of practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 262). It is knowledge in action. Drawing upon the understanding that teachers must have formal knowledge of both subject matter and pedagogy, this conception values the knowledge that is constructed as teachers apply their knowledge in everyday classroom interaction. Knowledge is also produced when teachers consciously reflect on their experiences, an idea articulated by Schön (1983) and endorsed by many. Novice teachers learn by observing and interacting with more experienced, competent teachers. Here, teachers are artisans who insightfully apply knowledge gained from study, experience, and reflection to their everyday practice. This conception draws from cognitivism (Ausubel, 1967; Piaget, 1972) the importance of reflection and attending to mental processes, as well as social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1976) in its support of teachers learning by observing more experienced others. Its focus remains in the content dimension of the acquisition process.

Finally, knowledge-of-practice connects “both knowers and knowledge…to larger political and social agendas” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 274). No longer are teachers’ work and knowledge limited to their classrooms. The knowledge teachers construct in their
personal lives as well as the socio-cultural milieu in which they work are taken into account. Teachers are viewed “as co-constructors of knowledge and creators of curriculum…[These roles] are informed by their stance as theorizers, activists, and school leaders” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 276). Collaborating with colleagues, teachers work to understand how discourses outside their local context connect to and influence their experiences. Any ensuing learning is used to spur action aimed at “transform[ing] teaching, learning, and schooling” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 278). Teachers are activists who understand their responsibility to their students, families, community, and profession. Knowledge-of-practice stems from a constructivist theory of learning and attempts to balance the acquisition and interaction learning processes. However, its focus tips toward the external, interaction process.

Looking at these conceptions through Illeris’s (2007a) framework of adult learning recognizes that they focus on what teachers do with learning. Teachers either apply learning to their context, construct knowledge in the context and then apply it effectively, or use learning to know how to act in the larger milieu. None of these conceptions addresses how teachers come to know, how they learn. In fact, “few empirical studies have been conducted…on the way teachers actually learn” (Bakkenes et al., 2010, p. 535). Most studies focus on activities teachers participate in, which lead to learning outcomes. Questioning how teachers learn is important “because answers…may result in recommendations for the improvement of both initial teacher education and the further professional development of teachers” (Beijaard, Korthagen, & Verloop, 2007, p. 105). Adult education scholars’ lack of attention to teachers’ learning is particularly surprising because many adult education studies focus on the learning of other professionals within their workplaces (Daley, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lundin & Nuldén, 2007; Rose, 1999).
Researching Teacher Learning

As adults, teachers are a logical population for adult education researchers’ attention. However, “teacher learning has…drawn relatively little attention from researchers” (Beijaard et al., 2007, p. 105). As professionals whose work and workplace center on learning, “the scarcity of systematic research on understanding and improving the learning processes of teachers themselves is striking” (Bakkenes et al., 2010, p. 533). Often research about teachers focuses on how their prior learning and present practice are influencing student achievement (Rowan et al., 2002; Rowan, Jacob, & Correnti, 2009; R. T. Williams et al., 2014). Other studies investigate learning in formal teacher preparation programs (Endedijk & Vermunt, 2013; Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2013) or teachers’ involvement in controlled professional learning opportunities such as graduate coursework (Hill, 2007) or professional workshops (Borko, 2004; Garet et al., 2001; Hill, 2007). Barriers to teachers’ involvement in these domains are also explored (Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2006). However, few studies have focused on teachers’ unintended, less structured learning in their workplace—the classroom (Bakkenes et al., 2010; Hoekstra et al., 2007, 2009). This is a missed opportunity because “the workplace context brings new perspectives to research on learning….It encompasses a wide range of more or less structured environments, which are only rarely structured with [teacher] learning in mind” (Eraut, 2004, p. 247).

Learning continuum. In researching learning, scholars distinguish between formal and informal learning. This distinction assumes a dichotomy that can be used to categorize various learning experiences, arguing that the two types are “fundamentally different” (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcom, 2003, p. 29). Formal learning is said to “combine high-status, propositional knowledge with learning processes centred [sic] upon teaching or instruction”
Another, perhaps more useful, way of describing learning is in terms of a “relational continuum” (Sawchuk, 2008, p. 1) with formal learning on one end and informal learning on the other. Broadly speaking, informal learning is characterized as “implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured…[in] the absence of a teacher” (Eraut, 2004, p. 250). Formal learning occupies the other end of this spectrum. It “can be described simply as intentional learning which takes place in formal settings established for that purpose (e.g., classrooms, lecture halls, seminar space, etc.), usually institutionally sponsored and formally structured (lectures, courses of study, curriculum, teachers, etc.)” (Smaller, 2012, p. 79). The continuum is helpful because distinguishing instances of formal and informal learning is difficult, if not impossible (Colley et al., 2003). It also “avoids misleading claims that either formal or informal/non-formal learning is inherently superior to the other” (Colley et al., 2003, p. 65).

However, even a continuum such as this can be ineffective in describing real-life learning situations that are not easily placed along the continuum. Can activities have properties of both formal and informal learning? For example, adults easily learn the hidden, unintended curriculum of formal education settings (Apple & King, 1977). Would this be considered informal learning in a formal context? Conversely, individuals engage in intentional learning of skills with family members in their homes or communities. Is this formal learning in an informal setting? The messiness of using a dichotomy or a continuum to describe learning is obvious.

Retaining some way to describe instances of learning is important because acquisition and interaction may operate differently depending upon the formality or informality of the
learning situation. Therefore, describing aspects of in/formality in learning (Colley et al., 2003, p. 30) is one way to address this complexity.

**Aspects of in/formality in learning.** After conducting an extensive literature review, Colley and colleagues (2003) compiled a list of common attributes that writers have given to informal and formal learning. These were clustered into four aspects (i.e., process, location and setting, purposes, content) that can more accurately describe the complex nature of learning situations (pp. 30-31). Table 1 outlines the attributes of in/formality that align with each of the four aspects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Processes</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Structured by a teacher</td>
<td>Incidental to everyday activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>Educational institutions</td>
<td>Workplace, community, family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Time restrictions; Specified curriculum; predetermined learning objectives; external certification</td>
<td>Open-ended; few or no time restrictions; no specified curriculum or predetermined objectives; no certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes</td>
<td>Learning is the prime focus of an activity.</td>
<td>Learning is largely an unintended outcome of an activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Propositional knowledge of an established expert; Outcomes rigidly specified</td>
<td>Development of knowledge based upon experiences; Outcomes are unpredictable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Attributes of in/formality. Adapted from Colley et al., 2003, pp. 30-31

Learning situations or activities that have more of the formal attributes could be said to fall toward the formal end of the learning continuum while those with more informal attributes are on the informal end. However, every instance of learning is complex and will likely include “diverse attributes of formality and informality” (Colley et al., 2003, p. 29). A heuristic device such as the chart above is not intended to be definitive, but is useful for “identifying and describing the complexities of formality and informality in learning, the interrelationships between different attributes in a particular setting, and the significance of all this for the learning that takes place and for its potential improvement” (Colley et al., 2003, p. 31).
Eraut’s (2000a, 2000b, 2004) typology is useful for further defining learning situations with more informal attributes. He describes informal learning as ranging from implicit to deliberative. Implicit learning occurs without the intent of the learner and with “no awareness of learning at the time it takes place” (Eraut, 2000a, p. 115). For deliberative learning to occur, a specific learning goal is set, demonstrating full intention on the part of the learner. Further, time for “acquiring new knowledge and engagement in deliberative activities” (Eraut, 2004, p. 251) is planned. Falling in between implicit and deliberative is reactive learning. Here, learning is “explicit but takes place almost spontaneously in response to recent, current or imminent situations without any time being specifically set aside for it….The learner is aware of it but the level of intentionality will vary” (Eraut, 2000b, p. 12). In comparing Eraut’s descriptions to Table 1, it is obvious that deliberative learning has some formal attributes, such as specific learning goals and planned time for engagement. Both implicit and reactive learning express more informal attributes.

**Teacher informal learning.** Although not as numerous as studies of formal learning situations, informal teacher learning has been investigated; however, the studies below highlight that deliberative learning garners most research attention.

Lohman & Wolff (2001) describe three types of informal teacher learning: knowledge exchanging, experimenting, and environmental scanning. Each of these is a self-directed type of learning: deliberative, according to Eraut. Collaboration is, by far, the most popular type of teachers’ deliberative learning (Tarc, 2007) to be studied, possibly because it has been shown to “constitute important potential learning opportunities” (Parise & Spillane, 2010, p. 327).

Bakkenes et al. (2010) investigated three groups of teachers: a planned project study group, reciprocal peer coaching relationships, and neither planned activity. Teachers were asked
to note six learning experiences during a school year and document their learning following specific guidelines for reflection. Thus, teachers reported on deliberative learning. Any reactive or implicit learning experiences were rendered deliberative through prolonged reflection (Eraut, 2000a, p. 115).

Few studies attempt to explore teachers’ reactive and implicit learning. Hoekstra and colleagues (Hoekstra et al., 2007) are an exception. To identify the learning of four secondary teachers, they focused their interviews and classroom observations on one concern noted by each teacher. Their findings indicated that multiple types of informal learning (deliberative, reactive, implicit) were present, with some more prominent than others. All teachers demonstrated deliberative learning such as “orienting”, “practicing”, and “seeking explicit student feedback” (p. 198). They also demonstrated reactive learning by “becoming consciously aware and adjusting their course of action” such as changing the lesson plan in the middle of the lesson or by “becoming aware and reframing” their understandings of student behavior (p. 198). Although the authors labeled it reactive, this learning would fall toward the deliberative end of Eraut’s continuum due to the reflection that occurred with researchers after the incident.

Researchers recognized only two implicit learning activities during data analysis, and each was present with only one teacher. The teachers did not articulate these, indicating they were indeed, examples of implicit learning. Both instances involved the teachers’ feelings or beliefs. Unfortunately, even though the role of these less conscious aspects is “increasingly addressed in research on teaching, there are no theories available that adequately account for [their] role…in teachers’ learning from teaching” (Hoekstra et al., 2007, p. 203). Illeris’s (2007a) incentive dimension, which includes feelings, emotions, and motivations, may provide a way to address this gap.
Contributions to the Literature

Current research about teacher learning does not explore the entire metaphorical iceberg of learning (Coffield, 2000; Livingstone, 1999). The visible portion of formal learning taking place in teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops has been explored at length. However, the larger submerged portion of informal learning is often ignored (Livingstone, 1999), even though teachers have named classroom experiences “as their most important site for learning” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 174). When informal learning is addressed, only particular types, such as deliberative learning, are foregrounded. Teacher learning, like the learning of all adults, is not bounded by formal programs or measured attempts at learning. It can occur across all of a teacher’s experiences, whether inside or outside the classroom. Although adult education scholars have studied informal learning in the workplace (Daley, 1999; Lundin & Nuldén, 2007), these concepts are rarely applied to teachers. A lack of rigorous investigation of the how and what of teacher learning across all of these experiences leaves much unknown. For example, such understandings may demonstrate that it is “worthwhile to incorporate more [on-the-job learning opportunities] into teachers’ work lives” (Parise & Spillane, 2010, p. 340) rather than more of the decontextualized formal learning programs that already dominate research and practice.

Additionally, other studies claim that environments that organize informal learning, such as peer-coaching, result in “qualitatively better” learning than that occurring naturally in practice (Bakkenes et al., 2010). This is a bold assertion that needs to be rigorously tested in a variety of settings to determine its trustworthiness. Otherwise, it, and similar claims, are likely to continue to dominate the literature, relegating organically occurring, informal learning to second-rate status.
Therefore, this study addressed these gaps by using an adult education lens to explore teachers’ informal learning. Specifically, the inquiry questioned how teachers understood and responded to the TLOs of the CCSS-ELA, as well as how the entrance of the CCSS into the teachers’ contexts did or did not change their understandings of literacy, ELs, or their identities as teachers of both. Mapping the data from the teachers’ narratives onto Illeris’s framework and exploring the content (what), incentive (why), and interaction (how) dimensions contributes to our understanding of the complex process of teachers’ informal workplace learning.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Reflecting on my past experiences with literacy pedagogy led me to wonder how I learned the things I now know and believe about literacy. How did I first come to understand I should teach the way administrators or curricula told me, even though I had been exposed to various methods? Later, how did I learn I had my own opinions, and that I could decide what did or did not work for my students? How did my understanding of literacy pedagogy change from expecting someone to tell me what to do to the development of such strong beliefs? In what ways have my understandings of literacy and how it should be taught been influenced by the contexts of my undergraduate preparation program, the private or public school setting, the colleagues and administrators I taught with, the community environment, or the historical change that naturally occurs over 14 years? These questions and the current educational reform effort, including the development of the CCSS, caused me to consider how my understandings of literacy pedagogy would be influenced if I were still a practicing elementary teacher. Would my pedagogical beliefs be strengthened or challenged in the current educational context?

This study was grounded in a qualitative approach to research. Therefore, I did not have a priori hypotheses to test, and I did not attempt to bracket myself out of the project (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Instead, I was mindful of my past experiences as an elementary teacher of ELs and considered how those influenced the way I conducted the study, analyzed the data, and reported findings.

At its core, the study asked a phenomenological (Creswell, 2013) question: What is it like to be a literacy teacher of elementary ELs under the authoritative power of the CCSS-ELA? I realized that part of the impetus for doing this research was to give me an opportunity to consider
how I would react if I were in my participants’ shoes. How would I feel and what choices might I make if I were in the classroom today? This study did not answer these hypothetical questions, but it provided an opportunity to hear the voices of those who were currently living this reality. Through the use of narrative inquiry, I attempted to “honor [my participants’] stories as data that could stand on their own as pure description of experience…[and analyze them] for connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human experience” (Patton, 2002, pp. 115–116). I used critical discourse analysis to “take apart, question, and investigate the ideological foundations” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 161) of the dominant discourses in the CCSS. Then, thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) was used to understand the participants’ informal learning experiences as described in their narratives. By combining the two methods of analysis, I sought to understand how the CCSS discourses might have influenced my participants and their work.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe what the narratives of teachers of elementary English Learners revealed about how they were experiencing and responding to the interaction of the Common Core State Standards – English Language Arts (CCSS-ELA) and their literacy pedagogy. Specifically, I wanted to understand what their narratives revealed about their informal learning in relation to the intended teacher learning outcomes of the CCSS-ELA and how they were affected personally and professionally.

**Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the explicit or implied teacher learning outcomes in the CCSS-ELA and related documents?
2. What do the narratives of elementary teachers of ELs reveal about what it is like to teach literacy in a CCSS-governed classroom?
   
   a. What pedagogical choices do teachers make about literacy instruction (especially for ELs), and what informs these choices?
   
   b. How are those choices related to their understandings of literacy, of ELs, or of themselves as teachers of both?

3. How are teachers understanding and responding to the intended teacher learning outcomes of the CCSS-ELA?
   
   a. If teachers are not taking up the intended learning outcomes, what barriers prevent their learning?

**Design**

The study’s purpose required a research design combining NI and CDA. Neither was adequate to answer the research questions independently. One critique of narrative inquiry is that it has often “glorify[ied] given practices [while] being insufficiently critical” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 377). Although scholars such as Clandinin et al. (2006) thoroughly describe the narratives of their participants and the sociocultural context, they stop short of analyzing them in connection with “issues of power and/or institutional discourses…[and thus produce] an incomplete analysis” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163).

Conversely, CDA analyses are often missing “contextual detail[s]” (Lewis, 2006, p. 375) and are “thus vulnerable to extensive counter-interpretation” (Collins, 2001, p. 145). For example, although Woodside-Jiron’s (2011) analysis is rigorous, it remained largely on the level of the sociocultural context. Little to no connection was made to the local situation where the policy was being implemented; teachers were not interviewed to understand how they were
interpreting these policy changes. Thus, interpretations were made without talking with people on the frontlines of implementation, leaving the reader to wonder whether the described discourses were truly powerful or not because “a discourse is only powerful when it is recycled in stories everyday people tell” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163).

Therefore, I built upon these studies and mitigated these weaknesses by utilizing both NI and CDA. Together, they produced a thorough analysis that led to implications for policy, practice, and further research. NI allowed me to think narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and gather stories of personal, localized experience. With CDA, I was able to “take apart, question, and investigate the ideological foundations of discourses [that have] normalized over time” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 161). The combination of the two allowed me to make explicit the ideology and “power of institutional discourses through the analysis of [my participants’] narratives” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163) and to see how they were experiencing and responding to these discourses in their everyday lives.

As the participants lived their lives at school, their narratives bumped into others’ stories of who they should be and how they should teach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). Thus, this study and its findings are important for teachers and those who care about teaching to develop a “critical meta-awareness of how institutional discourses [and stories] are recycled” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163; see also Freire, 1970) in narratives of everyday experience (Papola-Ellis, 2014). This awareness can help individuals to question and challenge dominant discourses rather than “uncritically embracing and being colonized” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 177) by them. Being able to critically read the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) opens up possibilities “to hope, to dream” (Rogers, 2011b, p. 5), and to write new stories of one’s life experiences.
Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry’s (NI) focus on “life experiences as narrated by those who live them” (Chase, 2011, p. 421) distinguishes it from other qualitative research approaches. It is based on an epistemology that humans lead storied lives and that it is through telling stories that we come to understand our experiences and identities, the actions of others, and the world around us (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477; Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1988). In this study, I wanted to understand my participants’ experiences of teaching literacy and how they are interpreting the influence of the CCSS-ELA on their practice, thus, listening to their narratives “offered [an] especially translucent window into [their] cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 116) of these experiences.

Researchers understand narrative, or story, to be “any spoken or written presentation” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). It is a mode of knowing (Bruner, 1986), a “distinct form of discourse” (Chase, 2011, p. 421; Polkinghorne, 1988) that functions to make human experience meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). Although different from the other primary mode of knowing that constructs reality through the development of a logical argument (Bruner, 1986), narrative, too, attempts to order experience by making connections and “seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase, 2011, p. 421). People are naturally inclined to frame past events and personal experiences within the larger structure of a narrative. Doing so provides “a context for interpreting the meaning” (Schram, 2006, p. 105) of the isolated events and experiences. In fact, “the meaning of each event is produced by [discovering or constructing] the part it plays in the whole episode” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 6). Thus, making the connection between a single experience or event and the whole helps us understand both more deeply (Polkinghorne, 1988).
Throughout the study, I worked to understand the stories of separate events my participants narrated, while focusing on the connections, or meanings, those events had for them (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Determining whether events happened as described was not the goal (Polkinghorne, 2007). It was the meanings tied to them that were important. Therefore, NI was a way for me to understand both my own experiences and those of others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with the goal of uncovering “the subjective experience[s] of participants as they interpret the events and conditions of their everyday lives” (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578).

The emergence of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is relatively new to the social sciences, but “has intellectual roots in the humanities and other fields under the broad heading of narratology” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). The collecting of life histories and documents to examine the experiences of various groups for scholarly purposes can be traced back to the early 20th century (Riessman, 2008). However, the focus on narratives soon declined with the rise of the positivist paradigm and concomitant desire for objective truth, which are not compatible with narrative research (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In the last 40 years, a narrative resurgence has begun due to a turning away from positivist perspectives in social science research, the popular culture’s interest in memoirs and biographies, and the identity movements that began in the 1960s and continue today (Riessman, 2008, pp. 14–16). Narrative ways of knowing continue to “reemerge as a legitimate field of study, means of communication, and orientation toward truth” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 25).

Although the study of narratives is cross-disciplinary (Riessman, 2008), Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explicitly introduced NI to educational research. In the preceding two decades, other scholars had supported educational researchers’ use of “autobiographical, narrative, literary, and arts-based forms of inquiry” (Barone, 2001, p. 734), but it was Connelly and
Clandinin who brought narrative and inquiry together in the educational context. They established the importance of recognizing that “teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) and that inquiry into the storied landscape of schooling (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) could illuminate “educational experiences as lived” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). Therefore, NI was an appropriate methodology for this study.

**The centrality of the story.** Narrative researchers from any discipline “embrace the assumption that the story is…the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4); however, approaches to narrative inquiry vary. Studies grounded in psychology begin and end their inquiry in everyday life with a goal of improving an individual’s life experiences or stimulating personal growth (Chase, 2011, pp. 421–422). Anthropological perspectives foreground the researcher’s own story and how it interacts with either the participants’ stories or the stories of the culture milieu. Sociological studies are interested in “how narrators make sense of personal experience in relation to cultural discourses…[and] the relationship between people's narrative practices and their local environments” (Chase, 2011, p. 422). This perspective claims that narratives elucidate the nature of hegemonic discourses and the ways narrators respond to them. Powerful discourses constrain, but do not determine, stories (Chase, 2011, p. 422); thus, storytelling can be a form of social action.

I used a sociological approach in my study because I wanted to understand how my participants’ experiences were interacting with the CCSS’s literacy discourses. The need to hear the voices of teachers and to understand their lived experiences continues to grow in the current accountability era (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Federal and state officials who are far removed from
the local context are making decisions about the tenure and condition of teachers’ jobs as well as the intricacies of their classroom practice. NI allows for the study of “people’s lives as lived, people whose life experience ha[s] been lost in the search for central tendencies” (Josselson, 2007) or objective measures of accountability.

**Three commonplaces of narrative inquiry.** Narrative inquiries are distinguished by their “simultaneous exploration” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479) of three components or commonplaces that are important to any narrative (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007) – temporality, sociality, and place. These are referred to collectively as a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

**Temporality.** Narratives, like human experiences, are “controlled by the concept of time” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 20), thus, temporality is a crucial feature of NI (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), unlike other research paradigms that view time as static and unimportant to the inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Regardless of how they are told, narratives typically advance chronologically from beginning to end and are assumed to have occurred at a particular time in history. However, the temporal boundaries of a narrative are difficult to define since there were events that led to the one being described and others that will follow from it. Thus, “each [narrated] event has a past, present as it appears to us, and implied future” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 45; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Because of narratives’ temporal nature, only my participants were able to tell their stories. Although my participants and I share some similar experiences, I have not lived their lives; therefore, I cannot tell their stories. In the following chapters, I was careful to include their exact words as much as possible so that they are the ones describing their experiences.

With the movement of time, comes change. The narrated event and the episode of
storytelling about the event are both located in the past as soon as the narrator utters their tale. Time does not stop and thus the stories, characters, and settings all continue to change in the flow of life. As time passes, the meanings given to experiences also change because of the shifting of the larger historical narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Schram, 2006, p. 105). As a result, I was only able to write about how things have been and how they might be in the future, but not about how they presently are (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 6).

Sociality. In seeking to understand human experiences as they occur in the fluid movement of everyday life (Dewey, 1938), narrative researchers must attend to both personal and societal conditions (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Personal conditions, which include “the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) of the researcher and the participants, must be considered. However, the “social conditions…[including] the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the individual’s context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) cannot be ignored. Such conditions are often made visible through the “social, cultural, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 29) that co-occur with the individual’s narrated experiences. The focus on both personal and social conditions distinguishes NI from other personal types of research that focus primarily on personal feelings.

In educational settings, Clandinin & Connelly (1996) refer to the social and physical context as a landscape. It is on this landscape that the narratives of students and teachers “bump up” against the narratives of others, of the school, and of the cultural context (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 35). This bumping creates tensions and the development of “competing and conflicting stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Narrative researchers cannot understand the nuances of a participant’s stories without also investigating how they interact with the narratives of the wider
Another dimension within this commonplace is the relationship between the researcher and the participants on the narrative landscape (Clandinin et al., 2006). People are central to narrative thinking. While grand cultural narratives often create universal categories of people, narrative inquiry seeks to understand the experiences of people who are in relation with others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Narrative inquiries are by necessity collaborative because both the researcher and the participants are “not static but dynamic” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 14), and the relationship allows “both…[to] learn and change in the encounter” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9). Collaboration occurs as the researcher considers how their own stories of experience interact with participants’ stories and those of the narrative landscape (Chase, 2011). Attention to this relationship is necessary if the researcher is to give time for the participants to tell their stories and to hear the participants’ voices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

**Place.** The third commonplace is the physical environment of both the inquiry and the narrated events. The “specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) are crucial to narrative inquiry because of their influence on the stories told. This idea contrasts with other research paradigms that attempt to bound their studies in an effort to remove the influence of the surroundings (e.g., positivist/positivism). Instead, narrative researchers actively explore the physical environment to better understand their participants’ stories (Riessman, 2008).

Scholars of the concept of ‘place’ would argue with Connelly and Clandinin’s (2006) use of the term in this way. They contend that place “incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. [It] is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality
to be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who have given it meaning” (Tuan, 1979, p. 387). Space is abstract and “becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). Although this understanding of place could be explored in a narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) are clearly referring to the physical environment in their description of the three-dimensional inquiry space. Therefore, perhaps a more accurate label for the concrete, physical environment of a study would be ‘space’.

**Purpose of narrative inquiry.** The purpose of narrative inquiry is not to develop generalizable theories or prescriptions for behavior. Instead, the focus is on particular people, in particular settings, with particular experiences in an effort to deepen understanding about the phenomenon in question (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). NI “tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set with their personal, social, and historical context” (Creswell, 2013, p. 75). Rather than constructing singular responses to complex issues, I attempted to create a stimulating text that “open[s] up possibilities for new questions and ways of thinking” (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 585; see also Barone, 2007) and gives “readers a place to imagine their own…applications” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Thus, the possibility exists for readers’ assumptions to be challenged (Delgado, 1989) and the dominant, “taken-for-granted social, cultural, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 600) to be contested.

Clandinin, et al.’s (2006) work at Ravine Elementary School exemplifies how inquiry into people’s narratives can deepen understanding about a social concern (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 24) and lead to possibilities for change. They explored how institution-wide narratives (e.g., attendance policies, standardized report cards, and lunch procedures) shaped the school landscape and the narratives of the students and teachers who inhabited it. Illuminating the
connections between these sociocultural narratives and individuals’ experiences can lead to the creation of counterstories that suggest new ways of living in schools’ structures (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 601; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). It can also provide opportunities to challenge dominant narratives and mindsets that limit or marginalize others’ stories to live by (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; Delgado, 1989). Wider spaces within social structures allow individuals to live their unique narratives rather than be conformed to a dominant narrative. In this study, I built upon Clandinin et al.’s work and explored how the CCSS narratives shaped the participants’ narratives about literacy, pedagogy, and ELs and how the teachers were responding.

**Thinking narratively.** Clandinin and Connelly’s (1996; 2006) description of a narrative landscape was particularly important in helping me think narratively about this project. Other research approaches, such as ethnography and phenomenology, often collect narratives as one type of data. These are typically analyzed thematically for what they can reveal about the research questions (Riessman, 2008). Although I collected and analyzed the participants’ narratives and the narratives embedded in the CCSS and related documents, I attempted to differentiate my study from these other approaches by thinking narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I imagined the participants’ narratives as being constructed on their particular school landscape. There, the narratives bumped up against others, creating tensions that resulted in the teachers deconstructing their current stories or creating new ones. The narratives connected to the CCSS-ELA had been introduced to this landscape and continued to have particular effects as they came in contact with the stories already on the landscape of this particular school and in the participants’ particular classrooms. As I talked with participants, visited their classrooms, and analyzed the data, I returned to this mental picture of a landscape
with multiple narratives and attempted to describe how they interacted as well as the results of the interaction.

**Use and construction of narratives in this study.** All of the narratives in this study are necessarily subjective for at least two reasons. First, they were related to me as bits of the teachers’ memories. Memories change due to the time and distance from the actual events, and they are mediated by the teachers’ life experiences (Riessman, 2008, p. 193). If I had interviewed the teachers prior to CCSS development, they may have described their experiences differently. That memories are distorted by time, distance, and subsequent life experiences does not render them invalid (Polkinghorne, 2007). They are important portrayals of how the teachers view themselves and their pedagogy. The teachers’ recall, the words they could find to express their memories and emotions, and the lengths to which they were willing to go to share them with a relative stranger (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 480) limited the narratives.

Second, the narratives portrayed here have also been interpreted through my understandings of what the teachers said and through my experiences as a teacher and scholar. The construction and organization of the narratives presented here are my own, but they are grounded in the explicit and implicit narrative bits the teachers told me. The voices of the teachers are vital to their narratives (Chase, 2011); thus, I have attempted to use their own words as much as possible.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) describes a range of approaches for studying language in use (Gee, 2014). The approaches share “the assumption that because language is a social practice and because not all social practices are created and treated equally, all analyses of language are inherently critical” (Rogers, 2011, p. 2; see also Gee, 1999/2014). Although the
various approaches have similar aims and perspectives, a single theoretical framework or methodology for conducting CDA does not exist (Gee, 2014; Rogers, 2011a). CDA work is grounded in social theory and systemic functional linguistics and, in general, analyzes texts, discourse practices, and social practices (Collins, 2011, p. x) that are found in written, spoken or other semiotic modes. The primary purpose of CDA is to “to see how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in the everyday, quotidian aspects of texts in use” (Luke, 1995, p. 11). The critical discourse analyst’s goal is to address or perhaps “intervene in institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world” (Gee, 2014, p. 9).

**Discourses and texts.** Much CDA in educational studies stems from Gee’s (1990) distinction between big “D” and little “d” discourse. Big “D” Discourses are “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (Gee, 1990, p. 142) and serve as identity kits. Fairclough (1989) further highlights that Discourses not only include descriptions of how things are in the world, but also how people act on and shape the world around them. Little “d” discourses refer to “connected stretches of language that make sense” (Gee, 1990, p. 142) and the grammar of written and spoken language (i.e., texts).

Texts can be defined as “any instance of written or spoken language that [has] coherence and coded meanings” (Luke, 1995, p. 13). They serve as a mode of “symbolic exchange” (Luke, 1995, p. 13) between humans and their physical and social environment because they are “designed in one context with a view to its uptake in others” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 45). Texts are the “product of the process of text production” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24), the concrete extension of a larger process of social interaction that Fairclough (1989) labels discourse. Texts have meaning because of this interaction and because they are socially,
culturally, and historically situated.

**Theory and method.** CDA is both theory and method (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 16; Gee, 2014, p. 11; Lewis, 2006), and although the two are often separated for clarity, in reality, they are interwoven because particular methods of analysis grow out of specific theories about language and social conditions and the relationship between them (Gee, 2014). Some theoretical ideas are foundational to multiple methods of CDA. These include the idea that language use is an ideologically based (Gee, 2011; Rogers, 2002) social practice (Fairclough, 1989).

**Language use is ideological.** “Critical discourse studies focus on how language as a cultural tool mediates relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge” (Rogers, 2002, p. 249). This mediation occurs through the creation and interpretation of texts, which are neither arbitrary nor independent. Texts are a part of other texts and constructed from the accepted ideologies and discourses of the social institutions from which they come (Gee, 2011, pp. 28–29). “People construct meaning on the basis of their prior experiences with language and texts, their available stock of discourse resources” (Luke, 1995, p. 15). In this way, texts have “ideological effects” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 102), which serve to further establish and maintain “relations of power, domination, and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2011, p. 123) over people’s social practices and identities and to support “institutional purposes and projects” (Luke, 1995, p. 15). Over time, dominant discourses become naturalized and seem to lose their “connection with particular ideologies and interests and [thus] become the common-sense practice” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 107) of an institution or cultural group.

**Language use is a social practice.** The relationship between humans and the language in texts is discursive. People use texts to make sense of their world, to understand who they are in
it, and to perform actions in the world (Gee, 2011, p. 29). These actions are typically part of a series that “allow us to build (or destroy) things in the world….or to sustain [them] over time” (Gee, 2011, p. 29).

Similarly, texts “construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas, and versions of the world” (Luke, 1995, p. 13) through the social practices of which they are a part (Fairclough, 2011, p. 120). In other words, texts, and the larger Discourses, shape people (T. J. Fenwick, 2003, p. 32) by telling them what is possible (Fairclough, 2011, p. 120). Through the texts of their everyday lives, humans learn to “be” because of the “cultural categories [that are made available to them]…as ‘normal’” (Luke, 1995, p. 14). The causal effects of texts are not guaranteed or regular in any way “because many other factors in the context determine whether particular texts as parts of particular events actually have such effects” (Fairclough, 2011, pp. 122–123). One such factor is how people choose to enact their agency. Any analysis of language as social practice must consider both the language structure and its interaction with the social context (Fairclough, 2011, p. 122).

**Critical and constructive.** CDA attends to the centrality of power in discourse and text in use. It works to make explicit the presence of power and ideology and to analyze how they work in discourses and texts (Lewis, 2006, p. 374). These ideological effects – “the effects of texts in inculcating and sustaining ideologies” (Fairclough, 2011, p. 123) – have been a major focus of CDA. Because texts are the productions of Discourses, they are laden with ideological effects that position people (Luke, 1995). These positions outline the “cultural categories and versions of children, students, [and] adults” (Luke, 1995, p. 14) that are available for individuals to take up. The available categories and positions are not random, but are “tied closely” to the foundational ideologies of the social institutions of the context (Luke, 1995) and are thought to
be “a means for the naturalization and disguise of power relations” (Luke, 1995, p. 12) and social inequalities. CDA helps to “deconstruct the ways that language can be used against people for oppressive purposes…[and to] reproduce dominant structures of power” (Lewis, 2006, p. 376). This type of analysis can challenge and disrupt authoritative discourses (Luke, 1995).

Although critique is obviously a key piece of any use of CDA, “it is not the end goal. The end goal is to hope, to dream, to create alternative realities that are based in equity [and] love” (Rogers, 2011b, p. 5). Therefore, CDA can also analyze the constructive aspects of language use.

Recently, scholars have begun to consider the constructive possibilities of CDA to raise individuals’ “critical meta-awareness” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 164) about the influence of dominant discourses on social practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). This awareness can “generate agency among [individuals]…by giving them tools to see…how texts position them…and generate” (Luke, 1995, p. 12) the power at work in their everyday experiences (Papola-Ellis, 2014). As “people look differently at routine problems and practices” (Rogers, 2011a, p. 15), they can begin to imagine a different, more equitable narrative that can be written. Teachers who develop such critical meta-awareness and begin to resist dominant ideologies and positionings (Davies & Harre, 1982) are said to be “teaching against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 284).

**The need for critical discourse analysis in this study.** The CCSS are an authoritative text that had been introduced into the K-12 classroom from outside the local context. As such, it embodied the ideologies of its creators and the larger Discourses of which it was a part (Fairclough, 1989). Therefore, it was important to investigate how the power of the CCSS was affecting its intended audience (Gee, 2014). Fairclough’s (1989) method of CDA was best suited for my research questions because it focused on the “mediation between the textual and social
world” (Rogers, 2011b, p. 12). Analyzing how texts, discourse practices, and social practices interacted helped me understand how the CCSS was influencing the teachers’ experiences and how they were resisting this influence. Additionally, Fairclough (2011) recognized the importance of learning, which he addressed as the causal effects of texts. The interdiscursivity of “texts…can lead to dynamic rearticulations [or reconstructions] of otherwise stable discourses” (Lewis & Ketter, 2011, p. 129) that may be thought of as learning. I wanted to understand how the teacher learning outcomes of CCSS-ELA documents were interacting with the participants’ prior understandings of literacy, thus leading to the construction of new ideas about literacy and literacy pedagogy. Changes in the teachers’ understanding of literacy, literacy pedagogy, or ELs were categorized as learning in this study.

Several studies have explored the influence of Discourses on teachers and teaching. Woodside-Jiron (2011) provide a relevant example. She analyzed the influence of authoritative policies, similar to the CCSS, on the practice of literacy teaching in California. Through the use of CDA methods aligned with Fairclough (1989), she was able to demonstrate how changes in the language of multiple policy documents moved claims about effective practice from the realm of suggestion to “established objective fact” and “common sense”. Once accepted, these “facts” altered expected literacy practices and instructional methods. This type of analysis is important because it can demonstrate how power is exercised by “ensure[ing] particular interpretations of text” (Woodside-Jiron, 2011, p. 169) and controlling which social practices are (or are not) permitted and valued. Similarly, I used CDA to analyze the language of the RPC to show how it, too, has “attained the status of common sense and become [potentially] difficult to…push against” (Woodside-Jiron, 2011, p. 176).
Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is “any agent that is competent to produce, manifest, or elicit the phenomenon under study” (I. Baptiste, personal communication [Lecture notes], May 20, 2013). The RPC was the CCSS-related document that most concisely described the teacher learning outcomes, thus it was the unit of analysis for the first research question. The teachers were the unit of analysis for questions 2 and 3 because theirs were the narratives that could help me understand how they were experiencing and responding to the CCSS-ELA.

Site Selection and Description

Selection criteria. Selecting a research site for this study was more about finding possibilities than selecting among them. The research questions indicated that the participants needed to be elementary teachers of ELs in a CCSS-governed classroom. Therefore, the research needed to take place in an elementary school that served ELs in a state that had adopted the CCSS. Because relationship between researcher and participants is a key piece of any narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006), I first attempted to draw upon past and present relationships to find such a site. The majority of my education-related contacts are in Missouri, Texas, Nebraska, Illinois, and Oregon. Texas and Nebraska did not adopt the CCSS and, as of 2014, the Missouri legislature had repealed it, so the contacts in those states did not lead to viable research sites. I reached out to former colleagues in Illinois and Oregon. Although they were interested in the study, principals responded that their teachers were too busy adjusting to the CCSS and the upcoming assessments.

At the time of the study I lived in Pennsylvania, which adopted the CCSS in 2010, so I began investigating potential research sites there. I contacted several colleagues and was referred to friends of those colleagues who had connections with school districts that met my purposeful
sampling criteria, including their ability to provide “information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Therefore, even though I was searching widely for contacts, I kept the parameters of the study in mind and had to eliminate school districts that did not have the demographics needed to provide information-rich cases (i.e., a high percentage of ELs).

**Site selection.** Many of my initial efforts led to responses ranging from silence to serious interest. Primarily through email, I followed up with every contact at a viable research site. One of these contacts suggested the Clarksburg School District (CSD, a pseudonym), a mid-sized urban district in Pennsylvania. The contact introduced me via email to a district administrator who agreed that the study held value for their schools and submitted my research request to the school board. The request was approved the following week, and I was given permission to contact the district’s elementary school principals.

Online searches of the CSD website and other publicly available information helped me determine that the district met the selection criteria. Almost half of its student population identified as Hispanic (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2015b) Several of the elementary schools had more than one English as a Second Language (ESL) Specialist, indicating large numbers of identified ELs. Even though generalizability was not the study’s intent, I wanted as much transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) as possible; therefore, the district, the participants, and their EL students needed to be “typical cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). For example, I did not consider another school district that primarily serves ELs who are connected to a university. Children of international professors or graduate students generally have different learning situations, needs, and socio-demographic characteristics than those of recent or second-generation immigrants, such as higher levels of poverty and limited financial or social resources (Passel, 2011). The CSD met the study’s criteria for potential transferability because most of its
ELs speak Spanish as a first language and about two-thirds were from economically disadvantaged families (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2015a).

**Site description.** From the available information, I discovered that North Clarksburg Elementary (NCE) held the most promise for finding participants meeting the selection criteria. During the year of the study, NCE was an urban school with over 800 students enrolled (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2015b), almost one-quarter of which were identified EL. More than 80% of the school’s students were reported as living in economically disadvantaged families according to federal guidelines (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2015a). There were more than 10 literacy teachers in Grades 3-5, increasing the likelihood of finding at least three willing to participate in the study. None of the staff or faculty at NCE were bilingual, except for one translator who divided her time between two district schools.

NCE was located on the north side of town. The three-story stucco and concrete block building was freshly painted and appeared to have been built within the last 30 years. It was bordered by housing, commercial buildings, a cemetery, and a community baseball field. The neighborhood closest to the school was tightly packed with homes. The streets were narrow with parking allowed on both sides. Many of the homes were multi-story duplexes built in the early-to mid-20th century and in various states of repair. Most had small front yards, some more neatly manicured than others. The immigrant history of the neighborhood, dating back to the early 20th century, was seen in the street, church, and community building names. The streets were relatively quiet during the school day, but came to life as the school day ended. Several days I saw family members, some with younger siblings or dogs, waiting outside the school building to walk their children home. Other students were picked up in cars, and many left the school walking with siblings or other students.
Participant Selection and Description

**Sampling strategy.** Principles of typical case sampling (Patton, 2002) also guided my selection of the research participants. Typical cases are those that are “not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 2002, p. 236) and are chosen to describe a setting with which others may not be familiar. Even though the number of ELs continues to grow in the United States, policymakers and even many school officials and teachers may not understand what it is like to work to meet ELs’ academic and linguistic needs. Through typical case sampling, I wanted to show that the participants’ experiences described in this study were illustrative of the typical teacher of ELs, not an exception. Thus, their experiences may “ring true” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8) for many teachers in the US and should be taken seriously.

“Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples…selected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon *in depth*” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers. A phenomenological approach could have been used and data collected from a larger number of participants to understand the essence of the phenomena across cases (Creswell, 2013). However, because much research about schooling in the US does not include the voices and perspectives of those most closely involved (i.e., students, teachers, secretaries, cafeteria workers; Seidman, 2006, p. 10), I chose to focus on the narratives of teachers to better hear, understand, and describe in detail the experiences of particular teachers in particular contexts. Therefore, I selected participants, “nested in their context” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) that were information-rich and “whose study [would] illuminate the questions” (Patton, 2002, p. 46) I wished to investigate.
I chose to interview three classroom teachers because “narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories…of a small number of individuals” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 73–74). This number was somewhat arbitrary, as I could have selected other “small numbers” appropriate to qualitative research, but the sample size was selected due to my study’s similarity to two others. Ferri and colleagues (2005), who also used similar research and data analysis approaches to study the presence of sociocultural discourses in teachers with learning disabilities, had four participants. Papola-Ellis’s (2014) study used ethnographic methods, but the focus on how the CCSS influenced teachers’ literacy pedagogy, aligned well with my study. She described data from only three teacher-participants.

**Selection criteria.** To collect narratives that would address the research questions, eligible participants had to meet the selection criteria. The criteria included current teaching position, classroom demographics, and years of teaching experience. Participants needed to be mainstream elementary literacy teachers with ELs in their classrooms, not ESL specialists. It was important for the classes to be predominately EL so that the students’ differing academic and linguistic needs would be more salient to the teacher, making the need for targeted pedagogical decisions more obvious. The participants needed to have more than four years of teaching experience to allow them to describe and compare their current literacy pedagogy to the ways they taught before the CCSS-ELA were implemented. Additionally, more experienced teachers are less likely to be focused on classroom management problems and routines and can typically spend more time contemplating, changing, and adjusting their practice; therefore, they potentially would have more insights into the topic of the study than novice teachers.

**Participant recruitment.** A school’s administrator serves as its primary gatekeeper (Creswell, 2013, p. 94), so it was important for me to seek their permission before recruiting
teachers. Therefore, I emailed the principal and assistant principal of NCE. The assistant principal expressed interest and asked to meet in person to learn more about the study. At our meeting the following week, we discussed the district and NCE – its teachers, students, successes, and challenges. He had spent over a decade with the district, but this was his first year as NCE assistant principal. At the conclusion of our meeting, I asked if I could contact teachers through email to let them know about the study and to solicit their participation. For reasons he did not disclose, he thought it would be better for him to make the initial contact with teachers. This was not my preference since I did not want teachers to feel pressured to participate, which could have happened when their supervisor offered the opportunity. However, I did not feel it was appropriate to skirt his expressed desires. The next day, I sent a follow-up email thanking him for his time and providing a detailed outline of the study and the criteria for participation. He announced the research opportunity in a faculty meeting early the next week, and four teachers volunteered to participate. I sent the volunteers an email describing the study and asking a few questions to confirm their eligibility to participate. I believed this was necessary since I did not know exactly what the administrator had shared with the teachers. All four responded to my inquiry, but one did not currently teach literacy classes and thus did not meet the selection criteria.

**Participant descriptions and context.** As soon as I met the three participants, I knew I was going to enjoy talking with them. They were friendly, welcoming, and willing to share their thoughts and opinions. I could imagine myself teaching alongside them. The participants were all monolingual English-speaking White women, ranging in age from 35-45. Each had a long tenure at NCE and several years of experience before joining this faculty. Table 2 summarizes some of the participants’ characteristics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Nichole</th>
<th>Mia</th>
<th>Lea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades previously taught</td>
<td>Fifth, Sixth</td>
<td>Fourth, Fifth, Sixth</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
</tr>
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<td>Self-contained (all subjects); reading and language arts; keyboarding skills</td>
<td>Self-contained (all subjects)</td>
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<td>Years at NCE</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current grade level</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current subject area</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degrees</td>
<td>B.S. Speech Pathology</td>
<td>B.A. Elementary Education M.A. in Reading</td>
<td>B.A. Elementary Education M.S. Classroom Technology 60 credits post-M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Certification</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Participant characteristics

During our first interview, I invited the teachers to choose a pseudonym. Nichole, Mia, and Lea were all upper-elementary classroom teachers. Since the study was focused on literacy teaching, this was an important factor because by the upper elementary grades, students are expected to read to learn and the comprehension of texts is considered key for success in all school subjects (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Additionally, most of my teaching experience has been in the upper grades, so I was better able to understand the teachers’ experiences and found more ways to develop relationships with them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

All NCE teachers in the upper elementary grades teach particular subjects. None are self-contained and required to teach all subject areas. Thus, each of the participants taught only English Language Arts (ELA) classes, which they described as including reading, writing, spelling, and grammar. Grade levels grouped their students into morning and afternoon classes according to academic proficiency levels. The morning class was considered homeroom and for
Nichole, Mia, and Lea, it included those with the lowest academic levels. The students stayed with their homeroom teacher and classmates for four 40-minute periods. Depending upon the day of the week, at least one period was a specials class (e.g., music, art, physical education), and the second period was referred to as Intervention. For this 40-minute period, students remained with grade-level classmates, but were further divided by proficiency level. During this time, the identified ELs received targeted instruction from the English as a Second Language teacher. Lea taught a Read 180\(^2\) Intervention group of 30 students, while Nichole taught lower level readers, and Mia focused on a more advanced group of readers. After second period, students returned to their homeroom teachers’ class and continued their ELA lessons. After lunch, each of the participants taught a more advanced class of students for periods five through eight, while their morning students attended math, science, and social studies classes with other teachers.

More than 90% of the students in the teachers’ homeroom classes spoke Spanish as their first language. Even though a much smaller percentage were officially identified as ELs and received instruction from the ESL teacher, the participants were quick to describe most of their students as second language learners. They believed the students primarily spoke Spanish outside of school and acknowledged that they often used Spanish with their peers during school, although all instruction was in English.

**Data Collection**

Throughout the inquiry, I was cognizant of the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). This was primarily realized in the types of data I collected. Data formats included field notes, interviews, researcher journal, and documents.

\(^2\) Read 180 (www.scholastic.com) is a reading program designed to assist low-level readers in reaching proficiency. Direct instruction is supplemented with a computer program, workbooks, independent reading and audio books.
Field notes (observations). Even though I did not conduct structured observations of the teachers’ classroom practices, I addressed the commonplaces of sociality and place/space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) by taking field notes related to the social and physical environment of the classrooms and the school as a whole.

To develop relationships and “feelings of connectedness” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) with my participants, I scheduled visits with each teacher the week before interviews were to begin. I asked the teachers to show me around their classrooms, describing the layout or items in the room that were most significant to them in relation to their literacy pedagogy. I took notes during the tours, as well as a few photographs, with the teachers’ permission, and wrote more detailed observations after the tour. These field notes and photographs helped to orient me to the teachers’ context and to remember details I asked about in later interviews.

Participant interviews. “The purpose of interviewing…is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). To learn about my participants’ perspectives and experiences, I conducted in-person, audio-recorded interviews with each of the participants. The interviews took place in the teachers’ respective classrooms during their 40-minute planning period. After confirming the teachers’ eligibility to participate, I collected information about their schedules and dates or times in the upcoming weeks they would not be available to interview. This information allowed me to plan an interview schedule and limited the number of trips I had to make to the research site, which was a considerable distance from my home. All of the teachers agreed to the proposed schedule and it occurred with only slight variation due to illness and inclement winter weather.
Recognizing that “events, people, and objects have a past, present, and a future” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479), I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants following an adaptation of Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series. This model was applicable because it is a form of phenomenological interviewing and my research questions were, at the core, phenomenological because they focused on understanding lived experience (Creswell, 2013). As a novice researcher, I intended to stick closely to Seidman’s (2006) guidelines for the length and spacing of the interview series. He recommended 90-minute interviews, stating that amount of time is long enough for participants to know their narratives are being taken seriously, and that anything shorter will not give participants time to “reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning” (Seidman, 2006, p. 20).

I also planned to follow Seidman’s suggestions of conducting the interviews at least three, but no more than seven, days apart. This timing allows the participant “to mull over the preceding interview, but not...lose the connection between the two” (Seidman, 2006, p. 21). However, the teachers were not available for after school interviews, so I interviewed them during their planning periods at various times during the school day. These periods were 40 minutes long and often included time for the teacher to take the students to a specials class. Thus, the actual time available for each interview was less than 40 minutes. For some of the interviews, the teachers asked colleagues to take their students to the specials class so that we would have more time for the interview. This effort suggested that the teachers enjoyed talking about their experiences. As a result, each of the original three interviews had to be divided into two parts (see Table 3).
Table 3. Interview schedule

For each interview, I wrote a semi-structured protocol (Appendix A). I wanted to follow the teachers’ narratives (Chase, 2011, p. 423; Riessman, 2008, p. 24), but also needed to be conscious of our limited interview time. Since leaving the elementary classroom as a full-time teacher, I have always enjoyed opportunities to visit. Thus, I suspected the experience would be an interesting one for me, one that might tempt me to allow our conversations to drift away from the intent of the study. Thus, a written protocol was necessary to help me keep the interviews focused on the research questions.
During the first interview (A and B), I asked about the participants’ past experiences of teaching literacy to ELs (i.e., before the CCSS-ELA were introduced) and tried to ascertain some of their core beliefs about literacy and ELs. My goal was to “put the participant’s experience in context by asking…her to tell as much as possible about [her literacy teaching]…up to the present time” (Seidman, 2006, p. 17). Throughout the interviews, I focused on asking “how” questions in an effort to get participants to “reconstruct and narrate a range of…events” (Seidman, 2006, p. 17) that demonstrated their pedagogical choices. For example, when they were describing a memorable pre-CCSS lesson, I asked how they made decisions about the content and strategies used. I was surprised that all of the teachers had difficulty limiting their descriptions to pre-CCSS teaching. Invariably, they would begin talking about a learning activity they used to do, but then would add that they could not, or did not, do that now because of CCSS. Often, the discussion would continue to a description of how their teaching had changed, and I had to work to focus us back on pre-CCSS teaching.

The second interview focused on the participants’ current experiences teaching literacy to ELs in-the-midst of CCSS-ELA implementation. “The purpose…was to concentrate on the concrete details of [their] present lived experience….so I asked them to reconstruct these details” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). For example, I asked them to describe lessons they had taught recently that they deemed particularly successful or unsuccessful for the ELs in their classroom. I had planned to ask about instructional choices that either confirmed or altered their previous understandings of literacy, ELs, or themselves as teachers of both. However, the participants found this difficult to describe, and I realized I would need to wait until formal analysis to see if they had illustrated some of these changes. Instead, I asked the teachers to describe their example lesson as concretely as possible. I wanted to understand their pedagogical choices and the
reasons behind them. In other words, what made the teachers choose to do one activity suggested by the curriculum, but not another?

Asking “how” questions was particularly important in this interview because I was tempted to ask participants about their learning in relation to the CCSS-ELA. Questions about learning typically lead people to consider formal schooling events, which were not the focus of this study. Instead, I asked the teachers what they did regarding literacy instruction and how they made those pedagogical decisions. Answers to those questions revealed how they had, or had not, taken up the learning outcomes of the CCSS-ELA.

During the third interview, participants were asked “to reflect on the meaning of their experience…. [with the purpose of addressing] the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). Here, I sought to understand how the authoritative power of the CCSS-ELA might have affected the teachers personally and professionally. Throughout the interviews, the teachers recounted selective narratives of their experiences. Those experiences that they chose to remember and to recast held meaning for them (Polkinghorne, 1988). “That meaning making [was] the center of… attention” (Seidman, 2006, p. 19) in this interview. At times, I needed to be patient because it was difficult for participants to “discuss the meaning of their experiences” (Creswell, p. 173). I found that Mia and Lea, in particular, inserted narratives about the emotional connections between their work and life throughout the interviews. They were not limited to these last discussions. As a result, I altered my original questions for the final interview to follow up with identity-related topics they had brought up earlier. I thought they were important to understanding how the CCSS implementation had affected them, and I wanted to give them an opportunity to further explain their thinking.
I also added to Seidman’s (2006) guidelines for the third interview by asking participants to imagine teaching literacy without the CCSS mandate—what they would do differently and why. This part of the discussion shed some light on the perceived permanence of changes related to the CCSS-ELA. Following Patton’s (2002) suggestions, I attempted to vary the question formats throughout the interviews. For example, rather than asking a direct question (e.g., What would you think if the CCSS were repealed?), I asked a simulation question (p. 368):

Imagine attending a staff meeting next week and the administrator announces that the CCSS-ELA are going to be repealed. As a result, next year every teacher will be able to teach literacy in any way they perceive as best.

• How would you feel about that announcement?
• Describe what you would say to a close teaching colleague as you walk back to your classrooms after the meeting.
• Describe how you would teach your next literacy lesson for ELs after the repeal of CCSS-ELA.

Responses to simulation questions “require the interviewee to visualize the situation to be described…[and often result in the] richest and most detailed descriptions” (Patton, 2002, p. 368). I found that these types of questions also seemed to create a more relaxed, conversational tone for the interviews.

The first and third interviews helped to give context and meaning to the teachers’ current experiences. Throughout each interview, I attempted to take the role of listener in a conversation (Josselson, 2013, p. 4) rather than interviewer by “inviting narrators’ specific stories” (Chase, 2011, p. 243) about their experiences instead of responses to my list of questions.
Researcher journal and analytic notes. I openly acknowledge the co-constructed nature of this narrative inquiry. I was interested in this topic because I identified with my participants; I remember what it was like to be an elementary teacher of ELs. Therefore, following Glesne’s (2011) suggestions, I attempted to journal responses loosely related to these questions after each day at the research site: 1) what surprised me? 2) what intrigued me? 3) what disturbed me? (p. 77). Question 1 helped track my assumptions. Question 2 helped me understand personal interests and positions, while question 3 helped me notice tensions and possible stereotypes or prejudices (p. 77). Paying attention to each of these dynamics throughout the study allowed me to recognize biases or attitudes that may otherwise have prevented me from asking important questions during interviews or noticing the significance of what a participant said. For example, in the second half of Interview 1, I began to realize that Nichole was more positive about the CCSS than I was. This surprised me because the other teachers had described negative reactions to the CCSS even during our first meeting. Through journaling, I reminded myself not to assume that all teachers perceived the CCSS the same way, and that there could be positive outcomes from the CCSS that I did not want to uncover. This processing helped me stay open-minded when I returned to Nichole’s classroom and to listen carefully to her opinions and experiences rather than dismissing them. Consequently, I better understood how the CCSS could generate constructive learning activities for students (i.e., student-led academic discussions).

Writing analytic notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) after each interview allowed me to record my overall impressions of the teacher and what was said in the interview. I noted commonalities with previous interviews, within or among participants. I also considered the significance of narratives that stood out to me during the interview, such as ideas the teacher emphasized or obvious gaps in what the teacher did not talk about. I made methodological notes
(e.g., the effectiveness of the interview question guide, the duration and setting of the interview) and then used these notes to adapt later interview questions.

I expected these notes to focus primarily on the mechanics of the interviews and the first stages of analysis. Although both of those things occurred, the notes ended up being important for me in a way I did not anticipate. They became a time to debrief what I was experiencing during the interviews. Because I identified with these teachers, I found myself concerned and frustrated with the experiences they described. They conveyed the anxiety they felt due to the effects of poverty on their students’ lives. They explained tensions of deciding between doing what the curriculum said to do and what they felt was right. Each teacher described examples of their jobs being harder and less enjoyable than they were in the past. Many days, I left the school feeling deep empathy for the teachers and their students. I wanted to offer assistance in addressing these real and felt needs, but realized I was not in position to do so. Thus, the debriefing sessions I had while writing out my thoughts or audio recording them as I drove home were crucial to my completing the project. I needed this avenue to decompress my emotions and refocus my efforts on the purpose of the study.

**Documents and artifacts.** Documents and artifacts were important to this study and were used to “raise questions for interviews, support or challenge interview data, [and develop] thick description…[for] content analysis (Glesne, 2011, p. 90). Documents collected included the CCSS-ELA Anchor Standards and the RPC for ELA. The Anchor Standards provide broad standards of “what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010c). There are ten anchor standards each for Reading and Writing and six each for Speaking and Listening (together) and Language. While the standards themselves outlined changes to the content teachers should address, the RPC described the changes necessary for
instructional practice to align with the standards (Newkirk, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2014; Pearson, 2013, p. 6). Directed at curriculum writers and publishers, the specificity of the RPC led to the development of curricular products that make pedagogical decisions for teachers (Newkirk, 2013). Papola-Ellis’s (2014) study of three elementary teachers showed that the CCSS and tenets of the RPC had “the most significant impact on literacy instruction” (p. 178), often over the teachers’ prior knowledge and beliefs. Therefore, the RPC was necessary for answering the first research question concerning the explicit or implied teacher learning outcomes of the CCSS. These documents were all accessed online.

This was the first school year the district was implementing a new ELA curriculum that was aligned to the CCSS-ELA. A team of administrators and teachers, including Lea, had chosen McGraw-Hill’s Reading Wonders curriculum. Artifacts, or “everyday objects…can be critical in…creating a space for storytelling” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011, p. 130). Therefore, I collected copies of the curricular materials that corresponded to narratives the teachers told about specific lessons. These allowed me “to further understand the teachers’ literacy instruction and how they understood and implemented CCSS” (Papola-Ellis, 2014, p. 172). These documents and artifacts added context to the interview data and supplemented what I saw and heard “by supporting, expanding, and challenging [my] portrayals and perceptions” (Glesne, 2011, p. 89).

Data Analysis

Analyzing the Revised Publishers’ Criteria using CDA. The CCSS-ELA Anchor Standards helped me understand the RPC, but were not analyzed separately because they contain learning outcomes for students, not teachers. The RPC has been most heavily critiqued regarding its intended influence on practice (Newkirk, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2014); therefore, I used CDA to better understand how it might be accomplishing this goal. I wanted to discover what the RPC
authors (David Coleman and Susan Pimentel) desired teachers to do as a result of reading the RPC or of following the curricula developed from it. In other words, what were the teacher learning outcomes (TLOs) embedded within the RPC?

Fairclough’s (1989) method of CDA includes three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation, with in-depth procedural possibilities in each one. Description was the most applicable stage for answering research question one. The interpretation and explanation stages were integrated with the thematic analysis detailed in the following sections.

Description involves considering experiential, relational, or expressive values of the text’s formal features (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, textual structures). As I considered the many ways to analyze the RPC, the relational values of the text’s grammatical features were most directly related to finding the TLOs. A relational value “is a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112). Specifically, relational modality describes “the authority of one participant in relation to others” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 126). By analyzing the text for features of relational modality, I was able to discover traces of the authority the RPC authors were exerting over the publishers and teachers who read the document. Relational modality is most often expressed with modal auxiliary verbs such as may, might, must, should, can, can’t. Must and should are the strongest modals and are “used to express that it is necessary, desirable, or important to perform the action of the following verb” (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2015). They imply that the action is a duty or moral obligation.

To find these modals in the RPC, I used Microsoft Word’s Find feature in a digital copy of the RPC sections related to ELA materials in grades 3-12 (pp. 1-13). This search revealed only five uses of “must”, which surprised me. I expected the CCSS’s authoritative nature to require
more instances of this strong modal. Next, I used the Find feature to locate uses of “should”. I located 88 instances of “should,” indicating that this was the authors’ preferred modal choice (see Appendix B for complete list). To understand the relationship between the “should” statements and the TLOs, I copied each “should” statement from the RPC into an Excel document (see sample in Figure 3). Then, I coded each “should” statement to make it easier to reference (Figure 3). Each code (e.g., S:8.5A) is comprised of four components:

- **S →** Indicates a “should” statement
- **8 →** Page number
- **5 →** Paragraph number
- **A →** First instance of a “should” statement in paragraph (B is the second instance, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publishers' Criteria - ELA &quot;Should&quot; statements</th>
<th>S:8.5A</th>
<th>My rewording of each &quot;should&quot; statement. As a classroom teacher, what does this statement want me to do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CULTIVATING STUDENTS’ ABILITY TO READ COMPLEX TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY</td>
<td>Provide scaffolding with caution and ensure it does not preemp or replace the text in any way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; the scaffolding should not become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective scaffolding aligned with the standards should result in the reader encountering the text on its own terms, with instructions providing helpful directions that focus students on the text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where he or she might struggle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligned curriculum materials therefore should explicitly direct students to re-read challenging portions of the text and offer instructional guidance about an array of text-based scaffolds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When necessary, extra textual scaffolding prior to and during the first read should focus on words and concepts that are essential to a basic understanding and that students are not likely to know or be able to determine from context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts and the discussion questions should be selected and ordered so that they bootstrap onto each other and promote deep thinking and substantive engagement with the text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close reading and gathering knowledge from specific texts should be at the heart of classroom activities and not be consigned to the margins when completing assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading strategies should work in the service of reading comprehension (rather than an end unto themselves) and assist students in building knowledge and insight from specific texts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be effective, instruction on specific reading techniques should occur when they illuminate specific aspects of a text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Sample "should" statements in Excel

After copying and coding each “should” statement, I reread each statement trying to imagine what I would take from it if I were a practicing elementary teacher intent on implementing the CCSS-ELA with fidelity. I asked myself, “What do these statements want me to do?” Samples of these statements are provided in Figure 3. When I completed this step for all
88 statements, I felt mentally and physically weighed down by the heavy burden of these “shoulds” on my imagined practice. The next step was to summarize my statements in each RPC section (see Figure 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The goal is for all students to read and comprehend &quot;complex&quot;, grade-level texts. Additional support, including opportunities to read below grade-level texts, may be provided for students who find this task difficult. Texts of various lengths, complexity, and genre (informational, literary nonfiction, fiction) are made available, and students are required to read across this spectrum. Text discussions cover the entire work, requiring close reading of selected passages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Section summary

From the section summaries, I constructed the TLOs (see Appendix C). I attempted to use the RPC authors’ words and phrasing as much as possible in my restatements, the section summaries, and the TLOs so that the original intent was carried throughout. While writing the TLOs, I imagined the RPC authors leading teacher workshops on CCSS implementation. The TLOs would be the sessions’ objectives (see Figure 5). To enhance the trustworthiness of the constructed TLOs, I identified the corresponding “should” statements and included their codes next to each TLO. Finally, because the CCSS authors emphasized three key shifts for implementation (see Chapter 4), I categorized each TLO that aligned with these shifts. I also noted those addressing scaffolding since it is considered an important practice for teaching ELs (Gibbons, 2002).
Thematic analysis. CDA provided a theoretical foundation for all of my data analysis, since I was constantly looking for how the sociocultural narrative of the CCSS might be interacting with or influencing the participants’ narratives. However, time constraints did not allow me to utilize CDA on the participant interviews. Additionally, the research questions called for a broad answer, rather than one at the fine-grained level of CDA, so I turned to thematic narrative analysis for the remaining data.

Within the field of narrative research, scholars typically use either analysis of narrative or narrative analysis (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Schram, 2006). Narrative analysis involves collecting data and then “recasting [it] into a storied form” (Barone, 2007, p. 456) with a final product consisting of characters, setting, and developed plotline. Analysis of narrative is compatible with various forms of qualitative research (e.g., ethnography, phenomenology) because it sees narratives as data to be analyzed, typically with themes and categories (Clandinin & Murphy,
The final product may contain examples of narratives, but is not in narrative form itself. I chose to conduct an analysis of the narratives because it was better suited for this inquiry to be written in the traditional dissertation format.

Three common forms of analyzing narratives include thematic, structural, and performative approaches (Riessman, 2008). I determined that thematic analysis was appropriate for analyzing the participant interviews because “the emphasis is on ‘the told’ – the events and cognitions to which language refers” (Riessman, 2008, p. 58). The research questions did not seek to investigate the telling of the narratives, which would have necessitated a structural or performative approach. As a foundational method for analyzing data qualitatively, thematic analysis was also suitable for me as a novice researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Analysis of participant interviews.** A professional transcriptionist and I transcribed all of the interviews. The speech in the transcripts was “cleaned up” (Riessman, 2008, p. 57) by eliminating pauses and disfluencies (e.g., repeated words, um, uh) when they did not affect the content. To ensure accuracy and to reacquaint myself with the data, I listened to each interview while reading the transcript. I uploaded the transcripts to NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software, which allowed for a more efficient and rigorous analysis. One benefit of the program was that it electronically, rather than manually, supported the organization and manipulation of large amounts of data. It allowed me to quickly search for words or phrases in the data and did not limit my codes to the number of colored pens available.

Data analysis began when I met the teachers for the classroom tour. As they talked informally about their work, I noted items that related to the TLOs (e.g., text evidence), similarities and differences between their narratives, and concepts I did not anticipate (e.g., caring for students). In this way, I began constructing codes and possible themes before opening
NVivo. I noted the ideas in my researcher journal and considered how I might follow these narratives into the interviews. For example, at our initial meeting both Lea and Mia spoke passionately about not being able to care for their students as much as they did in the past. I knew I could not ignore a concern that they were willing to voice to a virtual stranger. When I returned to the subject in later interviews, they had much more to say about the topic, and I was glad I had begun analyzing the data early enough to draw upon their comments.

As I participated in the interviews and vicariously revisited the teachers while reading and coding the transcripts, I attempted to listen for the narratives throughout their speech. I wondered – What are they trying to tell me? How do they see themselves as teachers? I did not limit my inquiry to bounded narratives that had a distinct beginning, middle, and end (Riessman, 2008). Instead, I thought narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) about the data and attempted to see how elements of their individual narratives contributed to dynamic overarching master narratives (Lyotard, 1984) that were present on the teachers’ school landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). I participated in the construction of these broader narratives as I interpreted and defined their boundaries (Riessman, 2008, p. 41) through the use of codes and themes.

The initial codes, such as creative and caring, were helpful as I began working with the transcripts in NVivo. I recorded examples of each code and developed new codes as I read each transcript. At this stage, I found it helpful to code across the interviews, reading what each teacher had said during Interview 1A before reading Interview 1B. Reading down the interviews (i.e., all of Lea’s) led to such wide-ranging topics that it became overwhelming until later when I had a better understanding of all that had been shared. I created new codes or sub-codes as I read. For example, the code pressure was subdivided into pressured by standardized testing and pressured by time. I also had initial codes for each of the three key shifts (i.e., complex text, text
evidence, nonfiction) because I wanted to see whether elements of the TLOs were evident in the teachers’ narratives. I originally planned to code data related to the content, incentive, and interaction dimensions of learning. However, these ended up being too broad. For example, using codes such as frustration, fear, and feelings were more helpful in understanding the incentive dimension. As I coded more of the transcripts, I began to cluster the codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), such as pre-CCSS, in-the-midst, and tensions, which I viewed as outlining the broad master narratives.

Analysis of field notes and researcher analytic notes. My field notes and analytic notes were used to record the context of the teachers’ narratives and my thoughts during the research. Throughout the analysis and writing phases, I returned to these notes to check my current thinking against understandings I had recorded immediately after an interview or other visit to the school. More than once, these earlier documents supported my later ideas about organizing codes or the development of themes.

Data Quality and Trustworthiness

Qualitative inquiries cannot be evaluated using quantitative research criteria such as validity, reliability, and generalizability because the purposes of the research paradigms differ (Creswell, 2013). However, that does not mean qualitative studies should not be judged for their rigor. The aim of these studies is to produce inquiries that are “useful and believable, not infallible and airtight” (Schram, 2006, p. 174). This is done by enhancing trustworthiness and transferability (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness includes ways of establishing confidence in the inquiry’s findings. This includes the quantitative concepts of validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest substituting validity for credibility in qualitative studies. In other words,
can the reader believe the findings as stated in the inquiry? There are several ways I sought to ensure the credibility of my study.

First, although I did not have prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell, 2013, p. 250; Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 77), I had shorter, intensive contact. The research site was more than two hours from my home, which required spending the night in Clarksburg when interviews were scheduled on consecutive days. This extra time in town allowed me to explore the area and better understand teachers’ references to relevant aspects of the community (e.g., concerns related to poverty). Additionally, I have years of experience in elementary schools, and with ELs; therefore, I did not have to spend time understanding the teachers’ typical life in school. I was able to begin with my background knowledge and get to know the particulars of this school and these teachers.

Second, with triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) the researcher “make[s] use of multiple and different sources [and] methods…to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). As part of Interview 3, I gave participants a list of many of the constructed TLOs. Our interview time was short, and I knew they would not have time to read the entire list, so I excerpted the first half into a separate document. I did not tell the teachers what the TLOs were, but simply asked them to read the statements and tell me how well they thought they did or did not match what the CCSS and their curriculum wanted them to do. All of the teachers stated that the list aligned their understanding of the CCSS. This corroboration supported the accuracy of the TLOs I had constructed. The teachers had not read the RPC, yet they confirmed that the TLOs derived from it captured CCSS directives.

Third, in describing the findings I have included multiple and extended portions of the interview transcripts. This technique adds thick description (Geertz, 1973), “allow[ing] the
reader to enter into the situation and thoughts” (Patton, 2002, p. 503) of the participants. By hearing the participants’ voices, rather than my paraphrasing, readers are led deeper into the interpretive process (Chase, 2011) where they can draw their own meanings from the text.

Finally, I attempted to be as transparent as possible about my thinking and actions throughout the study. By documenting the processes I used “to collect and interpret data” (Riessman, 2008, p. 193) in detail, readers are able to judge the trustworthiness of the findings for themselves (Patton, 2002).

**Transferability.** Quantitative studies typically focus on generalizability. Qualitative studies such as this one are based in the lives of particular people in specific contexts; thus generalizability is not possible, nor is it a goal. Instead, the qualitative researcher strives for transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) by providing thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973). This description not only allows readers to evaluate the interpretations, it also gives them a way to make “judgments about the degree of fit or similarity...[if they] wish to apply all or part of [the] findings elsewhere” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 77). Whether the reader determines the findings can transfer to their setting or not, they should be able to detect that the account of my inquiry is authentic or plausible (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). My hope is that the details I have provided about the inquiry, along with careful inclusion of the participants’ narratives, have produced a final text that “rings true” for other teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). Perhaps many of the particulars and “the scenes in which the particulars...occur” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8) are recognizable. In this way, the narrative inquiry “is not simply a factual report of events, but instead one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way” (Riessman, 2008, p. 187).
Reflexivity. Reflexivity is an important component of any qualitative project in which the researcher “position[s] themselves in their writings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). Through this positioning, the researcher reflects on, and reports, their conscious biases, values, and experiences. As is true for any researcher, I did not come to this study as a tabula rasa. I have over 20 years’ experience as a teacher and have beliefs and opinions about many aspects of education. I taught elementary classes in public and private schools for three years before encountering my first EL. I found that I thrived on the challenge of helping another person learn to speak, and then to read and write, the language that came so easily to me as a native speaker. The longer I taught ELs, the more I came to understand that other educators did not feel this same enthusiasm. For many, ELs were a barrier to their previous “success” as a good teacher. No longer could they execute the same lesson plans and get the same results. Some of my prior colleagues refused to change their practices, and thus, it was the ELs who suffered the consequences and were labeled deficient.

My evangelical Christian worldview holds that God creates all people in His image. Each person has value just because they exist. Therefore, neither ELs nor any other group of students deserve a lesser education than others, particularly in the US, which idealizes a notion of free and equal education for all. In all of my teaching, I strive to give every student the best learning opportunities possible. This often requires thinking creatively or ignoring curriculum suggestions or guidelines to meet the needs of individual students. Consequently, I am aware that I viewed this study through decidedly biased lenses.

My perspective was a part of the context of each piece of this inquiry. Although this likely clouded my findings in ways I remain blinded to, I worked to mitigate these effects. For example, the assistant principal introduced the participants to the study, and I accepted the three
who volunteered. Thus, I was shielded from selecting only teachers who aligned with my thinking about the CCSS. During each interview, I focused on asking clarifying questions. Rather than assuming I understood the teachers’ experiences, I asked questions so they could explain their thought processes and actions more completely. Nichole provided a counter-example to Mia and Lea because she described positive reactions to the CCSS implementation. Her experiences add depth to the study, providing another dimension from which to view the CCSS. Additionally, as a real person interacting with other real persons, I chose to exercise empathic neutrality by communicating “understanding, interest, and caring…[and by] being nonjudgmental” (Patton, 2002, p. 53) toward my participants.
Chapter 4

Findings - Document Analysis

This chapter describes findings related to the study’s first research question: What are the explicit or implied teacher learning outcomes in the CCSS-ELA and related documents? The RPC was the most relevant document for answering this question because it is the CCSS-related document most specifically designed to influence practice (Newkirk, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2014). The title of the RPC implies that publishers are the document’s audience. However, the authors state that the included guidelines “are intended to guide teachers, curriculum developers, and publishers to be purposeful and strategic in both what to include and what to exclude in instructional materials” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1). Thus, teachers are additional audience members who are to look to the text for guidance. In fact, I argue they are the text’s primary audience. Since the standards movement began, publishers have worked to understand states’ standards so they could develop and effectively market aligned curricula. Hundreds of millions of dollars of profit (Smagorinsky, 2012; Weiss, 2014b) attest that they have done their work well for many years. The RPC was not necessary for publishers; however, it was a conduit for the CCSS authors to direct teachers’ practice.

Using CDA and the procedures described in Chapter 3, I constructed a list of 43 TLOs from statements in the RPC text that expressed actions teachers are obligated to perform. In other words, the TLOs describe how the RPC authors want teachers to implement the CCSS-ELA. They are also used to measure teacher effectiveness through student performance on the standardized tests (Gangi & Reilly, 2013). Together, the TLOs construct a narrative of an effective teacher grounded in CCSS ideology. The CCSS narrative (CCSS-N) claims teachers must make three key pedagogical shifts because they are “essential to implementing the
standards well” (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b, para. 1). The three key shifts are described on the CCSS website (www.corestandards.org) and include: 1) Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language; 2) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational; and 3) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b [emphasis in original]). In this chapter, I provide examples of the TLOs that align with the key shifts. The complete list of TLOs is in Appendix C.

**Regular Practice with Complex Texts and Their Academic Language**

The first key shift calls for “a staircase of increasing complexity…of the texts students must read to be ready for the demands of college, career, and life” (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b, n.p.). Although all of the Anchor Standards for Reading focus on texts (e.g., determining key ideas, analyzing structure, evaluating a text’s argument), Standard 10 addresses complexity directly: “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010c). Each grade level’s standards are a bit more specific. For example, the aligned standard 10 for fifth grade literature and informational texts is:

- By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently. RL.5.10 (Reading, Literature)
- By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently. RI.5.10 (Reading, Informational Text)

In Appendix A of the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a), the authors describe this shift’s necessity due to the decline of textbook complexity (p. 3). However, a more current study on the cognitive demands of reading curricula found complexity has increased over the past 40 years,
particularly for third grade (Stevens et al., 2015). Also in Appendix A, the CCSS authors give a
detailed description of what they mean by text complexity. They delineate the three-part model
used to measure a text’s complexity level, which includes both qualitative and quantitative
dimensions and considerations of the reader and task. However, the reader and task descriptions
are not thorough, suggesting that quantitative measures are the focus (Moore, Zancanella, &
Ávila, 2014, pp. 131–132). Because the stated goal of the standards is to prepare students to be
college- and career-ready, the complexity required by “typical first-year credit-bearing college
courses and in workforce training programs” is at the top of the text complexity staircase. From
this point, the necessary steps (i.e., complexity levels) for each grade band are determined.
Teachers are provided with the expected Lexile ranges for their grade band (p. 8), which
represent an average increase of 14% over levels publishers previously identified and
recommended. A specific reading list is not included in the standards, and teachers are
encouraged to make decisions about texts to use in their classrooms. However, Appendix B of
the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b) provides a list of text exemplars and has been described as a
de facto required text list (Moss, 2013; Springen, 2012).

Academic vocabulary (i.e., words that appear in academic dialogue and text across
multiple content areas) is a secondary focus of this shift, but is included because of its relevance
to student comprehension of complex texts. The subordinated focus on academic vocabulary is
communicated in two ways: 1) its description comes after complex text and begins by noting its
relationship to text complexity, indicating that it is not included on its own merit; and 2) as
indicated above, complex text is underlined in the statement of the shift, signifying its
predominance. This is important because data presented in Chapter 5 illustrate the study’s
participants focused on text complexity rather than academic language.
I determined there were 14 TLOs aligned with this key shift. They were found throughout the RPC, but not surprisingly, were clustered in the sections related to complex text use and academic vocabulary.

**Complex text.** Examples of specific TLOs related to complex text and the RPC “should” statements with which they align are provided in Table 4. As a whole, the CCSS-N claims that effective teachers of complex text strive to have all students read and comprehend complex, grade-level texts. They provide additional support, including opportunities to read below grade-level texts, for students who find this task difficult. Teachers make texts of various lengths, complexity, and genre (e.g., informational, literary nonfiction, fiction) available, and students are required to read across this spectrum. They design academic text discussions that require close reading of selected texts and cover the entire work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLO</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample “should” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide extensive experiences for all students to engage with complex, grade-level texts</td>
<td>S:3.4A</td>
<td>“Curriculum materials <strong>should</strong> provide extensive opportunities for all students in a classroom to engage with complex text, although students whose reading ability is developing at a slower rate also will need supplementary opportunities to read text they can comprehend successfully without extensive supports.” (S:3.4A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make available and require students to read informational texts, literary nonfiction texts, and literature of varying length and complexity</td>
<td>S:3.2A S:4.2A S:4.3B S:4.3C</td>
<td>“Instructional materials <strong>should</strong> also offer advanced texts to provide students at every grade with the opportunity to read texts beyond their current grade level to prepare them for the challenges of more complex text.” (S:3.2A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide numerous opportunities for students to engage grade-level texts independently and in writing</td>
<td>S:10.1A S:10.1B</td>
<td>“A significant portion of the time spent with each text <strong>should</strong> provide opportunities for students to work independently on analyzing grade-level text because this independent analysis is required by the standards.” (S:10.1B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan academic discussions on grade-level topics and texts that require advanced preparation by students</td>
<td>S:12.6A</td>
<td>“Standards <strong>should</strong> show teachers how to plan engaging discussions around grade-level topics and texts that students have studied and researched in advance.” (S:12.6A)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 1: Complex text
**Academic vocabulary.** Table 5 includes examples of TLOs and RPC “should” statements focused on academic vocabulary. Regarding academic vocabulary development, the CCSS-N contends effective teachers design learning tasks and provide materials that assist students in acquiring essential academic vocabulary. They guide students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high-frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text. As time allows, teachers provide explicit instruction of high-frequency words when needed. They also require students to use academic vocabulary in speaking and writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLO</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample “should” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design learning tasks and provide materials that assist students in acquiring essential academic vocabulary</td>
<td>S:11.1A</td>
<td>“Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary because these are the words that will help them access a wide range of complex texts.” (S:11.1A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high-frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text</td>
<td>S:11.2A</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone.” (S:11.2A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high-frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text</td>
<td>S:11.2B</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone.” (S:11.2A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high-frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text</td>
<td>S:11.3A</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone.” (S:11.2A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high-frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text</td>
<td>S:11.3B</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone.” (S:11.2A)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 1: Academic vocabulary

**Questions and Answers Grounded in Text Evidence**

The second key shift is concerned with students “using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information” (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b, n.p.). Rather than relying on background knowledge or prior experience to answer questions, students must read texts closely to determine the authors’ meaning and to glean knowledge resident within the text. Additionally, it requires a movement away from narrative writing, which the CCSS authors claim dominated K-12 writing lessons in the past (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b, n.p.).
Instead, argumentative and informational writing, grounded in text evidence, are needed for student success in college, career, and life. A perceived overreliance on metacognitive strategies in recent years (Boyles, 2012; Pearson, 2013) likely led to this effort to turn students and teachers back to the text. Although students need to develop the ability to understand an author’s intent and to use evidence from texts to support their arguments, these skills outline a limited view of text engagement (Papola-Ellis, 2014). Additionally, it is presented as superior to other well-established perspectives such as reader response (Rosenblatt, 1991) and critical literacy (Freebody & Luke, 1990). There were 20 TLOs aligned with this shift, more than any other. They were predominately found in two sections of the RPC focused on high-quality, text-dependent questions and tasks and cultivating students’ ability to read complex texts independently.

**Text-dependent questions.** According to the CCSS-N, effective teachers design questions and learning tasks, such as close reading, that focus students on the text to recognize and glean the most significant ideas and important details from it. They ask supplementary questions that draw upon students' background knowledge and connections across texts to develop a deeper understanding of the lesson’s focal text. Teachers demonstrate, through appropriate tasks and questions, the value of gaining knowledge from texts and of using the texts to support the written and oral responses. For formative assessment purposes, teachers ask questions that determine students' abilities to provide explicitly stated details from the text, to make logical inferences based upon the text, and to support all responses with references to the text. Table 6 offers examples of aligned TLOs and “should” statements.
Table 6. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 2: Text-dependent questions

In addition to “should” statements, I examined the RPC for other clear directives for teachers. The most prominent example was related to this key shift where the authors give specific guidelines regarding how effective questioning occurs in the classroom:

An effective set of discussion questions might begin with relatively simple questions requiring attention to specific words, details, and arguments and then move on to explore the impact of those specifics on the text as a whole. Good questions will often linger over specific phrases and sentences to ensure careful comprehension and also promote deep thinking and substantive analysis of the text. Effective question sequences will build on each other to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text so they can learn fully from it. (p. 7)

Even though modals of obligation such as must and should do not occur in these sentences, their directive intent is clear because teachers do not strive to ask ineffective questions. The goal of all questioning is to turn students back to the text for further analysis and understanding. Students who are not able to display their understanding of texts in these particular ways, in class and on
the standardized tests, will be “cast as deficient” (Gangi & Reilly, 2013, p. 9), resulting in further marginalization for many.

**Cultivate independent reading of texts.** The CCSS’s significant focus on text evidence is evident in the large number of TLOs found in two sections of the RPC. This summary of teachers’ responsibilities and example TLOs appear similar to those in the section above. Therefore, the RPC authors deemed these ideas important enough to emphasize more than once.

In this section of the RPC, the CCSS-N demands that effective teachers focus all learning tasks and activities on specific texts, rather than discussing texts or reading in generalities. All of the teachers’ purposefully sequenced questioning should direct students to a close and careful reading of the focal text to glean the knowledge found there. Teachers can provide scaffolding on a limited basis, but they should encourage students to look to the text when they have difficulty and to rely on the scaffolds as little as possible. The teachers offer instruction related to specific reading techniques or strategies in direct relation to engagement with specific texts, not as isolated skills. They also lead students to engage texts independently and in writing. See Table 7 for related TLOs and “should” statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLO</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample “should” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focus all learning tasks and activities on specific texts. Activities and discussions require students to find specific ideas, draw evidence from the text, and glean available knowledge. | S:9.3A S:9.3E S:9.4A S:10.3B S:10.3C S:10.3E | “Additionally, care \textbf{should} be taken that introducing broad themes and questions in advance of reading does not prompt overly general conversations rather than focusing reading on the specific ideas and details, drawing evidence from the text, and gleaning meaning and knowledge from it.” (S:9.3E)  
“The text \textbf{should} be central, and surrounding materials \textbf{should} be included only when necessary, so as not to distract from the text itself.” (S:10.3C) |
| Evaluate students' abilities to comprehend text details and the author's argument before engaging in interpretation or evaluation of the text. All interpretations and evaluations must be grounded in the text. | S:10.2A S:10.2B | “Aligned materials \textbf{should} therefore require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author's argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others.” (S:10.2A) |

Table 7. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 2: Independent reading of texts

The TLOs and “should” statements related to the second key shift instruct teachers to focus questions, lessons, assignments, and assessments on student comprehension of complex, focal texts. This, combined with text-evidence directives, “provides a vision of schooling that overvalues texts and undervalues readers, teachers, and sociocultural contexts” (Moore et al., 2014, p. 131). Requiring students to rely on text evidence alone to support their responses means ignoring other modes of knowing (Bruner, 1986). A NLS understanding of literacy development contends that students draw on multiple resources to comprehend and interpret text (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The RPC instructs teachers to attempt to push these other student resources aside as they focus on what is within the four corners of the text, implying the words written on the page. However, the boundaries of texts’ corners are difficult to define. It is unclear whether the RPC means the literal four corners of a page or perhaps the corners extend to an entire
section, chapter, or book. The RPC authors do not assist a teacher in knowing when “information [read on a previous page] vacate[s] the text and become[s] a part of the [reader’s] knowledge base” (Pearson, 2013, p. 10), thus making it unsuitable for responding to text-dependent questions. Scholars have critiqued this CCSS assumption that all meaning resides in the text to be located and extracted by the reader (i.e., efferent reading) (Gangi & Reilly, 2013; Pearson, 2013). Privileging efferent over aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1991), may lessen some students’ desire to read (Gangi & Reilly, 2013), particularly if the required texts are not of interest or they differ significantly from the students’ cultural backgrounds.

**Building Knowledge through Non-Fiction**

The final shift contends that students “must be immersed in information about the world around them” (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b) to develop the knowledge necessary to be prepared for life beyond K-12 schooling. This expected knowledge development occurs through extensive exposure to informational texts in history, science, technical studies, and the arts. It is strongly recommended that these texts “be selected to support students in systematically developing knowledge about the world” (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b). The standards do not detail a particular body of knowledge or the way in which it should be organized. However, in Appendix B, the CCSS authors offer sanctioned text exemplars that teachers might use to develop students’ knowledge.

Five TLOs aligned with this focus on building knowledge through nonfiction texts. Two are included in Table 8 along with the corresponding RPC “should” statements. The CCSS-N holds that effective teachers utilize texts that conform to an understood standard of quality, although this standard is not explicitly delineated, but implied in the Appendix B exemplars and texts included in aligned curricula. Teachers know that the acceptable texts work together to
provide students with an exposure to, and understanding of, a new literary canon, which includes and highlights works of nonfiction. They do not permit students to read narrowly, such as within one genre, topic, or level of text complexity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLO</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample “should” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select and utilize high-quality texts to provide students with access to a coherent, sequenced body of knowledge and to provide a model for their own thinking and writing.</td>
<td>S:5.1A, S:5.3A, S:5.3B, S:5.3C, S:6.1A</td>
<td>“To become career and college ready, students must grapple with a range of works that span many genres, cultures, and eras and model the kinds of thinking and writing students should aspire to in their own work.” (S:5.3B) “Aligned materials for grades 3-12 should set out a coherent selection and sequence of texts (of sufficient complexity and quality) to give students a well-developed sense of bodies of literature (like American literature or classic myths and stories) as part of becoming college and career ready.” (S:6.1A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize carefully sequenced questions to direct students to a close reading of the text for the purposes of determining their response and gleaning knowledge present within the text.</td>
<td>S:9.2B</td>
<td>“Texts and the discussion questions should be selected and ordered so that they bootstrap onto each other and promote deep thinking and substantive engagement with the text.” (S:9.2B)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. TLOs aligned to Key Shift 3

The use of nonfiction, or informational texts, in the elementary classroom provides opportunities for students to learn about the world around them (Calo, 2011; Ness, 2011). However, they also may present difficulties, particularly for ELs. Teachers have reported that informational texts’ vocabulary, text structure, and language demands often impede ELs’ comprehension (Ness, 2011). Further, a lack of background knowledge can make content incomprehensible without adequate scaffolding. Therefore, the CCSS demand for more nonfiction texts may cause ELs additional academic hardships.
Limited Scaffolding

Although scaffolding is not listed as one of the three key shifts, it is important here because this study focuses on teaching ELs. Scaffolding for students has long been considered best practice for teachers of ELs (Gibbons, 2002). Scaffolding such as building on students’ background knowledge helps students to gain content knowledge while learning English. Waiting until their language proficiency allows for the development of content knowledge is not prudent or effective. It can take five to seven years or more to develop academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1984), and it is not realistic to have 10-12 year olds in Kindergarten classrooms. Additionally, ELs are often literate in their native language, and many have attended school in their home country. Thus, they already possess considerable content knowledge. Scaffolding allows them to continue their content learning while making connections to the English language.

In the RPC, three TLOs specifically limit teachers’ scaffolding for students (see Table 9). Although the RPC does not prohibit teachers’ scaffolding of content, it does caution and limit its use. It is generally understood that scaffolding has a limited and defined purpose (Gibbons, 2002), but the RPC authors deemed it important to remind teachers of this. Additionally, they instructed curriculum developers to include appropriate scaffolds in the curricula from which teachers could draw, implying teachers might otherwise choose unsuitable scaffolds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLO</th>
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<th>Sample “should” statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead all students to learn how to access complex text, providing</td>
<td>S:3.3A</td>
<td>“Complex text is a rich repository of ideas, information, and experience which all readers <strong>should</strong> learn how to access, although some students will need more scaffolding to do so.” (S:3.3A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scaffolding as needed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide scaffolding on a limited and as-needed basis. Remove when</td>
<td>S:8.5A</td>
<td>“However, the scaffolding <strong>should</strong> not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; the scaffolding <strong>should</strong> not become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully.” (S:8.5A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no longer necessary. Consult curriculum guides for appropriate</td>
<td>S:9.1A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scaffolds.</td>
<td>S:9.1B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S:9.1C</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S:9.2A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S:10.4A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions drawing upon students’ background knowledge and</td>
<td>S:7.2B</td>
<td>Student background knowledge and experiences can illuminate the reading but <strong>should</strong> not replace attention to the text itself.” (S:7.2B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections across texts sparingly and only after the focal text</td>
<td>S:8.2C</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>has been examined in depth.</td>
<td>S:8.2E</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9. TLOs limiting scaffolding</td>
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**The CCSS Narrative**

The TLOs described above create a particular narrative about literacy teaching. The narrative describes an effective literacy teacher as one who: a) provides students with regular practice with complex text and academic language; b) asks questions that require students to return to the text and provide answers grounded in the evidence found there; c) utilizes non-fiction texts to develop pre-determined knowledge and skills. It is based in CCSS ideology and attempts to recruit teachers into accepting the narrative as their new identity (Althusser, 1971). The ideology is evident in statements from Appendix A of the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a) such as the following:
A turning away from complex texts is likely to lead to a general **impoverishment** of knowledge, which…will accelerate the decline in the ability to comprehend complex texts….This **bodes ill** for the ability of Americans to meet the demands placed upon them by citizenship in a democratic republic and the challenges of a highly **competitive global** marketplace of goods, services, and ideas. (p. 4)

The CCSS authors contend that the only way to address the peril first outlined in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) is for teachers to follow these key shifts, training students to take on the identity of being college- and career-ready. Well-trained students understand a standardized, coherent body of knowledge and rely on the evidence in texts to support their understandings. Wise, effective literacy teachers follow the CCSS-aligned curriculum closely to ensure this achievement for all students. Otherwise, student performance on the standardized tests may not rise to acceptable levels, resulting in serious consequences for students, teachers, and the nation.
Chapter 5

Findings - Interviews

This chapter describes findings from the interviews with participants. Although I identified many interesting themes in the interview transcripts, I focus on those directly related to the study’s remaining questions and sub-questions: 1) What do the narratives of elementary teachers of ELs reveal about what it is like to teach literacy in a CCSS-governed classroom; 2) What pedagogical choices do they make, what informs those choices, and how are the choices related to their understandings of literacy, ELs, and themselves as teachers; 3) How are teachers understanding and responding to the TLOs?

To organize the chapter, I chose to follow a temporal path (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with the narratives focused on the teachers’ pedagogical decisions. I discuss the teachers’ pre-CCSS narratives as revealed in their descriptions of how they taught and felt before implementing the CCSS followed by their current narratives, which involve teaching in the midst of the CCSS narrative that is present in their school landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Next, I provide examples of tensions created when the CCSS-N and the teachers’ current (i.e., in-the-midst of CCSS) narratives collided (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). These tensions included choosing to follow the rules or ignore them, insecurity about effectiveness, and feeling forced to forego greater levels of care for students.

Teaching before CCSS: Focusing on Students

Before the CCSS narrative entered the teachers’ landscape, their teaching narrative focused on students. They described themselves as creative, effective teachers who cared about their students academically and personally.
Creative. For several years prior to the study, Mia and Lea both taught fifth grade at North Clarksburg Elementary. They described their teaching relationship as closer than typical colleagues, working “hand in hand for years,” sharing lesson ideas, encouraging and supporting one another. One reason they worked so well together was their shared pedagogical ideas about the use of hands-on projects. Although both teachers contributed to their brainstorming sessions, Lea acknowledged that Mia led the creative aspect. “Mia’s beyond creative. Where she [gets] some of her ideas? The good Lord only knows ‘cause she’s very creative.” Mia believes her creativity stems from her student teaching experiences in a district with “an open concept” that “didn’t believe in books”:

There were 65 kids and I had these two [mentor] teachers that were both teachers of the year. So I didn’t sleep. I did not sleep that whole student teaching experience because they [said], “We don’t believe in books. We have 65 kids. We want you to be creative.” I think I was just forced to be creative….I think of things on my own. More so than like a lot of people go on Pinterest. I get them [ideas] from here [pointing to her head].

Lea and Mia planned one major project for each quarter of the school year. Each project linked several subject areas such as reading, writing, science, or character development. Lea recalled:

The first quarter they would build different types of nature’s fury [e.g., tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes] and then write about that. So that [was] informational writing….A writing always had to accompany a project. ‘Give It All You’ve Got’ was another theme we did….They could bring in trophies and ribbons, or they could make a collage; however they wanted to display people giving it all they have. One little girl a few years ago, she was a gymnast and she made this beautiful collage of all of her
ribbons and her doing her different gymnastics, and then she wrote a story about it. They had to write a personal narrative. They could cut out pictures from a newspaper of people giving it all they have, like maybe a man who’s fighting cancer, or the cancer society receiving a check because people are giving all they have to give money to the cancer society. Then they [wrote] about a time when they or someone they knew gave it all they had to accomplish a task, a difficult task in their life.

It is impossible to use words to accurately capture Mia’s demeanor as she described projects she had done with her previous classes. She became more animated than usual, her face lit up with a bright smile, and she talked faster and faster as more experiences came to mind. She explained one project that required students to make persuasive speeches based upon books they had read:

I know the one time…for ELs, they were reading these books that had guided readers…and they had to create a poster. Like, you know, they were going to the movies and…we called it the Academy Awards, and they would come in dressed up. They had to write why we should read this book. They were just so proud. I gave them all crayons and markers and all that stuff, and they had to create a poster of why [their classmates] should read this book. Well, they were just so proud of that. And then the day when they presented, I said, ‘Make sure you dress up’. So they were wearing dresses, and one little boy wore a tie….They were so into this. They were so into doing these posters.

The hands-on projects were designed to get students “into reading” and to teach concepts and skills in ways that increased student engagement. Lea explained that she was always trying to think of new ways to help students learn content in fun, interactive ways. “My mind is constantly going when I’m here, when I’m at home, when I’m in the shower, when I’m driving down the street. That’s probably why I get tickets going through stop signs!” The desire to be
creative in teaching grew from the core of their identities as teachers. They did not want to be “boring [teachers] that just stood up and said, ‘Open to page 46’.” However, their creativity was not unfettered. Lea clarified that each of the projects was tied to mandated academic standards and could be justified to anyone who asked about their purpose:

We didn’t just do a project to do a project. It had to be tied to the standards….So they could ask me all they want and I’d back it up….I would never hand out a crossword puzzle and say, “Oh just work on that while I get this done”…..Yeah, if they would want to question me on why I’m doing a project, they can because I’ll have nine reasons why. Probably in ABC order.

Both teachers believed their students derived enjoyment and academic achievement from these hands-on projects. Mia judged this by the excitement students displayed for working on projects and the larger amount of homework they completed compared to assignments that were not tied to project work. Lea said, “I think they get a lot more [from hands-on projects]. They’re not getting anything when I’m just standing here blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.”

These findings demonstrate that the desire to be creative in teaching was not a passing fad, but was intricately woven into the teachers’ narrative before the CCSS entered the landscape.

**Effective.** Drawing upon professional knowledge developed through years of experience, the teachers described making pedagogical decisions based upon their beliefs about literacy and their understanding of students’ academic needs. All of the teachers gave broad definitions of literacy:

Everything around you is literacy. From McDonald’s signs to stop signs to exit signs to magazines to music. (Nichole)
It’s reading. Getting into reading and writing, listening and speaking. It’s all four things. They all go together. (Mia)

Reading, writing, growing with reading, speaking, listening…a whole culmination of all of them. (Lea)

In further discussion, each teacher illustrated they understood literacy to be focused on skill development, which they believed was needed to participate in everyday life and “to become successful lifelong readers and learners.” However, they also expressed that literacy skill development should be grounded in the personal aspect of children’s lives. Lea’s goal as a literacy teacher was to “instill a love of reading in them.” Nichole believed teachers and parents need to expose students to as much print as possible by “giving them anything they want to read – flash cards, magazines, books, even picture books” and that the language of the material (i.e., Spanish or English) should depend upon the educational and linguistic background of the child’s family:

Some parents only speak Spanish at home. Therefore, when the child comes they think in Spanish first….And I roll with that. I mean if they speak in Spanish at home I have to accept that. That’s their culture and, and their nature, and I can’t take that away from the family.

Drawing upon her pedagogical beliefs that students needed to develop a love of reading, Lea’s pre-CCSS literacy instruction included novel studies. Periodically throughout the year, she would pause their engagement with the traditional literacy curriculum to conduct novel studies based upon popular children’s literature such as The Mouse and the Motorcycle. The studies included guided reading of the text as well as writing and spelling activities drawn from it. She also incorporated hands-on activities such as creating a comic strip of the main character, Ralph,
and his adventures on the motorcycle and in a stolen ambulance. Her students enjoyed these literacy activities: “They loved it. They loved it because it was something different….I just feel like kids learn a lot more from hands-on [activities], and they grow” from them.

Mia emphasized the importance of listening and speaking for students’ literacy development. She was “very big on listening,” providing opportunities for students to listen to audio books and then assessing how well they had listened and comprehended the text. Mia also challenged students to develop listening and speaking skills through formal speeches they were required to give each year. The speech topics varied, but included persuasion, how-to, and poetry. Speaking practice was incorporated into class discussions and sharing times. “Every day we shared our journal entry.” Mia believed this practice helped students develop confidence in both their writing and speaking abilities. “I wanted them to be confident in what they wrote, and they liked that. They liked sharing.”

Using their professional knowledge about literacy and their students’ individual needs, the participants expressed confidence in their effectiveness as teachers. Lea said:

I felt like I got through to them. I felt like I was a good teacher. I felt like they got a good education. I mean, I instilled the love of learning in them from the start….A few years ago, I had…probably 5 kids that spoke English [the others spoke Spanish as their native language]…and it was a phenomenal year. I'm going to tell you my one success. She wasn't my only success, but this will stand out to me to the day I die. Alexandra [pseudonym] came in reading nothing. No English, nothing. By the time Alexandra left my room [at the end of the year], she was writing a paragraph and reading fluent[ly]. Lea did not take all of the credit for Alexandra’s achievements. She attributed it to a combination of Alexandra’s strong desire to learn, support from her family at home, and the fact that Lea
spent considerable time in one-on-one and small group instruction. Mia relayed similar stories of working with beginning ELs who made a great deal of progress by the end of the school year. Relying on her professional knowledge to determine appropriate teaching strategies, and then trying them out in the classroom showed her what worked and what did not. For one student, Mia “kept on giving her opportunities to write, and…praising her” efforts, and she “felt like there was success” with that student. In fact, Mia believed her first 18 years of teaching “were really, really effective.”

**Caring about personal lives.** During our initial meeting before the first interview, Mia identified herself as a “people person.” She described how she naturally remembers details of students’ lives long after they have left her classroom. She routinely attends graduation ceremonies to congratulate former students, often recalling details of their lives even when they do not remember her name. This natural inclination toward focusing on students’ personal lives was evident in her pre-CCSS classroom where she would take time out of the day to process grief and loss when a student’s favorite pet passed away. This was an effort to connect personally with students and to teach important life skills. It was not surprising that all three teachers mentioned similar examples since most teachers choose their profession because they care for students (Ingersoll, 2003). Having spent my professional career connected to the elementary classroom in some way, I know that teachers care for their students’ personal lives. I empathized with many of my former students and witnessed examples of care in my colleagues’ actions. However, as I talked with Mia and Lea, the heightened level of care they expressed for their students struck me. This piece of the pre-CCSS narrative was exemplified in Mia’s end-of-the-year personalized letters.
Beginning with her semester of student teaching, Mia sent handwritten personal letters to each of her students at the end of the school year. They were mailed to arrive at the students’ homes on the last day of school. In the letters, she highlighted their successes, encouraged them in their challenges and noted reasons she enjoyed having them in class. She got to know her students during the year as they shared journal entries written about their favorite baseball player or what they wanted to be when they grew up. Students talked with her about their lives during moments of transition between classes or at the beginning and end of the day. She viewed the letters as gifts to her students and explained why she spent so much time writing them even when she was overwhelmed with busyness at the end of the year:

> You want to thank them for being in your class, and that they did work hard. ‘Cause I do feel like the kids worked hard. I just wanted to make them feel that I was proud of them. You know? That I was very proud of them. I…just kind of want[ed] to get my word across. I always cry the last day of school. So I could never get my, my, my . . . and I do. I don’t know why I cry every year at the last day of school. But I always wanted to make sure that they knew that they were special. I got to make them feel special.

Mia also used the letters to remind students of their accomplishments during the year in an effort to support their developing self-esteem.

This ethic of care stemmed from Mia’s personal identity. “I’m more like that type of person. I like to give cards. I’m not a Facebook person, but I am a card person. I’m very traditional in that.” Over the years of sending personalized letters to students, she saw the effects it had on her – “It makes you feel good to do something like that.” – and on her students – “Sometimes I got letters from parents through the summer [saying] that was really nice that you
did that. You know that they appreciated it….I got positive feedback [from students] the next year, too.”

As the teachers talked about their teaching prior to the implementation of the CCSS, this narrative of caring for students personally surfaced repeatedly. It held their pre-CCSS narrative together because it undergirded their desire to work diligently to design creative, hands-on projects that met students’ academic, linguistic, individual, and personal needs.

**Teaching in the Midst of CCSS: Focusing on Standardized Tests**

This study was conducted during the spring of the first year of CCSS implementation in Pennsylvania. Although state standards and aligned standardized assessments had guided the teachers for over a decade, this was the first year of the CCSS and its accompanying assessments. Even without formal training, the participants clearly understood the TLOs related to the Key Shifts. However, their in-the-midst narrative centered largely on the standardized tests: **Good teachers focus on the standards to increase students’ likelihood of achieving higher test scores.** The teachers correctly perceived that the CCSS high-stakes testing is intended to assess the TLOs through student performance (Newkirk, 2013). Thus, as the clock counted down toward the upcoming tests, the teachers felt pressured to cover more content, which influenced their pedagogical choices and led them to view students as ‘bubble kids’.

**Recognizing the TLOs as ‘the rules’**. The teachers reported having no knowledge of how, why, or who developed the CCSS: “I have no idea, to be honest with you.” Though they acknowledged the CCSS was affecting their work, they did not express a desire to understand this background information.

M: Actually it [CCSS development] does have an impact, [but] I feel like it is what it is, and I’m not going to change it. It’s here, you know? Oh well, I’m just going to
deal with it and do it. To find out where they came from? I don’t think I’m interested.

N: I’m not curious about it because I truly feel it’s the same thing as the [prior] standards just at a higher, faster pace. A higher level and a faster pace.

Mia and Nichole perceived that their years of experience had taught them that standards would continue to be adjusted, but that they were a reality of their professional lives. They understood the standards to be the ‘rules’ they followed.

Given the widespread push for professional development (i.e., training) related to CCSS implementation (TESOL International Association, 2013), I was surprised to learn the participants had received little formal instruction about the CCSS.

A: So either this past summer or at the beginning of the school year, what type of professional development about the CCSS did the district or the school provide you?

M: You know what? We really didn’t get much. I mean we had a few [state professional development] days, but they weren’t on Common Core….I mean I did have a text passage analysis [workshop]…, but to be perfectly honest with you it was completely useless because nobody knows what they’re looking for.

A: How did you learn about the CCSS?

N: Well, the PDE [Pennsylvania Department of Education] website. You can go on there. I have gone on there a little bit this year.

Lea described attending a regional workshop about responding to text dependent questions. The principal had sent an email with information and interested teachers signed up. She thought the workshop was beneficial in helping her better understand how to teach students to respond to this
of test question. Like Nichole, Lea also sought information about the standards and the tests from the PDE website. Lea was the only teacher who used practice tests aligned to the CCSS, which were publicly available on the state’s website. When asked, the other participants did not know current practice tests existed. Instead, they were using tests from the ELA curriculum, which they believed were similar to the new test, or last year’s test examples, knowing they did not directly correspond to the CCSS. This demonstrates that teachers received minimal instruction about the CCSS and assessments.

Consequently, the teachers turned to their newly adopted ELA curriculum for assistance in implementing the CCSS. The district chose the Reading Wonders series by McGraw-Hill partly because it aligned with CCSS. Mia clearly relied on the series for implementation guidance:

I think our…new series has a lot. I’m learning a lot from there. I think that’s where I’m getting my information from….I mean, I know this is not good, but I get a little stressed out looking at the Common Core things [the standards themselves]….I think our book is applying it— How do you teach it? I mean, you could look at [the standards] on your computer, but I want to know how they’re working things in my book. I feel like the text…when they give you the things like ‘Paraphrase this’, ‘Do this’… I feel like I’m learning more from the McGraw-Hill [teachers’ guide] because I know that’s written for the Common Core….Just looking at the standards wouldn’t do anything for me.

Only Lea had printed copies of the standards from the state department of education’s website. Mia and Nichole followed the CCSS printed in an appendix of their ELA curriculum. Nichole had “ripped them right out just so that [she] had them handy” for writing in her lesson plans and on the whiteboard in her classroom.
With little district- or school-level instruction and information being provided for the teachers, these findings illustrate the extent to which the teachers relied on their new ELA curriculum for guidance in CCSS implementation. Therefore, the influence of the RPC on the development of the curriculum was vital to the remainder of the study.

The RPC has been critiqued for its intent to direct practice (Newkirk, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2014; Pearson, 2013), even though the CCSS-ELA claimed to not tell teachers how to teach (NGA & CCSSO, 2014a). As a first step in determining the extent to which the RPC was influencing the teachers’ practice, I gave the participants a list of the TLOs. I asked them to read the statements and consider how well they aligned with what they thought the CCSS wanted teachers to do. All of the participants said the TLOs were descriptions of CCSS directives for teachers. Mia summed up her evaluation simply: “I think [they align] exactly. I mean I feel these are what they’re looking for.” Nichole read many of the statements aloud, determining how well they aligned as she read. She also assessed how well she was meeting some of the outcomes:

Number one, provide extensive experiences. Yes, that matches the Common Core….Design and lead text discussions - Yes. It does ask us to do that, and the kids are learning how….Lead all students to learn how to access complex tasks - Yes. In addition to complex text provide opportunities for slower readers to read appropriately, leveled text. It does allow us to do . . . I mean it is requiring us to do that….Ensure all students have daily opportunities to read texts of their choice - Yes. Yeah. That is the Common Core, and I do that. Select and utilize high quality text to provide students with access to a coherent sequenced body of knowledge - I really believe McGraw-Hill matches that with Common Core. So that’s a yes, too. High-quality text dependent questions and tasks, asking text dependent questions 80-90% of the time….This is what the Common Core
wants; however, I think this is our weak area in this school. Because [students] don’t come with background knowledge; therefore, we get stuck. We can ask one question that’s text-dependent and it might evolve into building more background.

Lea agreed that the TLOs aligned with CCSS, but she clarified some that did not align with the standardized assessments.

Um, absolutely…the first 4, but number 5 where it says, 'In addition to complex text, provide opportunities for slower readers to read appropriately leveled texts independently.’ I don't agree with that only because the test isn't appropriately leveled….Yes, the leveled readers are, but then once we throw the test at them, it's not. It's all on a higher level than they can function at….And number 2 – ‘ask questions drawing upon students' background knowledge and connections across texts sparingly and only after the focal text has been examined in depth’. That's another one that's very difficult because students don't have background knowledge.

It seemed she has misread the statement, so I attempted to restate it:

A: Okay, but do you think the CCSS emphasizes that focusing on the text is more important than accessing background knowledge?

L: Oh, yes, oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, absolutely.

When I revealed that the TLOs had been derived from the RPC, none of the teachers acknowledged having ever heard of it. This, in conjunction with their limited formal instruction about the CCSS and their clear understanding of the TLOs, draws a direct line from the RPC through the ELA curriculum to their practice. The teachers understood what the CCSS intended they do in practice as a result of engagement with their ELA curriculum. A marketing video on
the McGraw-Hill website (Stoughton, 2013) confirms the publisher aligned the *Reading Wonders* series with the RPC:

[The Reading/Writing Workshop book was] designed to teach close reading as described in the Publisher’s Criteria. (@ 1:15)

This scaffolding is exactly what the Publisher’s Criteria asked publishers to provide, and we did. So, with *Wonders*, there’s no more wondering about how to help all students to access complex text. It’s built right into the Instructional Pathway. (@ 9:46)

The Publisher’s Criteria also requires the majority of the tasks to be text dependent. Therefore, the Respond to Reading questions at the end of each main selection are 100% text dependent and require students to use evidence from the text to answer them. (@ 10:00)

Both Newkirk (2013) and Pearson (2013) questioned the degree to which the RPC would undermine the stated intent of the CCSS to leave implementation decisions to teachers. Concerning this study’s participants, the answer is ‘yes’. Since the teachers looked to the curricular materials for implementation guidance, the authors of the RPC directed their practice in many ways.

**A reading sergeant drilling skills.** In reflecting on her practice during this first year of CCSS implementation, Mia declared, “I’m not a teacher any more. I just feel like [I’m] drilling them and drilling them with this text evidence....I don’t feel like I’m a language arts teacher any more. I feel like a reading sergeant just drilling skills.” Lea expressed similar feelings:

I guess I have this mindset that I know how hard this test is going to be for these kids, and I’m worried for them. I’m trying to overcompensate for them...I’m trying every day to pound as many skills into them as I can....I always taught test-taking skills. I always
hammered them. But other years, I’d hammer them, but then I’d move on….Where this year I feel like I keep hammering the same skills just so they get the basics ‘cause they’re lacking the basics this year.

In addition to test-taking skills, the teachers repeatedly discussed the types of literacy skills they were teaching (i.e., drilling, pounding, hammering), each of which aligned with the three Key Shifts identified by the CCSS authors (NGA & CCSSO, 2014b): 1) regular practice with complex texts and their academic language; 2) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational; and 3) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

**Complex text.** All three teachers discussed how many of the texts in the new *Reading Wonders* series were indeed complex. In fact, they characterized them as much more difficult than their previous curricula. There were many texts available as part of the series. Each student had a Reading/Writing Workshop book and a Literature Anthology. The Workshop book contained a text to introduce the week’s lesson as well as several pages focusing on particular skills (e.g., cause and effect, synonyms and antonyms, rereading). The Anthology had two or three lengthier texts that were intended to be the bulk of the week’s reading materials. Additional texts included leveled readers and skill cards with short reads aligned to specific skills. The teachers described the Workshop book as the most useful because the text was generally accessible to more of their students. The length and complexity of the texts in the Anthology proved to be more challenging. Lea found that even the students she described as reading on grade level had difficulty completing tasks based upon the Anthology reading passages because they contained vocabulary words on a much higher-grade level. More than once, Lea stated that
she believed the passages were written above what was previously understood to be a fifth grade reading level.

Lea also found complex texts in Study Island, a computer-based program designed to give students targeted practice of their state’s standards and assessments. She described a passage from a Study Island assessment that had all of the fifth grade teachers bewildered:

We were stumped. I actually took my computer to many different teachers around and said, “What did you get from this? What did you get from this? What did you get from this?”….It was amazing [the poems] they’re asking a fifth grader to be able to analyze and then internalize and then write about it. All in a theme question. Previous years you saw - What is the theme of the passage? Maybe [it was] the little boy cried wolf, one of those. Well, now this year they had to take this poem, and they had to literally analyze it to the point of turning it around. It was a mother speaking from when the baby was unborn to then her baby being born. First of all, what child would know about that as a 10 year old? And then internalize the theme that the mother was trying to get across? It was very difficult.

Mia routinely used the leveled readers that accompanied the *Wonders* series. She described a week’s worth of lessons on biographies. One activity involved students reading biographies that aligned with their proficiency levels, including one designed specifically for ELs. Mia chose to use that book with her Level 1 and 2\(^3\) EL students, which proved to be too difficult for independent work:

I would do the EL (leveled reader), and I’m telling you, they're still difficult. I mean…they're very difficult. …They had to read the biography as a group….They [had

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\(^3\) On a scale of 1-5, these are the lowest levels of English proficiency as determined by standardized language assessments.
to] read it together….I would work with them in a small group….just to get them into knowing a biography.

Mia found the complexity of the EL leveled reader necessitated scaffolding for students. They could not comprehend the content or grasp the requisite skills independently.

Although Nichole acknowledged that the texts in the ELA curriculum were complex, she did not find this to be as much of a problem as Mia and Lea:

People are complaining that the stories are high [reading level], but I’m finding that by going through it faster, the kids like it. I’m not going over and over it like we used to. We’re just hitting the key things that we think are interesting and moving on. So, I find them more attentive to the reading this year.

Nichole had made the professional decision to “personally motivate [herself] to move away from the mastery of [skills] because some children just don’t have the backgrounds to master.” She wanted to keep instruction “fresh and new so that [students] knew after this week, they’re done with these stories.” This decision contributed to her assessment that text complexity was not a negative issue for her students.

*It's not the skills; it's the texts.* Mia and Lea did not judge the skills as being too difficult for students; rather it was the text complexity that presented a barrier. Lea stated it clearly:

I could teach those skills on *their level* if the passage could be on their level, but they're not able to comprehend the passage. I feel like if you asked these kids how many people could tell me 'theme' in here? I think probably 98% of them would say, "It's the life lesson the author's trying to teach." And that's what I try to get across - What's the big idea the author's trying to teach? They could tell you that. But, for them to find it in a passage on what the state is telling me is a fifth grade passage? It's difficult….Out of that
98% that could tell you what theme meant; 10% in this particular class—and that's gauging a little high—would be able to find the theme on a fifth grade passage that is given to these kids. Even the leveled readers that are on the fifth grade level, they’re difficult passages. Now, if I give them an Apprentice one [leveled reader] or an EL one, do I think they'd be able to pick out the theme? Absolutely. But on the grade-level...

Lea did not find the leveled readers designed for lower proficiency levels to be as difficult as Mia did. However, I did not ask whether she thought students could read and comprehend the text independently or only in a group setting. Her point is clear, though. Her critique is not with the need to challenge students or with the skills the standards require, but with the complexity of the texts they are given. As demonstrated above, she felt confident in her ability to teach the skills to her students, many of whom are at beginning levels of English literacy. However, both she and her students will be judged by the students’ abilities to demonstrate their skills on grade-level passages on the standardized tests, not on passages that align with their current proficiency levels. For example, her student that is reading on a second grade level will take the fifth grade ELA test with his classmates. This is the crux of Lea’s contention with complex text:

**L:** You know, the passages…are so high that the kids actually have to have quite a bit of background knowledge (a) to understand them and (b) to get that deeper comprehension….They can’t even understand some of the words in the passages. In previous years the passages were hard, but they could use the context clues. [This year]…some of the words, you’re baffled that the kids are ever going to remotely understand it. It’s a higher level. I don’t know how else to say it. It’s a higher level that they really struggle with.
A: By higher level, are you saying that if you were to run a readability test on some of the passages, they would be at a higher-grade level?
L: Yeah, absolutely. I definitely think it’s above a fifth grade level.

I was curious to see how accurate Lea’s assessment of the readability levels were, so I found the fifth grade test samples online and pasted the individual passages into a Flesch-Kincaid⁴ readability scale found online (www.readability-score.com). Lea was correct. Four of the fifth grade sample test passages had readability levels of Grades 7.0, 7.9 (seventh grade, ninth month), 8.6 (eighth grade, sixth month), and 12.0. Despite these concerns, Lea and Mia continue to present their students with the complex text in their ELA curriculum, in the Study Island program, and in the practice tests, because that is what the TLOs require.

**Using text evidence.** The TLOs require teachers to ask questions grounded in the text and to require students to support their responses with text evidence. Although all three teachers mentioned the necessity of this key shift, it was most salient for Mia and Nichole. Mia described several examples of how her teaching had changed to align with the emphasis on text evidence:

Every day [pre-CCSS] we would share our journal entries. Now it’s just like, “Okay, proofread to see if there are any mistakes in it.” When we would [read a story, we would] discuss it, not so much like citing evidence….Now it’s just citing evidence with the facts, ‘Okay, where did you find that? Where did you find that?’

She described how each week of the Literature Anthology had two stories that students were asked to read and then use text evidence to compare or contrast them. “That’s a big thing – text to text.” I asked whether her teaching aligned with this emphasis and if she taught that way before CCSS:

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⁴ The Flesch-Kincaid is widely regarded and also used outside of education, serving as the mandated requirement in many states for legal documents such as insurance policies.
I do. I do. Yes. I would have done it, but I would have done other things, too….As I said, I used to do speeches and more getting them to think. We weren’t [flippant] about the text [before, but] we used a variety of activities. I think you’re limited now. Everything is like text evidence and…comparing text-to-text…Yeah, I would have done this, but not as much as I do now.

Mia expressed resentment at the way the emphasis on text evidence had taken time away from other activities she thought were important.

Conversely, Nichole saw the change in her pedagogy as a positive one for students. She reviewed the ELA curriculum over the summer and was concerned about its guidance on student-led text discussions:

When I was reviewing it a little bit over the summer, I was thinking, ‘Oh my gosh. This is never going to happen….They’re not going to be able to do that.’ But, you have to change your mindset to what’s coming, what’s new. It’s not easy. And then sure enough, I sat with them [small groups of students] for the first couple months, and I was asking the questions, pointing out where the questions were in the book. Now sure enough, I don’t have to say, “You’re a leader, you’re a leader [in asking questions].” They’ll ask each other the questions on their own. Then they’ll say, “Okay, can you prove it?” Then they’ll have to tell whoever is leading the group the proof. I’m really surprised, and I think as the years develop it…has the capability of getting stronger….I’m seeing major gain [in this area] that I didn’t think I’d see.

Throughout these academic discussion activities, Nichole taught her students the meaning of text evidence. “I’ve taught [them to] list the page, list the paragraph, and list the sentence. That’s text evidence – those three things: page, paragraph, and sentence. So then they’re able to give me the
text evidence [when I ask questions].” These changes to Nichole’s pedagogy were a result of the CCSS implementation recommended in the new ELA curriculum. She did not think the students capable of these types of academic discussions until the curriculum pushed her to give it a try.

**Building knowledge through non-fiction.** The participants did not highlight this third key shift as much as the other two. Lea mentioned allowing students to choose books for required book reports, which included a mixture of fiction and non-fiction. Both Lea and Nichole recalled using fiction texts for small group study or class read-alouds in past years; however, neither was doing so this year. The teachers relied almost exclusively on the texts their ELA curriculum provided, and many of the texts they described were non-fiction. For example, the teachers described recent curriculum-aligned lessons that they felt were successful. Nichole’s lesson was based upon science concepts of inventions and included a passage about Benjamin Franklin. Mia described a week of lessons on biographies. The focus text was about Abraham Lincoln. In this case, instead of having students read the story independently or in small groups, she adjusted her pedagogy and read the story aloud to the class because “non-fiction is hard. Biographies are hard.” The goal of one lesson was to use text evidence to answer questions about the reading:

M: We would discuss the story, and then they would go over the questions. I think the questions are good. I never skip the questions [in the text at the end of the passage]. It's always the text evidence. I always do the questions. What we would do is, we would go through each question, and they would work alone or with a partner. I would pair those EL students up with another person, and then I would see how they were doing, and then we would share them and model how to write
them in their notebook. They have to know how to restate a question, and they have a hard time with that. A very hard time with that.

A: Can you give me an example of one of those questions, and how the students would respond?

M: What is the author's point of view about slavery? The author's point of view about slavery is...and then they would use evidence. Using evidence. I always try to say, “Use ‘the author stated’.”…So, they have to go back and use 'the author stated this' and write their answer. So, I would be trying to train them like that. I mean, hopefully they're getting it.

A: What is the purpose of them restating the question in the response and using phrases like, ‘the author says’?

M: Everything's text evidence. They want you to show that you know that….This is the biggest skill I think of this reading [curriculum] - text evidence….If I had to pick a skill that was most popular…or the most demanding, it's the text evidence. So, obviously it's very important, and obviously I think these people [curriculum authors] are helping to do the test, so that's why we're doing text evidence.

In this example, Mia demonstrated how important skill development was to her current teaching. Lessons with non-fiction text about Abraham Lincoln and slavery are rich with opportunities for knowledge development beyond skills. For example, students could have learned about slavery’s history, explored its effects on individuals and people groups, and discussed its current existence. However, the CCSS emphasis on skills formed Mia’s teaching more than these other possibilities.
Interestingly, none of the teachers mentioned knowledge development beyond knowledge of skills. They focused on the CCSS required skills related to nonfiction texts (e.g., using context clues, finding text evidence, comparing and contrasting), but they did not relate their teaching to the development of other types of knowledge.

**Skills are necessary.** Even though Mia and Lea were frustrated by being compelled to “pound” skills into their students, none of the teachers believed the skills were unnecessary. Lea thought students needed to know how to “use context clues…to use text evidence…to answer text-dependent questions.” She expressed an autonomous view of literacy (Street, 1984) when she described the purpose of the standards and the required skills:

You want them to be literate in their life….We're going to have our ones who are going to work in an auto body shop, but they still need to be literate. They still need to be able to comprehend a text. You don't want to have illiterate kids out there in the world. We do, but, you want to have more literate students who are understanding text than that are not….You want them to be able to function in daily society, to be successful in daily society, whether they're going to be an architect or…a mechanic. You want them to be able to function on a daily basis and be literate, you know.

Nichole agreed, although she recognized that these literacy skills did not guarantee success for every student:

N: I don’t think [these standards and skills are] necessarily a bad thing. It’s just different. In today’s modern world, I think it was necessary to change to the Common Core. Does it help these type[s] of children? No. But does it help other children? Yes.

A: Other children meaning those who are not EL or are higher ELs?
N: Yes. Anyone higher. Anyone with a background of educational opportunity, educational importance and influence in their homes, outside of their homes, outside of school. I think this was necessary to keep up with the standards across our nation.

Nichole realized the required literacy skills would not benefit all students, but this was not an expression of an ideological view of literacy. Instead, she perceived the situation to be a symptom of the students’ background and home life, indicating the autonomous model’s tenet of individual responsibility.

In a later interview, Lea described her uncertainty with all of the skills the CCSS required. She acknowledged that she successfully completed college without the CCSS:

I think what they’re [CCSS] trying to get across is they’re making these students more ready for the world. I think I was quite ready without all of this when I went to school. I did fine in college. I’m a little ditzy at times, but it’s okay. I made it. You don’t have to be book smart….Some of the best book smart people are very unsuccessful in life. You know what I mean?

Her thoughts align with Bomer and Maloch (2011), who claim that the CCSS authors “provide no substantive evidence that the skills in the standards are in fact contributive to college success [or] to career” (p. 42).

**Good teachers follow the rules.** To varying degrees, the teachers followed the TLOs as they understood them. They utilized complex texts, pushed students to provide text evidence, and relied on nonfiction texts, although they did not focus on knowledge development outside of skills. In other words, they generally followed the rules for CCSS implementation outlined in the curriculum because that is what they believed they were supposed to do. Compliance was a
powerful thread in the teachers’ in-the-midst narrative. Nichole claimed her years of experience had taught her to look pragmatically at changing demands: “You see well, this is what’s new now. This is what needs to be done, and instead of bucking the system you kind of just have to go with it.” Mia, too, had assumed this posture in responding to forced change:

Yeah, I just kind of go with the flow, you know? Whatever. You don’t like it? There’s really nothing to do about it. So, you just kind of adapt and change. Okay, what’s it going to be this year? You just change and every tiny little thing changes. It happens every week it seems like there’s a different thing that they’re focusing on. One year it was questioning, and then it was small group. It’s just everything. I think we’re all, we’re all, we’re all so overwhelmed.

Although Mia had reconciled herself to change being a part of her teaching career, the CCSS related changes seemed to weigh heavily on her. During another interview, she claimed to be open to change and open to learning new ways to improve her practice. However, the CCSS changes were not completely welcomed:

I did change, but I think we had no choice [but] to change. I am open to change, but I'm feeling like…I did change my teaching style, but that's what they're wanting for the test.

So, I guess we had no, no...there was no...you had to change because of this test.

Nichole and Mia wavered between attitudes of indifference and resentment toward the CCSS changes. But in the end, they typically chose to adhere to the required changes because they trusted that those making the rules and creating the curriculum knew more than they did about what their students needed.
Nichole supported her decision to follow the TLOs by expressing agreement with a sociocultural narrative (Burns, 2012) that there are particular skills students need to acquire to be successful in the 21st century:

I don’t think developmentally these children are ready for it. But, you know, that’s the way our future’s going, and you go with it. The demands of colleges, the higher-level thinking of high schools, the AP [advanced placement] courses they’re offering…what they’re demanding. For our children to be successful in higher education, they’re going to have to know this. So that’s the way the world works. There’s more information to be learned so of course it’s going to get harder.

Nichole’s professional judgment was that the standards were not developmentally appropriate for her students. However, she chose to trust that the CCSS authors knew the universal requirements for 21st century life and how to prepare students to be successful in it.

This reliance on the curriculum writers to know best was prevalent throughout Nichole’s interviews:

At first you’re hesitant to do that as a teacher because you want the control. And I thought, you know what? I’m going to go with it and see what happens because that’s what they’re [the curriculum writers] recommending, and that’s what the core standards want. So at first it takes some getting used to.

The curriculum units were divided into weeks of lessons. It recommended that teachers spend one five-day school week on each week of lessons. Despite harsh winter weather, which caused numerous school delays, Nichole chose to follow the curriculum plan:

There’s so much [in the curriculum], I am picking and choosing what I find important. Every year it could change because of the classroom that you have. However, I made it
my own personal goal to stick with five days a unit and then move on whether it’s a snow day or no snow day….because I want to get through as much as possible.

Nichole had internalized the guidelines, or rules, of the curriculum to the degree that she identified the five-day plan as her personal goal. This desire to follow the rules and be seen as a team player has been noted in other studies (Booher-Jennings, 2006; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004).

Feeling pressured by testing. Although the teachers described pedagogical changes initiated by the TLOs, the strongest pressure for change stemmed from the looming standardized tests. In fact, the teachers perceived the CCSS to be very similar to the standards they used previously. Lea said:

The standards aren't much different than they used to be. There's a little bit added on, but I felt like they just tacked more numbers on the front of them and added CC. It's a deeper understanding. It's the content [that is deeper], but the standards are pretty much the standards. They pretty much stayed the same.

Like Mia and Nichole, Lea accepted that standards will always be part of her pedagogy, and she does not have a problem with that. Even if the CCSS were repealed in her state, as they have been in others, Lea would still expect to have standards:

[I would use] more hands-on projects, but still projects that applied to the standards.
I’d…make sure they’re using the text evidence…context clues…identifying word roots, but…students could choose the topics….We’d still be sticking to the standards, but more student choice of what they wanted to do.

Lea’s frustration was not so much with the standards, but with the high stakes testing tied to them: “It’s the test, the test. I don’t hate the standards.” The standardized tests were the focal
point for her. Several times during our discussions, I asked a question related to the standards, and Lea answered with a comment about the testing. For example:

A: Is there anything else you wish policy and decision makers knew about the implementation of the CCSS?

L: Um, just that there can't be a one-size fits all test for a million different size kids. There's not a one-size-fits-all answer to the world, but we're giving them this one-size-fits-all test. If you really want to sum it up, you know?

The efforts she saw to standardize the unique students in her classroom (Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013) disturbed Lea. Her concerns align with Williams (2005), who noted that the “pressure of standardized testing disconnects literacy education” (p. 154) from its primary purpose of encouraging students to read and write to communicate with other people. Other scholars have also discussed the problems with positioning students in standardizing ways (Dutro & Selland, 2012; Gangi & Reilly, 2013)

Although the standards and the TLOs were designed to direct practice (Newkirk, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2014), for these participants it was the upcoming standardized tests that compelled their pedagogical change. I asked Mia if she thought the standards were creating positive change, if they were helping the students:

I think they're helping the students prepare for the test. I do think they're helping the students prepare for the test because we're doing what the test wants us to do. We're finding text evidence. We're restating....I think we're just doing that, which is great because that's what the test is, but other things are not happening, you know?

Even though Mia acknowledged the directives came from the TLOs, she had determined the purpose of the standards was to prepare students to take the tests. This belief guided many of her
pedagogical decisions, too. For example, before the CCSS, Mia often chose to have students explain their thinking orally, specifically as a way to support ELs’ language development. Now, she gives more writing assignments because “that’s what they’re going to be doing on the [state test], which is important.”

Mia also chose to eliminate some teaching activities that she thought the standards did not explicitly require or that did not prepare students for the assessments. This thinking aligns with the CCSS authors’ intent as described in the RPC: “The criteria illustrate what shifts must take place…including paring away elements that distract or are at odds with the Common Core State Standards” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1). For the past 25 years, Mia had taught an egg-themed day in conjunction with the Easter holiday. The day involved students working in teams to complete academic activities with eggs. She decided it was not possible this year due to the uncertainty she felt about the new standardized tests:

I would never be able to even think of doing that this year….Maybe once I get the test I’ll feel like, ‘Okay I would be able to do that.’ Maybe next year….I just feel like I don’t know exactly what the test is going to be about, or how prepared they’re going to be when they get it. So I think it’s a trial and error year, but it’s a shame ‘cause these kids aren’t getting anything I normally do. This year it’s a shame, yeah.

Previous students routinely reminded Mia how much they had enjoyed Egg Day and asked if she was doing it again. She was disappointed and discouraged that this year’s class would not have the same fun learning experience:

Lea also focused on the tests when describing her current pedagogical decisions.

I'm just covering the material. At this point of the year, knowing the tests are 5 days away, I'm just covering the material. I'm not doing anything else. I'm not making sure
there's anything near mastery. I'm hoping, but starting Monday, we're just covering material. I will just stand and spiel. [Angela: How did you decide that's what you need to do next week?] It has to be touched upon. You know? I have to review. Most of the skills are touched upon that I know are going to be on the test. Even though we didn't get to Theme 6 [in the ELA curriculum], I still covered them in different ways….I still know the kids are pretty much ready for the test as what I deem ready. Not what the CCSS state people deem ready, because I could be here in August and I'm still not going to have them CCSS ready. I'm not, and I don't think anybody else is either.

Lea chose to cover content and skills she perceived were needed for the upcoming tests, regardless of how well students understood the material. At this point in the school year, the tests made it impossible for her to make pedagogical decisions based upon her professional knowledge or her students’ individual needs. She simply needed to do what the TLOs told her to do and cover the material, hoping that students would remember:

I just hope the day they’re given the test that they remember, ‘Okay you know I remember [my teacher] teaching me to look this up, or I remember her teaching me this is how I look for an antonym to identify the word’….I teach the skills as best I can.

Everything is about the test.

Nichole adjusted the way she graded student writing because of the test requirements:

I had to change my rubric for writing. I used to do the [one previously recommended by the state] that had focus, content, organization, style, and conventions. Now they shortened it down to four, and I was like [the other one was so] ingrained in me, but I have to adopt this new way. I have to adopt it. There is a rubric [in the new ELA curriculum], and what I did was I put it on cards….I put it on cards so that it forced
myself….I really had to force myself. This is the new way. You must do it the new way.
You know so what I did, I made it important to myself so that when I gave it to the kids, the kids would understand as well….I had to throw [my old rubric] away. I had to let it go.

This is another example of Nichole submitting her professional knowledge to the demands of the curriculum, and ultimately, the standardized tests. She perceived that she had no choice but to change her rubric if students were going to be prepared for the writing portion of the assessments.

**Setting them up to fail.** This focus on testing frustrated Lea primarily because the tests were “setting kids up to fail.” She told me about one of her students that was reading on a second grade level. Throughout the school year, she had adapted the curriculum to meet his needs in an effort to help him learn the required content and skills. She predicted what would happen during the upcoming state testing:

> And now, in two weeks I’m going to throw…a fifth grade test at him, which I feel like the readability is on a seventh grade level. What did I just set that child up to do? I put this test in front of him. He’s going to panic. He’s going to answer the best he can hopefully, and he’s going to get back a Below Basic [score]. I can pretty much go through and tell you who’s going to get what. I think any teacher can, and this year it’s going to be a lot lower…than what it was in the past.

In describing her actions, as required by her position as a teacher, Lea assumed the blame for student failure. Early in our discussions, she described the tests as setting students up to fail, but in this excerpt, as well in at least one other, she took the responsibility upon herself – “What did I just set that child up to do? We’re setting these kids up to fail.” This realization makes her
“want to cry because they’re not going to pass.” She felt that she had followed the rules by implementing the TLOs. She had given her best effort, yet in doing so, she believed she had also guaranteed her students’ failure.

**Feeling pressured by time.** The pressure of the upcoming tests was most clearly expressed in the teachers’ discussions of time. Repeatedly, their reasoning for pedagogical choices centered on lack of time. Lea explained how she and another fifth grade teacher had thought about doing a hands-on project for teaching prefixes and suffixes:

> We were going to do this big project…on prefixes and suffixes and kind of make like this really cute word wall with different prefixes and suffixes….We were going to do it out of plates and make different pies of prefixes and pies of suffixes. Instead, I handed out a list. I made them memorize it….I gave a quiz on it, and we moved right on….We did none of [the project].

When I asked about the reason for this decision, she said:

> I didn’t have time. I had to move on to the next concept. I'm already units behind, units behind. I don't have time. I was just thinking about [that project] last night, and I just thought…it would be amazing. It would just be amazing if students could display their work and show their work at their level, but creatively. I've taken the creativeness out of teaching, out of students, you know? As long as I think they've grasped the concept, we move on. We don't do anything creative beyond that. Creativity's gone.

The curriculum’s pacing guides spurred Lea’s belief that she was “units behind”. These guides were designed to ensure that teachers cover the required content and skills before standardized testing in the spring. The curriculum was divided into six units of five weeks each. The recommended plan was for teachers to cover one week of lesson plans during each five-day
school week. Nichole had “made it her personal goal to stick with” the weekly plan “whether it’s a snow day or no snow day…as recommended by the company.” Although Mia did not follow the plan exactly, she concluded that she was keeping up pretty well:

I'm on Unit 3, Week 5, which…seems like it's further than anybody else, but with snow days and stuff like that. It was crazy, but I try to [to keep up]….I think you could do [what is recommended] in a week.

Mia was able to stay close to the recommended pace because she agreed with Nichole that mastery of content could not be the goal:

I know some [teachers] get frustrated. They're so far behind because they want to master it, but they're going to get. We're going to revisit the skills. I said, "You can't get frustrated.” They [the curriculum authors] want us to move. They don't want us to sit there on Unit 1 and just master everything and do every activity.

When asked, Nichole said she did not know what the result of this new approach of following the pacing guides rather than focusing on mastery would be. However, she felt positive about it about at this point in the school year:

I have yet to see….It will be interesting. The one thing I can say is I feel a lot happier with the results for the children who are very capable. A lot of years have gone by where, as our population changes, [we] have actually made the [native] English-speaking students wait for learning. I feel strongly that by going at this faster pace I am definitely enriching more than I have in the last five years. [With this pace, the English-speaking students] don’t have to wait or repeat things that they already know….I also think by going a little faster pace, the other children are wanting to replicate that….I find it’s just a better system to go faster so that the children who have that home support, their [families
are] seeing that their kids are learning what the other children in the other schools are learning. I think that was necessary….I think it’s more exciting. It’s more vibrant.

Nichole’s decision to follow the curriculum’s pacing guide was undergirded by her belief that she had been lax at meeting the needs of native English-speaking students. Based upon comments from prior students’ families and experiences with her own children, Nichole felt she had ignored these students in the past when she focused on the academic and linguistic needs of the schools’ growing EL population. The recommended faster pacing gave her the freedom she desired to adjust her focus.

Conversely, Lea’s professional knowledge and opinions did not align with Mia’s and Nichole’s. At the time of our interviews, Lea was on Unit 2, Week 4. She acknowledged that she should be on Unit 4 if she “was following the curriculum.” Her reasoning was that she refused to ignore the goal of mastery, whether students were able to achieve it or not:

I cannot just keep flying, so I– well, we’re supposed to spend a week. I spend an average of two weeks on a week [in the curriculum]. Until I give the weekly test, and until I go over all the skills– because I will not move on with a limited understanding of a skill– I will not move on.

These examples demonstrate that the teachers’ professional understandings interacted differently with the curriculum directives. Although each acknowledged what they “should be doing,” their degree of discomfort with the directives was tied to how closely these aligned with their professional knowledge.

**Knowing the bubble kids.** As the teachers implemented the CCSS in accordance with the TLOs and the curriculum directives, they found it more difficult to see their students as
individuals, unrelated to testing. This became visible when Lea and Mia referred to some of their students as ‘bubble kids’.

Lea described how the pressure she felt to cover skills meant she had less time to work with students individually or in small groups. An aide assisted her for one 40-minute class period a day. Even with two adults in the room, they had difficulty getting around to all of the students, so they had to make choices. She explained how they chose whom to work with:

I have to say, too, this is probably not good to say, but [some students are] not going to pull a score. So if you have to decide…then I’m going to spend more time with the person who can move from a Below Basic to a Basic [score]. I’m sorry, but any person’s going to. The [others] don’t count for me. They don’t count for scores, you know?

The students who scored only a few points below the next proficiency level on last year’s standardized tests were the ones deemed most likely to be able to bump up this year. These “bubble kids” are deemed to be “on the threshold; finely balanced between success and failure” (Martin, 2015, para. 1). Bubble kids result from the practice known as educational triage and entails teachers dividing “students into safe cases, cases suitable for treatment, and hopeless cases and [then] rationing resources to focus on those students most likely to improve a school’s test scores” (Booher-Jennings, 2006, p. 758).

Lea described meeting with the school’s administrators each summer to review test scores and determine students who could improve the following year:

We have to gain. We can’t be losing…We’ve been trained in that over the years. Look at the bubble kids. Look at the bubble kids….I’m going to focus more time on them than the ones who don’t speak [English] because they’re not giving me a score.
Mia said she knew who her bubble kids were without having to look at a list. She referred to them as Basic or Proficient kids:

Yeah, I mean there are kids I feel could that you could push up from Basic to Proficient kids. We really want to work towards them….I know who could be that. I know kids that would probably be Below Basic that are always going to be Below Basic….That’s how you talk about kids….I just think that’s terrible.

Labeling students according to their standardized test scores seemed to be an assumed practice, even though both teachers expressed discomfort with the term. Lea said she realized it was not a good practice, and Mia thought it was “terrible.” However, she went on to describe how the pressure she felt from the high-stakes testing engendered this type of response:

Knowing that you have that test in front of you, and this is sad to say, but I can honestly say that when someone says they’re leaving the first thing in my mind are scores….We had a student that left yesterday. He was the cutest thing in the world. He was the nicest kid…but he was a low test scorer. And how sad is that? I just think that’s terrible. We don’t look at the kid. We look at [the fact that] he’s not going to score well….Because the scores are so much, you’re not looking at kids like students. This kid was a great kid to have in the classroom. He tried hard, but we’re measured by our scores. So we look at a kid by their scores.

Mia was uncomfortable with being pressured to see this student as “a liability rather than as an opportunity to promote individual student growth” (Booher-Jennings, 2006, p. 759). Like Lea, she also said the concept of bubble kids affected her teaching decisions of who to work with and which skills to address.
Nichole provided a counter-example. Since third grade is the first year of mandated standardized testing, she does not have prior scores for her current students. “We are the base score,” she said. Instead, the third grade teachers look at the scores of their previous year’s students and try to gauge concepts with which those students seemed to struggle. In this way, they attempt to determine areas of weakness and strength in their teaching to make adjustments for their current students. By not having scores for specific students, the idea of a bubble kid was not as strong for Nichole.

**Responding to Tensions between the Narratives**

Many narratives existed on the participants’ landscape at North Clarksburg Elementary. Only a few have been discussed above, but they are the ones that most closely correspond to the questions this study investigated. When the CCSS narrative entered and the teachers’ *in-the-midst* narratives began to develop, their pre-CCSS narratives were not deleted. Instead, all of these narratives existed simultaneously. They were not static, but moved about bumping into one another and causing tensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). The teachers dealt with these tensions daily, making both explicit and implicit decisions related to them and exhibiting a range of responses.

**Rule-follower or decision-maker?** Even though the teachers understood the TLOs and felt pressured to make pedagogical decisions based upon them, they did not always do so. They described examples of believing that good teachers followed the rules, but in other instances, their professional knowledge trumped the rules.

Nichole utilized the texts available in the curriculum in ways she thought were best for her students. For instance, she gave her students choices about which passages to read and when they would read them:
We have a Workshop text story, an Anthology story, another anthology story to compare and contrast, and the leveled readers. I put them [titles] on the board every week so that if [students] have any down time, [they can choose what to read]. If they like the leveled readers, they can use the leveled readers. The Workshop text is in their book in their desk. They can pull that out. If they’re bored with those, and they want to do the anthology stories, they’re welcome to get a partner or read by themselves.

This was in contrast to the curriculum’s suggested lesson plan, which recommended the teacher guide students through reading and completing questions or activities related to each of the Workshop and Anthology passages. The intent was for students to be grouped by reading ability to work through the corresponding leveled readers. Nichole’s choice aligned with her professional belief about literacy development. She contended that reluctant or struggling readers needed to be given “anything they want to read” and that more proficient readers needed to be challenged with longer texts. She was able to accomplish this goal by giving students the freedom to choose their own reading materials from the available texts, thus ignoring the curriculum’s directives.

Lea believed that part of her responsibility as a literacy teacher was to “instill a love of reading in” her students. Taking more time with the texts than the publisher recommended was one way she did this:

I do feel like I spend more time than technically what the textbook company or what the school district allows me to, but I feel like my students are successful. [They’re] more successful than if I just said, ‘Oh, I don’t care if you get the concept. I’m moving on’. The textbook company [representative said], “Well, just don’t read the stories.” These kids love to be read to. I’m promoting literacy. I’m not promoting literacy by saying,
“Okay, we’re going to read just the first page of Blancaflor and then we’re going to move on to From Tale to Table. What am I doing? I’m not promoting any type of literacy. I want to promote a love of learning, a love of reading, because kids don’t love to read. A lot of kids do not. If I take a poll I’d say 80% of kids do not love to read….They need to learn to love reading.

Even though at a recent workshop, a McGraw-Hill representative had suggested the teachers just read the first page or so of each passage to keep up with the recommended pacing guide, Lea’s professional judgment said it was not appropriate for her students. This is one example of how she chose to be a decision-maker instead of a rule-follower.

All three participants described using their professional knowledge to choose teaching strategies different than those the curriculum recommended. Mia acknowledged that she read through the curriculum’s teacher guide and that sometimes, even with 25 years of experiences, she picked up new ideas for teaching. However, many times she “looked at their ideas” and thought, “I know a better way to do this.” This was particularly true in regards to writing instruction where she typically ignored the curriculum guidance and followed her own plans. Her classroom had a strong focus on writing, and she drew from past experiences to design lessons and assignments that were appropriate for her students.

Although Nichole had chosen to follow the curriculum’s five-day lesson plan structure, she was “picking and choosing what [she] found important” from the available activities. As previously noted, the curriculum directives had clearly affected her pedagogy, but she had not given her teaching or students over to them. She made choices about which parts of the curriculum she would or would not implement based upon her professional knowledge of what might work and of her students. She acknowledged that some of her teaching in subsequent years
“could change because of the [different students in her] classroom”; thus, she intends to continue relying on her decision-making abilities.

Lea, too, drew on her past experience and knowledge to make pedagogical decisions. She described some of her lesson planning process:

Well, [I look at the curriculum as a] guide. Where [is] the book going? What [are] the skills? But, I use a lot more than the book. Like, I pull other worksheets that I had from previous years. I pull questions from Study Island. I pull [from] websites….I just gauge the skills that they want taught and then from there use all different resources….We would use the story [in the Workshop or Anthology texts], but then we would also branch out a little bit and use…an accompanying story.

The curriculum guided Lea’s choice of skills and texts, but she used her professional judgment to add to it to better meet the needs of her students and her own teaching style. However, the TLOs and the pressure of the upcoming tests seemed to more heavily influence Lea’s decisions than Mia’s or Nichole’s. Even though she made many decisions that aligned with her pedagogical beliefs, her pre-CCSS narrative of being creative and using hands-on projects had “basically gone out the window.”

To scaffold or not to scaffold. The RPC is clear that teachers should scaffold instruction for students only when it is absolutely necessary. The TLOs do not forbid scaffolding techniques, but teachers are cautioned not to use scaffolding as a way to simplify or otherwise replace the complex text the CCSS require (e.g., TLOs: S:7.2B, S:8.5A; S:9.1A; S:9.2A; S:10.1A; S:10.4A). However, each of the participants has taught ELs long enough to know that scaffolding is essential, particularly when working with beginning language learners (Gibbons, 2002). They chose to scaffold in various ways.
Mia allowed ELs to complete some assignments orally while other students wrote their answers:

So that was guided, and it was all oral….Oh, absolutely, [I adapt]….I mean, they don’t write down everything….A lot of times, even with the journal entry they get frustrated….So, if they can restate it and just give a sentence….that’s big.

Nichole adapted the weekly tests from the *Reading Wonders* texts so that students could experience more success than she thought they would otherwise:

They [the curriculum] have weekly tests. They have unit tests….I could do that, but I don’t think [my students would] be successful. I don’t want to get hung up on not being successful. I want to stay in the groove of being successful for right now….Actually what I did, I finally came up with a system where I took…all the [Unit 3] selection tests I found…in the teacher’s manuals [and] online….They’re very simple comprehension questions. What I did was I packed it together, the entire unit of tests. It’s a front and back, so if there are five stories, you have two, four, six, eight, ten pages of questions. I packeted them together, stapled them and had [the students] get with a partner. Then I gave each group an Anthology, and then they were going back and finding [the story and completing the questions]. So I thought that was a successful way….But the testing issue I had to push off because I knew they wouldn’t be successful back in September and October.

For Nichole, it was important for her students to experience success, particularly in regards to testing. She scaffolded the assessments by choosing to use the simpler comprehension questions and allowing students to work with a partner.
In our conversations, Lea repeatedly returned to the standardized tests. She described scaffolding her lessons for students, even though she knew that they would be working independently on grade-level material during the testing. She spoke of realizing that she “shouldn’t” be doing as much scaffolding as she was, but her deep belief that a teacher’s responsibility was to help students guided her decisions:

It's not fair to them if I just say, “I don't care if you get it or not” and just move on. I think I still [scaffold] as much as I should but [I do it] for my personal reasons. I know they're getting something. I shouldn't do as much as I do because I need to cover more content….I need to just kick them off from when they get off the ship or off the plane basically. They have no English skills, but basically I just need to keep moving. [That’s] what they tell me to do, but that's not what I do. We start back at the basics with them.

So, do I scaffold more than they tell me I should? Absolutely!

Lea continued scaffolding for students even when they were doing standardized assessment practice. She explained why she did not simulate testing procedures, which permitted no assistance from the teacher, during these practice sessions:

On these skills tests tomorrow, I'll walk around and help them. I’ll read the whole test to the whole class because they wouldn’t make it. Three [of my] kids would make it. I’m not going to just throw this test at them and say, “Okay, I can’t read it now.” I’d be handing out Fs. What does that show me as a teacher? F, F, F, F . . . I’m not growing these kids. I’m not meeting their needs. I’m not meeting their levels….I’d rather all year meet their levels and know I’m doing everything in my power I can to teach at their level and grow them and [then] fail the test. I’m okay with [failing the standardized tests]. At this point I’m okay with that because I know all those adaptations I made helped them the
other…170 [school] days. Those 10 days [of testing], it doesn’t help them. [It] sets them up for failure. But guess what? The other 170 I helped them….When they see failure, failure, failure, failure, they're going to give up and say, "I'm a failure." I will not allow that. I will not allow that to happen. So, even in my higher class, I still scaffold down these text dependent questions and the stories in general. I mean, I just have to.

There are not words to adequately convey the passion that was in Lea’s voice when she shared these thoughts. She deeply wanted to positively affect her students’ learning, so she scaffolded the content in many different ways even while she struggled with knowing she was not completely following the rules.

**Insecurity about effectiveness.** Tensions developed between the teachers’ pre-CCSS narratives about being effective professionals and the CCSS-N, which said they had to act in particular, often different, ways to be effective. The bumping of these narratives contributed to insecurity among the teachers, which each expressed in their own way.

**Mia.** Referring to her current teaching methods, Mia’s insecurity surfaced in her narrative: *Is this working? I think this might be working. I don’t know if this is working. I don’t think this is working.* Although it seemed unlikely that a teacher would express such varying evaluations, Mia did. This fact revealed the depth of the tension Mia was experiencing. She believed she was a good teacher before the CCSS entered her landscape:

I’m totally different, I think, as a teacher. I do. Than what I was. So I’m grateful that I had so many good years….At least I know the first 18 years of my teaching [career] were really effective.
After her detailed description of a recent lesson, I asked Mia whether she thought the CCSS-aligned teaching was helping her to be an effective teacher. She said it was and gave an example for her assessment:

If [the students] get a concept, I feel like that's always like a feather in your cap. That's always [when I] feel like I'm being effective….I feel like the kids are doing well. I feel like they're growing. Their Study Island scores…all grew….I was very pleased with that….I don't feel like I’m doing it, but then I think, ‘Okay, I must be doing something right.’ You do get frustrated, but I feel like when you hear somebody [a student] say, "I'm going to find text evidence," well, then that's like, 'Oh, yes. I got to somebody. I got to somebody.'

Mia described herself as a teacher open to change and new ideas. She said she was not that way in other areas of her life, but had always been open to learning new teaching techniques. She wished for a student teacher that could share the latest pedagogical strategies with her. However, the CCSS and assessments spurred changes that caused Mia to doubt her current effectiveness. Within the space of a few words, she vacillated between saying she was now a more effective teacher and saying the verdict was still out:

I think in the long run, [I am] a more effective teacher. I do. I do. You know, I feel like I’m teaching a little bit differently this year, and I will see what the results [test scores] are, but you know. I think teaching you’re constantly learning….I like to know different ideas [about] what works and what doesn't…but I think I'm being more effective because I'm very open minded.
Although Mia wanted to believe she was an effective teacher, she had determined that only the standardized test scores would provide an accurate assessment. From previous years’ experience, she knew what it was like to get reports of poor scores for her students:

I’m so stressed out over...looking at our test results from last year and knowing that it’s going to get even much harder [this year]. It’s just so frustrating as a teacher. So frustrating because you work, you, you go crazy with these kids. Then, you see your test results in the summer, and it’s like what did I do? Then you think it’s going to get even harder than that [this year]. It’s almost like…teachers are very close to just saying, “Whatever happens, happens.”…I mean I saw how hard I worked with them last year…You know, you have 30 questions on a test that determines your whole year or what you taught these kids.

Mia expressed frustration about not knowing how to be an effective teacher. Her pre-CCSS narrative told her that her previous pedagogical choices were right for students and that she was effective. Yet, the CCSS narrative undermined these beliefs, telling her that only the standardized test scores would determine the extent of her effectiveness.

Later, Mia revealed that she did not believe the recent push for more high-stakes testing was helping students academically. In essence, she deemed the current teaching methodologies ineffective:

M: I don’t think these kids are any better off than they were 15 years ago when we didn’t test every grade level.

A: Better off in what way?
M: Like knowing more. Knowing more. I don’t think so. I don’t think that these kids know more than they did 15 years ago just because now we have to prepare them for a test. I think they hate school more.

Mia vacillated between believing she was an effective teacher, not knowing until she received test scores, and using her professional knowledge to determine the current (CCSS-driven) pedagogy was not working. She described how these conflicting narratives shaped her opinion of her work life:

[Teachers] are just so burned out. It’s like you keep…preparing these kids [for the tests], and you’re no longer a teacher. I always [used to] say, ‘I’m going to school’. Now I say, ‘I’m going to work’. I think it’s because of all of these standards. It’s just horrible to say that, but…I always looked at school [as] a great place to be. Now it’s just with all these, these rules and regiments - it’s just you come to school and you’re just so stressed out.

As a twenty-five year teaching veteran, Mia no longer felt like a teacher.

Lea. Unlike Mia, Lea did not question whether the TLOs were successful. Her narrative said - This isn’t working, but I’m doing it anyway. Lea felt compelled to teach the required standards and to move as quickly as she could through the aligned curriculum. Even though she believed projects were more effective than worksheets, Lea chose to eliminate them from in her classroom due to the quickly approaching standardized testing season. To clarify her thoughts, I asked whether she thought students would not remember content as well via a worksheet than a project:

No, they won't have as deep of an understanding…if they didn't do a hands-on project….I'm not saying worksheets are horrible, but worksheets might be good for, um, well, I don't want to just say the auditory learner. The auditory learner takes it and then
writes it, but these kids that learn best by using their hands, they're…not getting it.

They're not. I'm not reaching every kid by handing this Your Turn [curriculum workbook] book out and saying, “Let's do this page,” even when we do it together. I'm not reaching every kid. I'm not.

In an earlier conversation, Lea had also expressed doubts about her effectiveness as a teacher:

A: Has the implementation of the CCSS through your new ELA curriculum made you a better or a more effective teacher in any way?

L: No.

A: Has it made you a less effective teacher in any way?

L: Probably because I’m just stressed out….I feel like this year…I’m just all over the place, and I don’t like to be all over the place. I like to know, ‘Okay, my kids are 110% prepared for this test.’ This year I just feel like I’m kind of wishy-washy, and it’s not because of the ability levels, and that they’re low, and I have kids on a million different levels—because I had that other years. I just feel like it’s so hard to pull them to the Common Core level that I’m just wishy-washy. No, I think it’s made me a worse teacher….I’ve never doubted myself as much as I have this year.

Time and again, Lea’s answers to the interview questions turned to standardized testing. She could have described effectiveness in a multitude of ways, but she focused on the testing. This demonstrates how prominent the assessment was for her. Here she said she felt wishy-washy about whether her students were prepared for the upcoming tests. However, at numerous other times during our conversations, she confidently said she knew they were not prepared. In fact, she thought that both she and her students were being set up for failure:
I feel like, if you want my honest to God’s opinion, Common Core is setting both the teacher…and the student up to fail. Absolutely 110% I will state that. Somebody could tell me [I’m] going to lose [my] job if [I] say that. I’m stating the facts to you. It’s a lose-lose situation for everybody.

This belief was at the heart of the tension between her narratives. Lea contended the CCSS and its aligned testing were setting teachers and students up for failure. Her past experiences and professional knowledge told her she should use less complex, but appropriate, texts with her students, and that there were more effective ways to teach skills and concepts. However, as a teacher who generally followed the rules by doing what was asked of her, she believed the requirements of CCSS implementation and testing were restraining her from being as effective as she could have been:

Yes, I think change is good, but there was a time when you couldn't wait to come to school, and you couldn't wait to reach these kids. There are days I still feel like that. [For example,] we had this ah-ha moment today, and we really had a nice day. We had a nice lesson, but then in the back of my mind when I go home tonight, [I will] focus on all these things that I need to cover next week because guess what? The following Monday these tests are coming in front of them. Now, are they going to grasp all this that I'm going to cover next week? Nooooo, probably not, but at least I know I covered it. That's the point you get to. How does that make me an effective teacher? It doesn't.

Lea knows she tried her best to both follow the expectations placed upon her and meet her students’ needs: “If I know I came in every day and gave 210%, that’s good with me.”
However, the CCSS-N spoke very loudly to her, and she had already determined that she was “a complete failure.” She went on to say that this assessment was based upon her projection of student test scores:

They're not going to make it. We're going to get these scores back and it's going to be Below Basic, Below Basic, Below Basic. I might have some Proficients. If I had to gauge our scores, what we’re going to get back, I feel like overall they're all going to go down. Even the higher-flying students [will go down] because of this new core curriculum. It's just gauged too high.

Within this same excerpt, Lea blamed both herself and the curriculum for student failure. She believed the curriculum asked too much of students, particularly ELs who were still developing their English skills, and she felt like she was a failure because she had not led students to achieve what she had already deemed impossible.

The tension between these narratives caused Lea to feel highly levels of frustration, which she often tried to release at the gym:

I go straight to the gym every day [after school] because I’ve got to get out my frustration, and I don’t smoke. So I just go to the gym and just run as fast as my legs will take me. I find myself doubting myself more than I ever have in 15 years of teaching. I literally close my eyes at night, and I know I gave all I could give except the clothes off my back to better these kids, to make sure they got even a little ounce of learning, and I’m still doubting myself. That’s where I’m just so frustrated, because I don’t know if…. They’re not getting it. But I don’t know how to make them get it because it’s so difficult. It’s so difficult. I go to bed feeling frustrated, and I wake up feeling frustrated.
At the core of Lea’s frustration was her belief that she did the very best she could considering the discrepancy between her students’ needs and the CCSS requirements, and that her best would not be good enough because it would be judged by the students’ test scores. She chose to scaffold the content and her teaching for students throughout the school year in hopes they would learn, even though she knew they would likely not pass the CCSS tests:

That’s my frustration. Imagine you work so hard, so hard, so hard, so hard, so hard, and then it’s beyond your control that you didn’t do well. But, who cares? You know you practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, but you practice on a different level because that’s the level [they’re] going to achieve. If from the beginning of the year I say, “Just take this test on your own. It’s a fifth grade level and everybody’s on a fifth grade level.” Is that a teacher? Is that what a teacher should do? That’s not what I would think this teacher should do. Is that what the state thinks a teacher should do? Because if it is they need to reassess what good teachers do. You know? But like I said, for 170 days of the year I know I’m being the best teacher I can be, and those 10 days [of testing] I’m not because I have adapted the entire year. I’ve tried to help these kids on their level, and that’s not helping them [for the test].

Lea struggled to understand her effectiveness as a teacher. One narrative said she was effective by adapting her teaching throughout the school year while another narrative said she was only effective if the students did well on the standardized tests. She seemed to feel that those two narratives could not coexist, and thus she lived in a state of extreme frustration.

Nichole. Nichole did not express as much insecurity about her effectiveness as Mia and Lea. This was largely due to her narrative - I’m trusting this is working. As discussed in an earlier section, Nichole was at first unsure about the potential success of some of the
curriculum’s teaching suggestions. For example, she did not know if students would be able to actively participate in academic discussions about texts. However, she decided to trust the curriculum authors and give it a try. The work students were able to accomplish “pleasantly surprised” her.

Nichole also decided to trust the curriculum’s pacing guide and had made it her goal to keep a faster pace and to let go of the previously held goal of student mastery of content. I asked what she thought would be the end result of releasing this goal. She said she “had yet to see”; implying perhaps that the standardized tests would reveal the outcome.

Comparing her responses to the other participants, Nichole’s calmness about the CCSS testing surprised me. Her students’ performance seemed to not frustrate or stress her. I asked if she had tried to find ways to decouple her teaching from the outcomes of the testing:

I do. I do it because I look at the kids and I see what their struggles are and what they’re being asked to do. I run the lower program [her class has more Level 1, 2, and 3 EL students]. It’s like asking an infant to start running on a track. You’re not going to do that. You wouldn’t do that. That’s cruel. That’s how I feel about the test. For some children they cannot do it yet. Yet. Maybe someday they will, but if they can’t, far be it from me to put that child down and put that pressure [on them] when they’re not going to be successful at it anyway. I can spin my head in circles. It’s still not going to happen. They’re not ready, and if they’re not ready who am I to say I’m a bad teacher because he didn’t get to that level? I’m not putting that pressure on myself. I can only do so much in a day….That’s just reality, and I like to stay in reality.

Nichole had found a way to “stay in reality,” which for her meant acknowledging the academic needs and current performance levels of the students in her classroom as well as the rigorous
requirements of the CCSS. Like Lea, she believed the differences between the two constituted an almost impossible divide. However, unlike Lea, Nichole refused to take or assign the blame if students scored poorly on the tests. Her years of experience told her that students developed at their own pace and that this was no one’s fault.

Although I appreciated Nichole’s attitude in this regard, I still wondered if there were additional factors contributing to her lack of frustration. I thought she might have always felt this way:

A: So have you always pretty much been able to have this kind of attitude?
N: No. No. It’s been learned. Developed.
A: So you used to feel more stressed about the tests?
N: Absolutely. Absolutely.
A: Was there a year where you moved over to saying, ‘I’m not going to stress about it as much’? What changed your feelings?
N: There was the year when we got investigated.

Lea explained that several years prior, NCE had been officially investigated on suspicion of cheating on standardized tests. I did not pursue details about what led to the investigation because both of the teachers that talked about it did not seem to feel those details mattered anymore. Nichole went on to explain how the investigation affected her:

My team at that time [and I] were pulled in to meet with the lawyers. They were almost accusing [us, saying] we changed answers and we did this and that. They were comparing three years [of test scores]. They had a great big chart and all three years they were comparing looked the same. They said, “All these scores are so consistent.” [Implying cheating was suspected because of the consistent scores.] I said, “Well, that’s amazing
because I wasn’t here one of those years.” So, I don’t know how to explain what they were leading to, but they were leading to something that was false, and I knew it. At that point I was kind of like, you know what? This test creates more problems than it does educate our children. I am an educator. I am not a test proctor. Period. End of story. That’s when I kind of shut the door on the test and said I’m going to educate….I’m not going to teach to the test. I’ll do what’s required of me, absolutely. But I’m not stressing over this test ever again. So, that was a deal breaker for me….To be pressuring us that we would do something like that was so insulting….If they did it to me again I would just take that even keel [because] I don’t know what [they] want from us. We’re in here doing the best we can.

This experience was the tipping point for Nichole. She decided that she would no longer allow the standardized testing industry to judge her teaching. Instead, she judged her own effectiveness by looking at the successes she sees in her students. “To me, that’s more of a measure of my success than [the students’] success [or failure] on one test.”

**Choosing rules or care.** Central to Mia’s and Lea’s pre-CCSS narrative was the idea that they cared about their students’ personal lives. One way Mia demonstrated this care was by getting to know the students well enough during the school year so that she could send a personalized letter to each of them on the last day of school. In recent years with the increased push for higher standards and high-stakes assessment, she has not had as much time to learn about students personally and has had to change her letters:

Maybe the [last] five or six years, I’ve had to write a universal letter. Like, ‘Oh, thank you for being in my class’ and [then I] just wrote their name on the top. I still send them letters, but it’s universal, where before I was able to say, “I hope you’re a teacher
someday. I know you want to be a teacher.” I knew everything about them…. [I have to give a universal letter] because I don’t know enough about them now. I don’t. I don’t, and it’s so sad. I don’t know enough about them. You want to hear their stories, and the kids want to talk. They want to talk. They’re just itching to talk, [but] we’ve got to go on. We got to go on. Even at [high school] graduation I always send graduation cards. I [can look at the graduation list] … and I know exactly who was in [my] class. I’m pretty good with people, so I know exactly who was in that class. Well, I think in the next [few] years I’m going to be struggling [to remember], who did I teach? Because there’s sometimes [even the next year] I’m like, ‘What was their name?’ I was never like that. I mean I know I’m getting older, but I’m a people person…. I don’t remember my voicemail [code] on my phone, but I remember people. But I can’t do that [now], and I think that’s terrible. How do you teach someone all year and the next year [you can’t remember their name]? I think [it’s because] you’re drilling. You’re not that teacher that tries to get to know them because if you get to know them you’re wasting time on another thing.

Mia’s evaluation that the CCSS expected more time be spent on teaching skills than getting to know students personally echoed sentiments expressed by David Coleman, one author of the CCSS-ELA and the RPC. When speaking to educators at a meeting of the New York Department of Education about the underlying shifts in the standards, Coleman delivered what has been called the “core pedagogy of the CCSS” (Ohanian, 2011, para. 1). He said, “The only problem with [personal opinion] writing is as you grow up in this world, you realize that people really don’t give a [expletive] about what you feel or what you think” (Coleman, 2011). Coleman claimed that in college or work environments, the focus is on presenting arguments with evidence, not offering personal opinions. Thus, if teachers apply this statement implementing the
CCSS, they will not waste any more time than necessary getting to know students, but instead will focus on teaching the standards so that students can be college- and career-ready.

Both Lea and Nichole agreed that caring about students’ personal lives was not part of the CCSS:

L: Well, I, I wish I could go back to the caring aspect of it and it could be more them putting in what their thoughts and feelings and opinions in writings and in such. Where[as now], we don't care about that anymore….These standards take the kid out of it. They take the whole personal level out of it….They don't care about what you think….The personal level of the student [has been taken] out of the standards.

N: I chose to be a teacher because I care about children, not because I wanted to treat them like robots and machines. They ask us to individualize programs, but we can't individualize the child. I don't agree with it. Every child that walks through this door has a story behind them and a voice to be heard. We don't allow their voices to be heard.

The teachers’ pre-CCSS narrative of caring for students’ personal lives was at odds with the CCSS-N of caring for students’ abilities to demonstrate skills. The tension between these narratives led to feelings of frustration.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided data to describe the teachers’ pre- and in-the-midst CCSS narratives. Prior to the entrance of the CCSS-N, the teachers described themselves as creative, effective teachers who cared about the personal lives of their students. Their current narratives about themselves as teachers included a focus on teaching skills, which they hoped would lead to
higher levels of student test performance. This is what they felt pressured to do to be considered good or effective teachers.

Additionally, I have described the tensions that the teachers experienced when these narratives clashed with the CCSS-N within their school landscape. Tensions included decisions about following rules or relying on their own professional knowledge, being unsure of their teaching effectiveness, and feeling pressured to choose between doing what they were told and caring for students’ personal lives.
Chapter 6

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to describe what the narratives of teachers of elementary ELs revealed about how they were experiencing and responding to the interaction of the CCSS-ELA and their literacy pedagogy. Specifically, I wanted to understand what their narratives revealed about their informal learning in relation to the intended teacher learning outcomes of the CCSS-ELA and how they were affected personally and professionally.

In this chapter, I discuss how the narrative data presented in the preceding two chapters address the research questions and illuminate the participants’ informal learning in the midst of the authoritative CCSS implementation. The three dimensions (i.e., content, incentive, interaction) of Illeris’s (2007a) comprehensive learning model are used as a lens to understand the teachers’ informal learning in relation to the intended TLOs and other unintended learning outcomes. I also consider how the CCSS ideology played a role in the process. Finally, I suggest implications from the study’s findings for research, policy, and practice and conclude by noting limitations of the study and offering some final thoughts.

Learning Informally in Practice

This study draws on Illeris’s (2007a) broad definition of learning as “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing” (p. 3). It is impossible for me to judge the permanency of the participants’ learning since their narratives could have changed after I left their classrooms. However, the teachers did show a permanent capacity for change when they described changes to their feelings, beliefs, and behaviors, thus indicating the possibility of permanence. This is particularly probable because the authoritative nature of the TLOs and the CCSS-N spurred their learning,
and there was no indication at the state or local level that these influences on the teachers’ work would be altered in the near future.

**Formal/Informal learning.** Formal learning is often said to “combine high-status, propositional knowledge with learning processes centred [sic] upon teaching or instruction” (Colley et al., 2003, p. 4) in structured educational settings, whereas informal learning is “implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured…[in] the absence of a teacher” (Eraut, 2004, p. 250). The teachers described receiving virtually no training before implementing the CCSS or the new reading curriculum, except for two presentations by McGraw-Hill representatives; thus, their learning was not the result of formal instruction and falls on the informal end of the learning continuum (Sawchuk, 2008).

The degree to which their learning was informal can be seen by considering the learning attributes described by Colley and colleagues (2003): learning processes, location and setting, purposes, and content. In Table 10, I have highlighted the applicable attributes of the teachers’ learning. In the Informal column, I noted that the learning occurred in the teachers’ workplace and was part of their everyday activities related to being a teacher. Some of their learning was open-ended and had no specified curriculum or predetermined objectives. In general, it was the unintended outcome of their activity as a teacher, and the outcomes were unpredictable and varied within and among the participants.
There were also aspects of the learning that were more formal. For example, there were implied time restrictions on the teachers. Although the TLOs were not presented to the teachers as explicit learning outcomes, they needed to understand the TLOs and how to implement them as a part of the requirements of their position. They began teaching the new ELA curriculum the first week of school and had to plan lessons for every subsequent week. Thus, they were expected to have taught the required skills and content before standardized testing began in the late spring. Additionally, although the learning was not part of a traditionally structured workshop or class, much of the curriculum for the teachers’ learning was specified in the Reading Wonders series because it provided recommendations for understanding and implementing the TLOs. The CCSS authors intended for teachers to learn the TLOs and to implement them in particular ways as described in the RPC; therefore, they could be regarded as predetermined objectives. The TLO content of the teachers’ learning was outlined in the RPC and therefore constitutes propositional knowledge of purported experts. The intended outcomes were specified, but in reality were unpredictable.
This finding illustrates the complexity of identifying learning situations as formal or informal. Even considering the teachers’ learning experiences individually (i.e., the learning of one TLO) results in attributes across the continuum. Thus, attempting to identify learning situations as existing along the continuum may add helpful description, but it does not contribute to our collective understanding of the learning process.

**Deliberative, reactive, and implicit learning.** Few studies of teacher informal learning exist (Bakkenes et al., 2010). Hoekstra and colleagues (2007, 2009) are an exception. They studied teacher informal learning and categorized the learning experiences as deliberative, reactive, or implicit (Eraut, 2004). All three were found to be present, although only two instances of implicit learning were identified and both were related to the teachers’ feelings or beliefs.

Although I used different research methods, I also found examples of deliberative, reactive, and implicit learning. Nichole discussed *deliberative* learning when she described setting a goal for herself to learn the curriculum’s way of doing things, such as following the pacing guides and implementing the suggested academic discussions. Lea displayed *reactive* learning when she reflected on choosing to spend more time with bubble kids during small group work. Based upon their performance with assigned tasks, she adjusted her teaching methods accordingly. *Implicit* learning became evident during the analysis phase of the study. The teachers did not describe learning to be a rule-follower or to be insecure about their effectiveness. However, when I began looking closely at the data it was evident they had learned these things. This finding aligns with Hoekstra and colleagues’ (2007) study in that the implicit learning dealt with the teachers’ feelings or beliefs. Much research about adult learning focuses on cognitive aspects (Merriam & Bierema, 2014); however, this finding supports the need to
understand how emotions and beliefs are involved in teachers' learning from teaching. I argue in
the sections below that Illeris’s (2007a) comprehensive model of adult learning is a useful tool
for such research.

**Impulses for learning.** The learning model (Illeris, 2007a, 2009) on which this study is
based consists of two processes (external and internal) and three dimensions (content, incentive,
interaction; see Figures 1 and 2). The external process encompasses the interaction dimension
and describes the fluid relationship between the learner and his or her environment. This
interaction “provides the impulses that initiate the learning process” (Illeris, 2009, p. 11).
Although there are a multitude of interactions that could be explored, this study focused on the
interaction between the teacher and the CCSS-N, which is a part of the sociocultural narrative of
education reform and increased teacher accountability.

I want to be cautious about making causal statements regarding reasons for the teachers’
learning; however, the participants themselves pointed to the CCSS. They described how they
taught before the CCSS and claimed to have made changes to their pedagogy only because of the
requirements of the TLOs and the related high-stakes testing. The school’s student demographics
have remained relatively constant for over a decade, and each of the participants was a teacher at
North Clarksburg Elementary during that time; thus, changes in students or school settings did
not spur their learning. When asked, the teachers repeatedly cited the new curriculum or the
upcoming testing as reasons for many of their pedagogical choices. For example, Mia described
how she had changed her methodology after reading a text with the class. In the past they would
have discussed the story and completed a variety of activities. Now, because of the second Key
Shift, they focus on finding and describing text evidence. Nichole claimed to have learned that
ELs could actively participate in and lead academic discussions. In the past, the discussions
would have been teacher-focused, but she changed to a more student-focused method because the curriculum recommended the approach.

With learning experiences such as these, a fairly clear line can be drawn between the learning and its impulse. However, the teachers’ learning to be insecure about their effectiveness is not so obvious. There were many factors that contributed to Lea’s belief that she was helping her students and simultaneously feeling like a failure. During the interviews and even in the analysis phase, I struggled to understand the causes of these varying evaluations of her performance as a teacher. A single impulse did not spur Lea’s learning about herself. This illustrates a weakness of the model Goldman and colleagues (2009) also mentioned. Rather than one impulse resulting in one learning episode, there were examples of one impulse (e.g., a single Key Shift) spurring numerous and varied learning episodes. As with Lea, there were also examples of multiple impulses contributing to one learning episode or outcome.

Together, these findings support Illeris’s (2009) claim that to better understand learning, researchers must look at both processes (p. 9). Many studies may have considered only the internal, acquisition process and missed the influences that the CCSS-N had on the teachers’ learning. Illeris’s (2007a) model remains important for understanding adult learning and, as demonstrated in this study, is applicable to teacher informal learning. However, it needs continued refinement to better account for the complexity of real-world learning.

**Learning Intended Outcomes**

**TLOs.** The acquisition process of the learning model (Illeris, 2007a) includes the content and incentive dimensions. The content dimension “concerns what is learned” (Illeris, 2009, p. 10), including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. The teachers’ learning in relation to the TLO content is at the heart of this study’s research questions. Using CDA, I identified what
CCSS authors intended teachers to do and used the authors’ words to construct the TLOs. I needed to complete this analysis before conducting the interviews so that I could listen for the TLOs in the teachers’ narratives. Additionally, I was able to elicit the teachers’ reactions to a list of TLOs.

In general, the teachers learned the prominent TLOs and implemented them in their classrooms. This occurred largely through the adoption of the McGraw-Hill *Reading Wonders* curriculum, since the standards, the TLOs, and the curriculum were virtually synonymous terms for the teachers. Evidence of the teachers’ learning was woven throughout their in-the-midst narratives when they talked about the TLOs that aligned with the Key Shifts (i.e., complex text, text evidence, nonfiction texts). Complex text and using text evidence to generate questions and support responses were the two shifts they discussed the most.

The required text complexity was a key frustration for Lea. She described how students could demonstrate the required skills with appropriately leveled texts, but not with the texts provided in the curriculum and the test samplers. Additionally, she assessed the new fifth-grade texts as being at a higher level than previously provided texts, creating greater disparity between her students’ current levels and the CCSS-required texts. Mia described many examples of having learned to use text evidence in her teaching. She noted that this focus was what “they,” implying the standards authors, wanted. Text evidence was not a new concept to her, but its centrality to her teaching and the subsequent displacement of other concepts was. The teachers noted a strong focus on nonfiction texts and gave examples of using nonfiction in their lessons. Lea was the only teacher that mentioned current use of a fiction text, a folktale found in the curriculum.
The teachers demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the TLOs again when they looked at a list and agreed that the statements were what CCSS authors and their curriculum wanted them to do. None of the teachers knew about the RPC, yet they clearly understood what they were supposed to be doing. They talked about how they were not, or could not, do everything the way they were “supposed” to, but none of the statements seemed surprising.

These findings demonstrate that the teachers had learned about, and learned to implement, the intended outcomes of the CCSS authors. This learning occurred even when the teachers’ professional knowledge and experience conflicted with the TLOs.

**Autonomous model of literacy.** As described in Chapter 2, the CCSS are based on an autonomous model of literacy (Burns, 2012; Orellana & Rodriguez, 2013), which assumes “that literacy and language development means teaching children a one-size-fits-all set of skills and behaviors” (Botzakis, Burns, & Hall, 2014, p. 223). The CCSS discourse claims these skills prepare students for success in college and career (NGA & CCSSO, 2015). The participants in this study expressed alignment with the autonomous model (Street, 1984) as well. They articulated this view when they said the literacy skills outlined by the CCSS were necessary for students to be literate or to be successful in the world. Even when Lea acknowledged that not all students would go to college, she still held that regardless of their future career direction, they needed the skills required by the CCSS to be literate, implying success in life (Bartlett, 2008; Goody & Watt, 1963; Lankshear, 1999). The teachers also demonstrated alignment with the autonomous model when they stated that the CCSS standards and required skills were not much different than their prior standards. Essentially, they acknowledged changes with the CCSS, but did not note a qualitative difference in skill emphasis that they found troubling. This alignment with the autonomous model may have mitigated additional negative effects for the teachers.
In many ways, the CCSS-N supported the teachers’ prior understandings of literacy. Although they defined literacy more broadly than the CCSS, including a stronger emphasis on listening and speaking, the teachers did not articulate an ideological view. For example, they only briefly mentioned the many ways students might be engaged in literacy practices at home. Reducing literacy, as the autonomous model does, to a decontextualized set of skills “fail[s] to do justice to the richness and complexity of actual literacy practices in people’s lives” (Street, 2005, p. 420). All students engage in socially situated literacy practices outside of school (Bartlett, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 2003a). Some are a reflection of school literacy practices while others are not. Students bring the internalization of their home literacy practices with them to school each day; however, the teachers in this study did not appear to acknowledge these out-of-school practices. In general, the teachers saw the students’ home lives as a detriment to their learning within school, not a support. Nichole recognized that many of her students and their families spoke a dominant language other than English at home. Instead of describing how she might build upon those literacy practices in the classroom, she expressed the need to accept and not try to change what happened at home. So, although she did not diminish the students’ native language, she clearly did not perceive the home literacy practices to be as valuable as the school literacy practices she was teaching. Neither the teachers nor the CCSS-N, then, view literacy as encompassing all of students’ literacy practices, including their native languages and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Although the teachers’ understanding of literacy seemed to align well with the CCSS-N, they did not always take up the required literacy practices. For example, Mia allowed students to complete tasks orally, even though the CCSS required more written work. The TLOs (e.g., S:9.1A; S:10.1B; S:12.4B) strongly recommend students work independently with minimal
support from teachers. Lea provided much more scaffolding to her students because she deemed it necessary for their learning.

As discussed above, the CCSS are based on an autonomous model of literacy, which is rooted in a particular ideology. This ideology has constructed sociocultural practices that define what literacy is (i.e., specifically predetermined skills) and what must be done to prove one’s literacy proficiency (i.e., score well on CCSS-aligned standardized tests). At first glance, it seemed that the teachers problematized this situation and perhaps leaned toward an ideological understanding of literacy. Each of the teachers predicted that most of their students would score below Proficient on the upcoming assessments and agreed that the CCSS tests would not accurately reveal their students’ literacy abilities. However, their contention with the tests was the discrepancy between their students’ current abilities and the level of the tests. For example, Lea was frustrated that one of her students who was reading on a second grade level would be expected to perform well on a test designed for a fifth grade level. If the student could have been given an appropriately leveled test, she would presumably not have been as concerned about his performance. Nichole believed that even though many of her students likely would not do well on the third grade test, future classes would perform at higher levels because they would have had more time to be trained in what the CCSS demanded. Therefore, even though the teachers alleged that the tests would not accurately demonstrate their students’ abilities, they did not express an ideological view of literacy. They did not critique the test for attempting to assess students’ literacy abilities or privileging particular literacy practices over others (Bartlett, 2008).

These findings illustrate that the CCSS discourse about literacy reinforced the teachers’ predominately autonomous views. With the support of such an authoritative policy, the teachers did not question the validity of the required skills or the necessity of administering some type of
standardized test to assess students’ abilities. As a result, the socially situated literacy practices and events the CCSS authors deemed important were imposed upon all students in the participants’ classrooms. Thus, the students and their diverse language and literacy practices were devalued, potentially intensifying inequities (Larson, 2013). Devaluing students was not the expressed intent of Mia, Lea, or Nichole. Each demonstrated exceptional levels of care for their students. However, the autonomous model was a foundational part of their understanding of literacy, and when the authoritative CCSS it, it resulted in unintentional harm (Botzakis et al., 2014; Burns, 2012).

**Coercion and Motivation: Helping Teachers Learn**

The incentive dimension of Illeris’s (2007a) model “provides and directs the mental energy that is necessary for the learning process to take place” (Illeris, 2009, p. 10). Feelings, emotions, and motivation work to ensure a continuous “mental and bodily balance” (Illeris, 2007a, p. 26) in the learner. The content and incentive dimensions interact and influence each other. This is helpful in explaining how the teachers learned the TLOs. The importance of considering the involvement of emotions in teacher learning has been noted by other researchers (Hoekstra et al., 2007) and proved to be important in this study as well.

**The coercive power of an authoritative policy.** In describing changes in her current pedagogy, Mia claimed the changes were forced. She perceived that teachers “had no choice [but] to change…because of the test.” Each of the teachers demonstrated they had learned the TLOs, which are specified objectives persons outside their local context had established. The authors of the CCSS and the TLOs were not physically present at NCE nor did they conduct workshops to instruct the teachers in CCSS implementation; however, the teachers knew what they were supposed to do. This shows that the RPC, facilitated by the authoritative nature of the
CCSS, was successful in “ordering practice [from] a distance” (T. Fenwick, 2010, p. 119). As part of the current education reform efforts, the performance of students, teachers, schools, and districts is judged using the high-stakes CCSS assessments and the consequences of not measuring up to pre-determined goals are substantial (Dutro & Selland, 2012; Segool et al., 2013, p. 489; Weiss, 2014a). Those who fall below required proficiency levels suffer negative sanctions ranging from embarrassment, retention, and loss of future opportunities for students to loss of employment, funding, and local control of educational institutions for teachers and school districts (Paris, 2000). Numerous studies have also highlighted the detrimental effects of high-stakes testing for students and teachers (Meyer, 2013; J. Z. Pandya, 2011). Thus, the power behind the CCSS pressured the teachers to align their pedagogy with the standards.

The coercive power of the CCSS was also effective with the participants because it tapped into the ideological desires for good behavior and professional conscience they had learned in the past (Brookfield, 2001, p. 16). These feelings included wishes to be viewed as good or effective teachers. The teachers in MacGillivray and colleagues’ (2004) study felt a similar compelling need to be seen as team players. The structure of the accountability system engendered this type of response. Originally, ratings based upon test scores were used to determine how well a school was meeting state standards. Those ratings are now extended to school personnel. Thus, teachers working in high-performing schools are “typically viewed as being highly competent,” whereas those in lower-performing schools are “seen as ineffective” (Nelson, McGhee, Meno, & Slater, 2007, p. 706).

The teachers had internalized these ratings and knew what they needed to do to be considered effective. Even though they did not implement every recommendation in the curriculum, they thought they should adhere to it as closely as possible because they believed
teachers generally follow the rules. Nichole noted that the CCSS was the latest of many forced changes she had experienced in her teaching career and that instead of “bucking the system” she just had to “go with it.” Mia, too, thought there was nothing to do but to follow the requirements. Lea displayed similar feelings when she described moving at a faster pace through the curriculum than many of her students could handle. Even though she thought she was going as fast as she could, she also believed it was not as fast as she should be going. A comparable “culture of compliance” has been found to result in teachers just wanting “to know how to do it as painlessly as possible” (Blackmore, 1998, p. 472) after enduring a series of imposed changes. These teachers had opinions, but their desire to be viewed as rule-followers motivated their submission to the demands of the CCSS.

Changing teachers’ practices through powerful top-down mandates has also been demonstrated in other studies. Some of the changes were the result of an imposed scripted reading curriculum (L Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008), while others were the result of the “policy cascades” associated with the CCSS and RPC (Papola-Ellis, 2014).

Motivating with commonsense. As illustrated in Chapter 5, the teachers’ in-the-midst narratives were different from their pre-CCSS narratives. Although their pre-CCSS narratives did not align well with the CCSS-N, their current narratives did because of their compliance with the mandates. This finding demonstrates that the CCSS ideology had recruited the teachers. The ideology was infused in the CCSS-N, present in the RPC, and made operational in McGraw-Hill’s Reading Wonders curriculum. It spoke loudly to the teachers, giving them additional narratives through which to understand themselves and their students (Althusser, 1971).

The CCSS ideology, substantiated in the discourse of the curriculum, was effective at recruiting the teachers because it was largely invisible to them (Fairclough, 1989). They did not
know who had written the CCSS nor did they know about the existence of the RPC, its purpose, or influence over the development of the curriculum they were implementing. This lack of background knowledge, coupled with the teachers’ existing alignment with the autonomous model, led them to view the CCSS-required skills as commonsense. They demonstrated this in their statements about the skills being very similar to what they had always taught, not seeing the standards as anything ‘bad’, and believing that the CCSS and its skills were necessary because of the demands of 21\textsuperscript{st} century life and work. They did not problematize the skills themselves, but instead held them to be commonsense assumptions, a hallmark of effective ideological transmission (Fairclough, 1989).

Even though the CCSS-N and ideology shaped the teachers’ new narratives, their pre-CCSS narratives were not totally replaced. Instead, all of the narratives were “piling up” on the teachers’ landscape, similar to the way sediment accumulates in a delta (Brandt, 2001, p. 192). The subsequent colliding of narratives resulted in various tensions for the teachers. Mia and Lea felt frustration and anger at being required to teach in ways that contradicted their understandings of effective teaching. Nichole experienced frustration as well, but she chose to rely primarily on her prior narratives of success and not succumb to the CCSS-N that attempted to evaluate her teaching. Nichole even felt positive about some of the changes she had made to her teaching (e.g., student-led academic discussions), which allowed her to feel less tension.

**Conclusion.** These findings demonstrate the power inherent in authoritative policies such as the CCSS and related documents like the RPC. Tapping into the teachers’ feelings and beliefs through coercion and motivation, the CCSS authors led the participants to explicitly and implicitly learn the desired outcomes. This aligns with Hoekstra and colleagues’ finding that teacher learning involves “behavioural, cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects” (2007, p.
Even though the CCSS claimed not to tell these NCE teachers how to teach, it did that very thing through the TLOs embedded in the RPC and written into the design of McGraw-Hill’s *Reading Wonders* curriculum. The CCSS authors’ ideology was transmitted to Mia, Lea, and Nichole through this process. Thus, top-down mandates tied to high-stakes accountability are effective ways to influence teacher learning (Papola-Ellis, 2014; L Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008). In a similar study, Papola-Ellis (2014) demonstrated that teachers learned to change their instructional practices due to pressures from top-down mandates understood through district and school-level professional development. This study extends previous research by illustrating that teacher learning related to policy implementation also occurs informally *in-the-midst* of practice.

**Learning Unintended Outcomes**

In addition to the intended TLOs, the teachers learned content that the CCSS authors may or may not have been intended. The participants learned to doubt their effectiveness as teachers, and they learned to resist some TLOs.

**Learning to doubt.** The CCSS-N worked to construct the teachers’ understandings of themselves as professionals (Luke, 1995) and shape their beliefs about their effectiveness (T. J. Fenwick, 2003). Prior to the CCSS, Mia thought she had been an effective teacher for most of her lengthy career. However, implementing the TLOs and following the curricular recommendations left her wondering about her effectiveness. Lea found herself between the significant academic and linguistic needs of her students and the rigorous demands of the CCSS and its tests. As a result, she learned to see herself as a failure. Her pre-CCSS narratives were still present, telling her to rely on her professional knowledge and experience to make decisions, but the CCSS-N pronounced her a failure because her students would likely not score at
proficient levels on the standardized tests. Experiencing evidence of this potential failure day after day led Lea to construct an altered understanding of herself.

Mia’s and Lea’s views of their students also changed. The pressures of the standardized testing and the desire to be seen as effective teachers pushed them to see their students as test scores, with the bubble kids being given more instructional time than others. The teachers did not support this practice, but they had been convinced that educational triage was the best response due to the critical circumstances in which they found themselves (Booher-Jennings, 2006).

Bakkenes and colleagues (2010) argue that these negative learning outcomes are often found in informal learning environments. Teachers in their study who participated in organized learning environments such as reciprocal peer-coaching and collaborative project groups reported “relatively little experience of negative emotions” (p. 546), while those in informal environments reported many more. This was one factor that led them to conclude that organized environments produce “qualitatively better” (p. 546) teacher learning. Although I agree that negative emotions are not the outcome of choice, I think it is shortsighted to use them as a primary factor in judging the quality of learning environments. As noted above, learning is complex and all three dimensions of the process, not just the incentive, must be considered.

**Learning to resist.** Even though the teachers learned and implemented many of the TLOs, they sometimes questioned the recommended methods for teaching the required skills. Based upon their professional knowledge and experience, they did not always deem the curriculum’s suggestions to be the most effective way. The teachers had implicit feelings that someone or something was ‘pulling their strings’ by attempting to get them to teach in ways that did not make sense, indicating there were other ideological narratives that influenced their decision making (Althusser, 1971). This illustrates that they were aware of the some of the tools
of ideological recruitment, although they could not identify the source other than referring to the state legislators or the textbook company. The participants in Papola-Ellis’ (2014) study responded similarly when they seemed to be unaware of how the policy cascades were affecting their teaching strategies.

At the time of the study, NCE’s administrators were critiquing none of the teachers’ practices, and the teachers did not express concern that their jobs were in jeopardy due to their pedagogical decisions. Thus, it appears they had learned to draw on their professional knowledge and successfully resist certain TLOs. For example, Nichole and Lea used the curriculum texts in ways that aligned with their beliefs, but differed greatly from the offered recommendations. Mia typically ignored the curriculum’s directives for writing and conducted her own lessons similarly to the way she had in the past. In direct opposition to the TLOs about limited support, Lea regularly scaffolded for her students, including on CCSS practice tests. Teachers are often regarded as central to reform efforts (Datnow & Castellano, 2000) because they either adapt, adopt, or reject forced implementation guidelines. Many of these adjustments are based upon their professional knowledge and understanding of their students’ needs (L Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008).

Feelings and Beliefs: Helping Teachers Learn

Like the intended TLOs, the interaction of the content and incentive dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2007a) also influenced these unintended outcomes. The TLOs in the CCSS-N confronted the teachers, and they engaged their emotions, beliefs, and motivations to respond in varying ways. In some instances, the CCSS-N challenged their feelings of competence. The force of the challenge altered their beliefs about themselves and their students; although, it is
impossible to neatly explain how this occurred because the teachers’ beliefs continued to be dynamic throughout our conversations.

In other situations, the CCSS-N pushed against the teachers’ beliefs about literacy pedagogy. Throughout the analysis, I attempted to identify a clear distinction between pedagogical beliefs the teachers released and retained. I wondered why they let go of some that seemed to be so important to them, such as Mia and Lea’s hands-on projects. However, the learning process is complicated and it seemed the teachers could not articulate the tipping point either. I can only offer opinions about what prompted their various decisions. What is clear is that, as in other studies (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; L Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008), the teachers’ feelings and beliefs were involved. The data reveal that the teachers resisted TLOs that confronted some of their deeply held beliefs related to helping students. Interestingly, they resisted in ways they could justify as necessary. For example, Lea firmly believed that her responsibility as a teacher was to make the content as comprehensible as possible for students, so she scaffolded the complex texts. She justified this decision by saying that because of the scaffolding, her students were helped (i.e., they learned) 170 days of the school year, even though the ten days of standardized testing would not document her efforts.

Nichole believed students needed to feel success, so she ignored guidelines to test students at the end of each week and unit of ELA instruction. She thought the students’ learning would suffer if they experienced failure on these tests throughout the year, so she waited until they were ready and devised a way to test them that promised more success.

Mia determined that some of her EL students did not have the language proficiency to complete various written assignments, so she allowed them to respond orally. Even though the CCSS’ assessments expected written responses to many prompts, she justified her decision
because she thought this was the only way the students would be able to complete the task. Additionally, with this modification, she could show she was teaching the required skills, such as using text evidence, to all students.

In these and other ways, the teachers demonstrated interaction between the content and incentive dimensions of learning. They attempted to find equilibrium between the demands of the CCSS and their own deeply held beliefs about a teacher’s responsibility to her students.

**Conclusion.** Teacher informal learning is complex, and there is no easy way to draw lines from the learning back to its causes or impediments. It is difficult to understand what causes a teacher to reject or embrace intended learning outcomes and why some unintended outcomes occur instead of others. However, what is clear is that teachers learn in and through their professional practice (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 134). Additionally, the data presented here demonstrate that the content, incentive, and interaction dimensions are intricately entangled in the learning process. Most of the learning described in this study would not have occurred if the authoritative CCSS-N had not entered the landscape. It is likely the teachers would have continued teaching largely as they had before – creatively using projects, believing themselves to be effective as they worked to meet students’ academic needs, and attending to important aspects of students’ personal lives.

**Limitations**

Limitations related to the participants’ characteristics, school setting, and study design could affect the applicability of these findings to other contexts. First, the three participants were all White, middle-class women with 12 or more years of teaching experience. Despite these similarities, they were experiencing and responding to CCSS implementation in differing ways. Thus, the findings do not represent all teachers at NCE. The school’s male or novice teachers
may have described different experiences. The participants were also monolingual English speakers. Latino/a teachers who shared the students’ cultural background or native language may have offered other perspectives. For example, they may have used Spanish in their teaching or expressed a more nuanced understanding of cultural influences on home/school relationships.

Second, the school’s location in a mid-sized urban area with high levels of poverty may have affected the participants’ experiences. The teachers perceived that poverty influenced their students’ opportunities to learn and resulted in greater discrepancies between their current abilities and CCSS demands. Teachers in more affluent schools or districts may not have had the same reactions. Additionally, NCE administrators did not provide professional development about CCSS implementation. It is possible that formal instruction would have affected the teachers’ learning outcomes.

Third, the study’s design limits the findings. I collected data primarily through participant interviews. Therefore, what the participants could recall and articulate, and what they were willing to share with me are necessarily limited (Patton, 2002). Their responses could have been further distorted because the interviews took place during their only preparation period. Typically, they graded papers, prepared lessons, and dealt with administrative tasks during this time. They may have been distracted by events from earlier in the day or thoughts of other things they could have been doing during this time. Interviewing outside of the school day may have reduced these distractions and given more time for the teachers to contemplate their responses. Conducting the interviews during the fall, rather than spring, semester may also have resulted in different findings. The teachers would not have had as much experience with the new curriculum, but they also may not have felt as much pressure from the upcoming standardized tests. Both conditions could have affected their experiences.
Implications for Policy

Concerning this study’s participants, authoritative policies such as the CCSS, combined with specific guidelines for publishers, are effective tools for controlling classroom practice. However, policymakers should consider whether these methods are producing results that are good for students and teachers. The CCSS contributed to the de-professionalization of Mia, Lea, and Nichole. Rather than fully relying on professional knowledge developed through years of experience, they often implemented pedagogical decisions with which they disagreed. These actions resulted in the teachers conveying the will of others, resisting in limited ways. This study has added to the literature demonstrating the continued detrimental effects of authoritative policies on teachers. Policymakers are encouraged to solicit and read a variety of teachers’ narratives regarding their practice. Only then can those who create and endorse sweeping policies understand how their actions affect others. Policymakers must consider more appropriate methods of educational reform, preferably those that recognize teachers as competent decision makers.

Implications for Practice

Teachers like Mia and Lea could use integrated, hands-on projects with their students. In fact, the TLOs require research projects: 1) provide students opportunities to complete both short and longer research projects (S:12.4A); and 2) structure shorter research projects in a way that students can build skills necessary to conduct research independently (S:12.4B). Such projects would likely require careful planning to meet CCSS demands and student needs, but they would allow the teachers to express their creativity and to teach in ways that better reflected their beliefs about student learning. For example, rather than reading selected biographies from the textbooks, Mia’s students could have researched historic figures individually or with a partner.
This research would have required reading across multiple texts of varying complexity levels. Then, students could have been required to analyze what they read and write reports summarizing important information. They could have presented the findings to their classmates, engaging in academic discussions on each of the topics.

This study’s participants could benefit from a workshop focused on critical pedagogy. Even though this study supports the importance of teachers learning informally in practice, it does not deny the place of formal instruction or its influence on subsequent learning in informal contexts. The ideology in the CCSS and RPC-inspired curriculum clearly affected the teachers’ practice, and the pressures to align their pedagogy with the mandates resulted in varying levels of stress and frustration. However, they did not have a thorough understanding of how this powerful ideology was shaping their identities or their work.

Learning to “understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within” (Giroux, 2011, p. 157) their school context would potentially illuminate ideas that were previously hidden from them (Papola-Ellis, 2014). Through a workshop focused on defining ideology and doing ideology critique, the teachers could “become aware of how ideology lives within them as well as an understanding” of how it constructs what appears to be a “normal order of things” (Brookfield, 2001, p. 16) in society.

Beyond recognition of the presence and work of power in texts and social structures, critical pedagogy prods individuals to reflect critically on these potentially new understandings of the world in which they live. This insight would offer teachers a new way of seeing their teaching and the authoritative policies that strive to control their work. It would give them opportunities to challenge dominant discourses (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011), such
as those in the TLOs, rather than “uncritically embracing and being colonized” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 177) by them.

Additionally, a more critical mindset would allow the teachers to critique their own practices, such as those that routinely implement an autonomous model of literacy and do unintentional harm to the EL students that populate their classrooms. Finally, a workshop such as this would urge teachers to “to act on the knowledge, values, and social relations they acquire by being responsive” (Giroux, 2011, p. 14) to the needs of their students in nuanced ways, hopefully contributing to the positive transformation of education and society at large.

**Implications for Future Research**

As indicated above, this study has provided an empirical application of Illeris’s (2007a) comprehensive learning model to teachers. It has demonstrated that the interaction between the multiple dimensions of the learning process must always be considered to understand what happens during teacher informal learning. Further, it has added to the growing knowledge base about the significance of the unstructured learning that occurs in teachers’ workplace, the classroom. However, future research is needed to support or contradict these findings in two primary ways: 1) how additional factors may have contributed to learning unintended outcomes and 2) how race/ethnicity and class influenced the teachers’ learning.

The teachers learned to understand themselves and their students in new ways. Learning to be insecure about their effectiveness as teachers and to see students as test scores (i.e., bubble kids) is not a beneficial learning outcome. These findings could prompt additional studies. For instance, we need to understand how or why Nichole seemed to demonstrate less of this learning than Mia and Lea. Were there personal factors or those related to her position as a third grade teacher that contributed to this outcome? Did Nichole not refer to her students as bubble kids
because, as the first year of standardized testing, she did not have her current students’ test scores? Other schools label students in this way as early as kindergarten (Booher-Jennings, 2006). Further research would be needed to discover whether this was the practice at NCE and Nichole somehow dismissed it, or if this type of labeling did not begin until fourth grade, when third grade test scores were known.

Finally, the teachers were all middle-class, White women who were monolingual English speakers, and their students were predominately bilingual Latino/as living in poverty. Further analysis of these data might reveal how race/ethnicity and class influenced the way the teachers understood their students. For example, the teachers spoke of “having to roll” with students speaking Spanish at home. They frequently claimed students’ lack of necessary skills and background knowledge reflected their home lives (i.e., lack of parental support, conditions of poverty). With no bilingual staff, except for one translator, NCE did not have cultural informants available to help construct bridges of communication between the school personnel, the students, and the community. Ethnographic studies that encompassed the school and surrounding neighborhoods could elucidate how sociocultural narratives in the community affected teacher-student relationships.

**Final Thoughts**

In conducting this study, I hoped to provide a glimpse into what it is like for teachers to do the work of bridging the chasm between ELs’ academic and linguistic needs and the demands of an authoritative policy such as the CCSS. From the time this study was conceived, throughout the literature review, the data collection and analysis, and the construction of the narratives told in these pages, I wondered what my narrative would have been if I were a teacher and not a researcher. Would I have learned the TLOs? Would I have let go of pieces of my pre-CCSS
narrative and held tightly to others? Would I have learned to doubt my abilities as a teacher and
to see my students as test scores?

I will never know the answers to these questions, but I do know that I have come to
understand more deeply the difficulty of the work my participants were doing. I have developed
pressing questions about the CCSS authors’ intended teacher learning outcomes. I suspect they
intended for Nichole to learn that she could expect more of ELs by challenging them to lead
academic discussions, but did they intend for Lea to learn she is a failure? Did they intend for
Mia to question the pedagogical knowledge she had developed over a 25-year career? Did they
intend for the teachers to learn they could resist and not follow all of the rules? Did they intend
to compel teachers to choose between adopting teaching practices they deemed inappropriate and
being seen as bad teachers? I think the CCSS authors would not regard these outcomes as
intentional, but rather unavoidable “casualties” of the current reform effort (Meyer, 2013, p. 5). I
hope that this study offers those outside of today’s classrooms a better understanding of teachers’
work and the impetus to continue investigating the outcomes of our actions.
Appendix A

Interview Guide
Interview 1: Part 1
Focus: Literacy teaching with ELs prior to Common Core English Language Arts Standards (CCSS-ELA) implementation

Introductory
• How long have you been teaching?
• What grades have you taught? Where? (this school/district or elsewhere)
• What were two important factors, or influences, on your decision to become a teacher?

Literacy
• If a parent asked you what literacy was, what would you say?
• What factors contributed to you teaching literacy, and not math, science, etc.?

Teaching ELs
• Tell me about the first time you had an EL in your classroom.
  o Where?
  o What grade?
  o How many ELs? (1 or more)
• How did it make you feel to be a teacher of ELs?

Teaching literacy to ELs
• Think about a memorable year teaching ELs, prior to CCSS. It can be memorable because it was a good/fun/successful year or because it was more challenging/difficult (for any reason).
  o Describe a lesson (or unit of lessons) I would have seen if I had visited your classroom.
    ▪ What did you do?
    ▪ How did you decide to do that?
    ▪ What issues did you consider when you were planning it?
    ▪ What did you hope would happen?
    ▪ How did it work out?
    ▪ How did students respond?
Interview 1: Part 2
Focus: Literacy teaching with ELs prior to Common Core English Language Arts Standards (CCSS-ELA) implementation

Teaching literacy to ELs
• Last time you told me about a memorable literacy lesson you taught to ELs, prior to CCSS implementation. It was a successful/unsuccessful lesson. Tell me about (the opposite type).
  o Describe a lesson (or unit of lessons) I would have seen if I had visited your classroom.
    ▪ What did you do?
    ▪ How did you decide to do that?
    ▪ What issues did you consider when you were planning it?
    ▪ What did you hope would happen?
    ▪ How did it work out?
    ▪ How did students respond?

Core beliefs about teaching ELs (to determine if there are differences between belief and actions)
• Imagine I am your student teacher during one of those years prior to CCSS. I’m concerned about knowing how to teach literacy to ELs. I don’t feel prepared to do so.
  o What would you tell me?
  o How do you know those things? (learned in prep prog. or through experience?)

Planning for instruction
• How do you plan for literacy instruction? Describe your process.
• If I could hear your thoughts as you’re planning a typical lesson/unit, what would I hear?
Interview 2: Part 1
Focus: Current experiences teaching literacy to ELs (during CCSS-ELA implementation)

Understandings of ELs
• Tell me about a couple of ELs you’ve had that you would consider typical of ELs in this school.
  o What did you determine to be their greatest academic needs?
  o Did you perceive them to have social needs? If so, what were the ones having the most influence on their academic needs?

Perceptions of good/effective teacher characteristics
• Describe what a good (effective) literacy teacher of ELs does.

Knowledge and influence of CCSS-ELA
• Your aunt is a former elementary teacher who retired in 2008. She tells you that she’s heard about the Common Core English Language Arts Standards (CCSS-ELA) on TV or in the newspaper, but she wants to know more. She asks…
  o What can you tell me about the CCSS-ELA? (What is it?)
  o Where did/do you get information about the CCSS?
  o What does this mean for your literacy teaching? (How, if at all, is your teaching being affected by the implementation of the CCSS?)

Influence of CCSS on teachers’ work
• Think about a day in the last week or so that you would consider to be a “typical” day of this school year. Describe for me what you did from the time you arrived at school until your morning class was over.

Time factor
In prior interviews, you mentioned that a lack of time contributed to some of your instructional choices. Can you talk more about what you mean by that?

**At end of interview, ask teachers to think about successful and unsuccessful lessons they have taught recently. Ask them to be prepared to talk about those lessons and to show me the materials they used.**
Interview 2: Part 2

Designing literacy instruction
• Imagine I am a novice teacher, sent to your classroom this year to learn about teaching literacy to ELs. What would I see, hear, and learn from you?
• How do you plan for literacy instruction this year? Describe your process.

Notable lessons
• Tell me about a literacy lesson you taught recently that you thought was particularly successful for the ELs in your classroom.
  o How did you know it was a successful lesson?
    ▪ Do you think your principal would consider it a successful lesson? Why or why not?
  o How did you make the pedagogical choices for that lesson? (i.e., What guided your choices?)
  o In what ways did this lesson, or others similar to it, confirm or alter what you believe or know about literacy? About ELs? About yourself as a teacher?

• Tell me about a literacy lesson you taught recently that you thought was particularly unsuccessful for the ELs in your classroom.
  o How did you know it was a successful lesson?
    ▪ Do you think your principal would consider it a successful lesson? Why or why not?
  o How did you make the pedagogical choices for that lesson? (i.e., What guided your choices?)
  o In what ways did this lesson, or others similar to it, confirm or alter what you believe or know about literacy? About ELs? About yourself as a teacher?

Perceived changes to instruction
• Have your understandings of teaching literacy or teaching ELs changed as a result of the CCSS?
• Has the implementation of the CCSS made you a better, more effective teacher in any way? If so, how?
• Has it made you a less effective teacher in any way? If so, how?
Interview 3: Part 1
Focus: The meaning of experiences; imagining a future without CCSS-ELA

TLOs
• Provide list of TLOs. How well do you think these statements align with what CCSS is expecting you to do as a teacher?

Attitudes and opinions about CCSS-ELA
• What is your professional assessment of the CCSS-ELA?
  o Is this the same as your personal assessment (not in your role as a teacher)?

Imagining a future without CCSS-ELA
• Imagine attending a staff meeting next week and the administrator announces that the CCSS-ELA are going to be repealed. As a result, next year every teacher will be able to teach literacy in any way they perceive as best.
  o How would you feel about that announcement?
  o Describe what you would say to a close teaching colleague as you walk back to your classrooms after the meeting.
  o Describe how you would teach your next literacy lesson for ELs after the repeal of CCSS-ELA.
Interview 3: Part 2
Focus: The meaning of experiences; imagining a future without CCSS-ELA

Exploring identity before CCSS-ELA implementation and currently
- During the first interview, you described your teaching of literacy to ELs prior to CCSS. Describe how you felt about yourself as an EL literacy teacher during those years.
- During the second interview, you described recent lessons that you taught. Describe how you feel about yourself as an EL literacy teacher in light of those lessons, or others similar to them.
- What others things do you wish policy and decision makers knew about the implementation of the CCSS?
Appendix B

Revised Publishers’ Criteria “Should” Statements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) “Should” Statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEY CRITERIA FOR TEXT SELECTION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT COMPLEXITY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>S:3.2A</td>
<td>&quot;Instructional materials should also offer advanced texts to provide students at every grade with the opportunity to read texts beyond their current grade level to prepare them for the challenges of more complex text.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:3.3A</td>
<td>&quot;Complex text is a rich repository of ideas, information, and experience which all readers should learn how to access, although some students will need more scaffolding to do so.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:3.4A</td>
<td>&quot;Curriculum materials should provide extensive opportunities for all students in a classroom to engage with complex text, although students whose reading ability is developing at a slower rate also will need supplementary opportunities to read text they can comprehend successfully without extensive supports.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:4.2A</td>
<td>&quot;Students should also be required to read texts of a range of lengths — for a variety of purposes — including several longer texts each year.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:4.2B</td>
<td>&quot;Discussion of extended or longer texts should span the entire text while also creating a series of questions that demonstrate how careful attention to specific passages within the text provide opportunities for close reading.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| S:4.3A | "These materials should ensure that all students have daily opportunities to read texts of their choice on their own during and outside of the school day."
| S:4.3B | "Texts should also vary in length and density, requiring students to slow down or read more quickly depending on their purpose for reading." |
| S:4.3C | "In alignment with the standards and to acknowledge the range of students' interests, these materials should include informational texts and literary nonfiction as well as literature." |
| **RANGE AND QUALITY OF TEXTS** |
| S:5.1A | “In addition, to develop reading comprehension for all readers, as well as build vocabulary, the selected informational texts should build a coherent body of knowledge both within and across grades.” |
| S:5.3A | “Given the emphasis of the Common Core State Standards on close reading, many of the texts selected should be worthy of close attention and careful re-reading for understanding.” |
| S:5.3B | "To become career and college ready, students must grapple with a range of works that span many genres, cultures, and eras and model the kinds of thinking and writing students should aspire to in their own work.” |
| S:5.3C | “Also, there should be selections of sources that require students to read and integrate a larger volume of material for research purposes.” |
| S:6.1A | “Aligned materials for grades 3-12 should set out a coherent selection and sequence of texts (of sufficient complexity and quality) to give students a well-developed sense of bodies of literature (like American literature or classic myths and stories) as part of becoming college and career ready.” |
## Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) “Should” Statements

### Key Criteria for Questions and Tasks

#### High-Quality, Text-Dependent Questions and Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>“Should” Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S:6.5A</td>
<td>“Eighty to ninety percent of the Reading Standards in each grade require text-dependent analysis; accordingly, aligned curriculum materials should have a similar percentage of text-dependent questions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:6.5B</td>
<td>“When examining a complex text in depth, tasks should require careful scrutiny of the text and specific references to evidence from the text itself to support responses.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:6.6A</td>
<td>“That is, high quality questions should be developed to address the specific text being read, in response to the demands of that text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:6.6B</td>
<td>“Though there is a productive role for good general questions for teachers and students to have at hand, materials should not over rely on ‘cookie-cutter’ questions that could be asked of any text, such as “What is the main idea? Provide three supporting details.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.1A</td>
<td>“Materials should develop sequences of individually crafted questions that draw students and teachers into an exploration of the text or texts at hand.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.2A</td>
<td>“A text-dependent approach can and should be applied to building knowledge from multiple sources as well as making connections among texts and learned material, according to the principle that each source be read and understood carefully.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.2B</td>
<td>“Student background knowledge and experiences can illuminate the reading but should not replace attention to the text itself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.3A</td>
<td>“The sequence of questions should cultivate student mastery of the specific ideas and illuminating particulars of the text.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:7.3B</td>
<td>“Questions aligned with Common Core State Standards should demand attention to the text to answer fully.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:7.3C</td>
<td>“Even when dealing with larger volumes of text, questions should be designed to stimulate student attention to gaining specific knowledge and insight from each source.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.4A</td>
<td>“Aligned curriculum materials should include explicit models of a range of high-quality evidence-based answers to questions - samples of proficient student responses - about specific texts from each grade.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.4B</td>
<td>“Questions should require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated and are able to make nontrivial inferences beyond what is explicitly stated in the text regarding what logically follows from the evidence in the text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.5A</td>
<td>“Questions should reward careful reading by focusing on illuminating specifics and ideas of the text that &quot;pay off&quot; in a deeper understanding and insight.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:7.5B</td>
<td>“The sequence of questions should not be random but should build toward more coherent understanding and analysis.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:8.1A</td>
<td>“Care should be taken that initial questions are not so overly broad and general that they pull students away from an in-depth encounter with the specific text or texts; rather, strong questions will return students to the text to achieve greater...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.1B</td>
<td>“The best questions will motivate students to dig in and explore further - just as texts should be worth reading, so should questions be worth answering.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.2A</td>
<td>“Materials should design opportunities for close reading of selected passages or texts and create a series of questions that demonstrate how careful attention to those readings allows students to gather evidence and build knowledge.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.2B</td>
<td>“This approach can and should encourage the comparison and synthesis of multiple sources.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:8.2C</td>
<td>“Once each source is read and understood carefully, attention should be given to integrating what students have just read with what they have read and learned previously.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.2D</td>
<td>“As students apply knowledge and concepts gained through reading to build a more coherent understanding of a subject, productive connections and comparisons across texts and ideas should bring students back to careful reading of specific texts.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.2E</td>
<td>“Students can and should make connections between texts, but this activity should not supersede the close examination of each specific text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:8.3A</td>
<td>“While the English teacher is not meant to be a content expert in an area covered by particular texts, curriculum materials should guide teachers and students to demonstrate careful understanding of the information developed in the text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:8.3B</td>
<td>“For example, in a narrative with a great deal of science, teachers and students should be required to follow and comprehend the scientific information as presented by the text.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CULTIVATING STUDENTS' ABILITY TO READ COMPLEX TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>S:8.5A</td>
<td>“However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; the scaffolding should not become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.1A</td>
<td>“Effective scaffolding aligned with the standards should result in the reader encountering the text on its own terms, with instructions providing helpful directions that focus students on the text.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.1B</td>
<td>“Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where he or she might struggle.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.1C</td>
<td>“Aligned curriculum materials therefore should explicitly direct students to re-read challenging portions of the text and offer instructors clear guidance about an array of text-based scaffolds.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:9.2A</td>
<td>“When necessary, extra textual scaffolding prior to and during the first read should focus on words and concepts that are essential to a basic understanding and that students are not likely to know or be able to determine from context.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:9.2B</td>
<td>“Texts and the discussion questions should be selected and ordered so that they bootstrap onto each other and promote deep thinking and substantive engagement with the text.”</td>
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</table>
| S:9.3A | “Close reading and gathering knowledge from specific texts should be at the heart of classroom activities and not be
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<td>consigned to the margins when completing assignments.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.3B</td>
<td>“Reading strategies should work in the service of reading comprehension (rather than an end unto themselves) and assist</td>
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<td>students in building knowledge and insight from specific texts.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.3C</td>
<td>“To be effective, instruction on specific reading techniques should occur when they illuminate specific aspects of a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.3D</td>
<td>“As much as possible, this training should be embedded in the activity of reading the text rather than being taught as a</td>
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<td>separate body of material.”</td>
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<td>S:9.3E</td>
<td>“Additionally, care should be taken that introducing broad themes and questions in advance of reading does not prompt</td>
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<td>overly general conversations rather than focusing reading on the specific ideas and details, drawing evidence from the text,</td>
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<td>and gleaning meaning and knowledge from it.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.4A</td>
<td>“Materials should provide opportunities for students to participate in real, substantive discussions that require them to</td>
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<td>respond directly to the ideas of their peers.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.4B</td>
<td>“Teachers can begin by asking the kind and level of questions appropriate to the reading and then students should be</td>
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<td>prompted to ask high-quality questions about what they are reading to one another for further comprehension and analysis.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:9.4C</td>
<td>“Students should have opportunities to use writing to clarify, examine, and organize their own thinking, so reading</td>
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<td>materials should provide effective ongoing prompts for students to analyze texts in writing.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.1A</td>
<td>“Instructional materials should be designed to devote sufficient time in class to students encountering text without</td>
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<td>scaffolding, as they often will in college-and career-ready environments.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.1B</td>
<td>“A significant portion of the time spent with each text should provide opportunities for students to work independently on</td>
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<td>analyzing grade-level text because this independent analysis is required by the standards.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.2A</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should therefore require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an</td>
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<td>author's argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.2B</td>
<td>“When engaging in critique, materials should require students to return to the text to check the quality and accuracy of their</td>
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<td>evaluations and interpretations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.3A</td>
<td>“Teachers' guides or students' editions of curriculum materials should highlight the reading selections.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.3B</td>
<td>“Everything included in the surrounding materials should be thoughtfully considered and justified before being included.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.3C</td>
<td>“The text should be central, and surrounding materials should be included only when necessary, so as not to distract from</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>the text itself.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.3D</td>
<td>“Instructional support materials should focus on questions that engage students in becoming interested in the text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.3E</td>
<td>“Rather than being consigned to the margins when completing assignments, close and careful reading should be at the</td>
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<td>center of classroom activities.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.3F</td>
<td>“Given the focus of the Common Core State Standards, publishers should be extremely sparing in offering activities that are</td>
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<td>not text based.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) “Should” Statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:10.4A</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide teachers to provide scaffolding but also gradually remove those supports by including tasks that require students to demonstrate their independent capacity to read and write in every domain at the appropriate level of complexity and sophistication.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:10.4B</td>
<td>“Activities used for assessment should clearly denote what standards and texts are being emphasized, and materials should offer frequent and easily implemented assessments, including systems for record keeping and follow-up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>KEY CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC VOCABULARY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.1A</td>
<td>“Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary because these are the words that will help them access a wide range of complex texts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.2A</td>
<td>“Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from the context of how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely to be able to figure out their meanings from the text alone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.2B</td>
<td>“In alignment with the standards, materials should also require students to explain the impact of specific word choices on the text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.2C</td>
<td>“Materials and activities should also provide ample opportunities for students to practice the use of academic vocabulary in their speaking and writing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.3A</td>
<td>“Materials should therefore offer the resources necessary for supporting students who are developing knowledge of high-frequency words.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.3B</td>
<td>“Since teachers will often not have the time to teach explicitly all of the high-frequency words required, materials should make it possible for students to learn the words' meanings on their own, providing such things as student-friendly definitions for high-frequency words whose meanings cannot be inferred from the context.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>KEY CRITERIA FOR WRITING TO SOURCES AND RESEARCH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MATERIALS PORTRAY WRITING TO SOURCES AS A KEY TASK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.4A</td>
<td>“Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards should give students extensive opportunities to write in response to sources throughout grade-level materials.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.4B</td>
<td>“Model rubrics for the writing assignments as well as high-quality student samples should also be provided as guidance to teachers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MATERIALS FOCUS ON FORMING ARGUMENTS AS WELL AS INFORMATIVE WRITING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.5A</td>
<td>“As a consequence, less classroom time should be spent in later grades on personal writing in response to decontextualized prompts that ask students to detail personal experiences or opinions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:11.5B</td>
<td>“In elementary school, 30 percent of student writing should be to argue, 35 percent should be to explain/inform, and 35 percent should be narrative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) “Should” Statements</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.1A</td>
<td>“In middle school, 35 percent of student writing should be to write arguments, 35 percent should be to explain/inform, and 30 percent should be narrative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.1B</td>
<td>“In high school, 40 percent of student writing should be to write arguments, 40 percent should be to explain/inform, and 20 percent should be narrative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.3A</td>
<td>“Materials make it clear that student writing should be responsive to the needs of the audience and the particulars of the text in question.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.3B</td>
<td>“As the standards are silent on length and structure, student writing should not be evaluated by whether it follows a particular format or formula (e.g., the five paragraph essay).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>STUDENTS ARE GIVEN EXTENSIVE PRACTICE WITH SHORT, FOCUSED RESEARCH PROJECTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.4A</td>
<td>“Standard 7 emphasizes that students should conduct several short research projects in addition to more sustained research efforts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.4B</td>
<td>“Materials should require several of these short research projects annually to enable students to repeat the research process many times and develop the expertise needed to conduct research independently.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>ADDITIONAL KEY CRITERIA FOR STUDENT READING, WRITING, LISTENING, SPEAKING</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>MATERIALS PROVIDE SYSTEMATIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO READ COMPLEX TEXT WITH FLUENCY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.5A</td>
<td>“Standards should draw on the connections between the Speaking and Listening Standards and the Reading Standards on fluency to provide opportunities for students to develop this important skill (e.g., rehearsing an oral performance of a written piece has the built-in benefit of promoting reading fluency).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MATERIALS HELP TEACHERS PLAN SUBSTANTIVE ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.6A</td>
<td>“Standards should show teachers how to plan engaging discussions around grade-level topics and texts that students have studied and researched in advance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.6B</td>
<td>“Speaking and Listening prompts and questions should offer opportunities for students to share preparation, evidence, and research - real, substantive discussions that require students to respond directly to the ideas of their peers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:12.6C</td>
<td>“Materials should highlight strengthening students’ listening skills as well as their ability to respond to and challenge their peers with relevant follow-up questions and evidence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:13.1A</td>
<td>“Materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards therefore should use multimedia and technology in a way that engages students in absorbing or expressing details of the text rather than becoming a distraction or replacement for engaging with the text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:13.2A</td>
<td>“Thus, aligned materials should demonstrate that they explicitly and effectively support student mastery of the full range of grammar and conventions as they are applied in increasingly sophisticated contexts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:13.2B</td>
<td>“The materials should also indicate when students should adhere to formal conventions and when they are speaking and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Revised Publishers’ Criteria (RPC) “Should” Statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:13.3A</td>
<td>“A great deal of the material designed for the standards will by necessity be new, but as much as possible the work should be based on research and developed and refined through actual testing in classrooms.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:13.3B</td>
<td>“Publishers should provide a clear research plan for how the efficacy of their materials will be assessed and improved over time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:13.3C</td>
<td>“Revisions should be based on evidence of actual use and results with a wide range of students, including English language learners.”</td>
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</table>
Appendix C

Teacher Learning Outcomes (TLOs)
## Teacher Learning Outcomes (TLOs)

### KEY CRITERIA FOR TEXT SELECTION

#### TEXT COMPLEXITY

| Provide extensive experiences for all students to engage with complex, grade-level texts | S:3.4A | X |  |  |
| Design and lead text discussions that cover the entire text and require close reading of selected passages | S:4.2B | X |  |  |
| Make available and require students to read informational texts, literary nonfiction texts, and literature of varying length and complexity. | S:3.2A; S:4.2A; S:4.3B; S:4.3C | X |  |  |
| Lead all students to learn how to access complex text, providing scaffolding as needed. | S:3.3A | X | X |  |
| In addition to complex text, provide opportunities for slower readers to read appropriately leveled texts independently. | S:3.3A | X |  |  |
| Ensure all students have daily opportunities to read texts of their choice | S:4.3A |  |  |  |

#### RANGE AND QUALITY OF TEXTS

| Select and utilize high-quality texts to provide students with access to a coherent, sequenced body of knowledge and to provide a model for their own thinking and writing | S:5.1A; S:5.3A; S:5.3B; S:5.3C; S:6.1A |  | X |  |

### KEY CRITERIA FOR QUESTIONS AND TASKS

#### HIGH-QUALITY, TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS AND TASKS

<p>| Design questions and learning tasks, such as close reading, that focus students on the text in order to recognize and glean the most significant ideas and important details from it. | S:7.2A; S:7.3A; S:7.3C; S:7.5A | X | X |  |
| Ask questions drawing upon students’ background knowledge and connections across texts sparingly and only after the focal text has been examined in depth | S:7.2B; S:8.2C; S:8.2E |  |  | X |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Learning Outcomes (TLOs)</th>
<th>Corresponding &quot;should&quot; statements</th>
<th>Key Shift 1</th>
<th>Key Shift 2</th>
<th>Key Shift 3</th>
<th>Scaffolding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate, through appropriate tasks and questions, the values of gaining knowledge from texts and using the texts to support their written and oral responses.</td>
<td>S:8.2A; S:8.3A; S:8.3B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking to the curriculum for guidance, ask questions that assess students' abilities to provide explicitly stated details from the text,</td>
<td>S:7.4A; S:7.4B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Ask text-dependent questions 80-90% of the time</td>
<td>S:6.5A</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Design questions and learning tasks that are directly related to the specific text, not general in nature.</td>
<td>S:6.6A; S:6.6B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design questions and learning tasks that require students to use evidence from the text to support all responses.</td>
<td>S:6.5B; S:7.3B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking to the curriculum for guidance, ask questions that assess students' abilities to make logical inferences based upon the text.</td>
<td>S:7.4A; S:7.4B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design and ask question sequences that are specific to the text and require students to fully explore the text.</td>
<td>S:7.1A; S:8.1B</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask purposeful questions that lead to coherent understanding and analysis of text.</td>
<td>S:7.5B; S:8.1A</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design learning tasks that require students to compare and synthesize multiple texts.</td>
<td>S:8.2B; S:8.2D</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CULTIVATING STUDENTS' ABILITY TO READ COMPLEX TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus all learning tasks and activities on specific texts. Activities and discussions require students to find specific ideas, draw evidence from the text, and glean available knowledge.</td>
<td>S:9.3A; S:9.3E; S:9.4A; S:10.3B; S:10.3C; S:10.3E</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize carefully sequenced questions to direct students to a close reading of the text for the purposes of determining their response and gleaning knowledge present within the text.</td>
<td>S:9.2B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide scaffolding on a limited and as-needed basis. Remove when no longer necessary. Consult curriculum guides for appropriate scaffolds.</td>
<td>S:8.5A; S:9.1A; S:9.1B; S:9.1C; S:9.2A; S:10.4A</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach reading techniques or strategies in direct relation to engagement with specific texts, not as isolated units of study</td>
<td>S:9.3B; S:9.3C; S:9.3D</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide numerous opportunities for students to engage grade-level texts independently and in writing</td>
<td>S:10.1A; S:10.1B</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model and then require students to ask appropriate text-dependent questions of their peers</td>
<td>S:9.4B</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design writing tasks that require students to engage more fully with the text, to analyze it, and to clarify their thinking about it.</td>
<td>S:9.4C</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate students' abilities to comprehend text details and the author's argument before engaging in interpretation or evaluation of the text. All interpretations and evaluations must be grounded in the text.</td>
<td>S:10.2A; S:10.2B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align assessments to specific standards and texts</td>
<td>S:10.4B</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**KEY CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**

<p>| Design learning tasks and provide materials that assist students in acquiring essential academic vocabulary. | S:11.1A | | X | | |
| Guide students to use context clues and other in-text resources to determine the meanings of academic and high frequency words and to explain the impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text. | S:11.2A; S:11.2B; S:11.3A; S:11.3B | | X | | |
| As time allows, provide explicit instruction of high-frequency words when needed. | S:11.3B | | | X | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Learning Outcomes (TLOs)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for students to use academic vocabulary in speaking and writing.</td>
<td>S:11.2C</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

**KEY CRITERIA FOR WRITING TO SOURCES AND RESEARCH**

**MATERIALS PORTRAY WRITING TO SOURCES AS A KEY TASK**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give students many opportunities to write in response to sources.</td>
<td>S:11.4A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade student writing using provided rubrics and student samples for guidance.</td>
<td>S:11.4B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MATERIALS FOCUS ON FORMING ARGUMENTS AS WELL AS INFORMATIVE WRITING**

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<tr>
<td>Require students to write argumentative, informational, and narrative pieces. Less class time should be spent on narrative writing that details personal experiences or opinions.</td>
<td>S:11.5A; S:11.5B; S:12.1A; S:12.1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade student writing based upon how well it attends to audience and connections to the texts on which the prompt is based. Requiring a particular structure is not the focus of grading.</td>
<td>S:12.3A; S:12.3B</td>
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</table>

**STUDENTS ARE GIVEN EXTENSIVE PRACTICE WITH SHORT, FOCUSED RESEARCH PROJECTS**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require students to complete shorter and longer research projects.</td>
<td>S:12.4A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure shorter research projects in a way that students can build skills necessary to conduct research independently.</td>
<td>S:12.4B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL KEY CRITERIA FOR STUDENT READING, WRITING, LISTENING, SPEAKING**

**MATERIALS PROVIDE SYSTEMATIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO READ COMPLEX TEXT WITH FLUENCY**

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilize the speaking and listening standards with complex text so that students can develop better reading fluency.</td>
<td>S:12.5A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Learning Outcomes (TLOs)</td>
<td>Corresponding &quot;should&quot; statements</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATERIALS HELP TEACHERS PLAN SUBSTANTIVE ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan academic discussions on grade-level topics and texts that require advanced preparation by students.</td>
<td>S:12.6A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design question prompts and learning activities that require students to actively participate in substantive academic discussions with their peers. Active participation includes listening and responding to peers, challenging ideas, and asking relevant questions.</td>
<td>S:12.6B; S:12.6C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use multimedia and technology in ways that promote more, rather than less, engagement with the text.</td>
<td>S:13.1A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize materials that promote student mastery and application of the full range of grammar and language conventions.</td>
<td>S:13.2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach students to understand and apply the range of registers for language conventions.</td>
<td>S:13.2B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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doi:10.1177/1077800406297667


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