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TEACHERS' DISSONANCE WITH

CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY

DIVERSE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Historically, efforts to address the educational needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students (LCD) children have been inadequate. Currently, NCLB along with high-stakes testing, standards and objectives based education LCD students are performing below their peers (Weil, 1998). Classroom teachers, caught in the middle, are charged with the responsibility to raise test scores, plan curriculum, motivate students, and provide a welcoming learning environment for all students. Here, teachers' beliefs about meeting the needs of LCD students amidst NCLB were explored, in relation to curriculum planning.

A review of constructivist theory, curriculum theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy was provided as insight into to how teachers' beliefs are constructed, the role of curriculum, and approaches towards meeting academic needs of LCD students. A Case Study approach guided this research, using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data analysis included coding and categorizing the data, while looking for major themes to emerge. Participant responses along with observational field notes and documents were developed into three major themes and several subthemes.

The major themes that emerged from the study were: dissonance, individualized pedagogy and redefined expectations for teaching and learning. Data from participant statements and researcher observations, illuminate the *dissonance* between teachers' beliefs about district mandated pacing schedule, deficiencies in students' prior knowledge, and pedagogical beliefs. Dissonance was defined as the discord between meeting student academic needs while adhering to the mandated curriculum and pacing

guide. From this case study, dissonance led to a redefined philosophy of teaching and learning as a means to reconcile the discord or to find equilibrium. According to the data, teachers unknowingly sought out ways to resolve dissonance through a process of *individualizing pedagogy*. The individualized pedagogical approaches were identified as *curriculum adaptation* and/or *curriculum integration*. Due to the factors creating dissonance, teachers attempted to meet student academic needs by redefining their expectations for teaching and learning as a result of personal experiences, individual constructs teaching and learning, and the district mandated pacing schedule. The notion of *redefined expectations for teaching and learning* are directly linked to the influence of the pacing schedule, state and local assessments, perceptions of student social and academic needs, and their own beliefs about teaching and learning.

Teachers expressed a spectrum of beliefs about their role, the classroom, and meeting the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. The participants found the pacing guide useful but left little room for creativity and did not acknowledge the needs of their students. Often times the curriculum was not relevant and practical due to the backgrounds of the students. As a result, teachers implemented what they found to be for their students by adjusting the curriculum.

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Teachers' Dissonance With Curriculum Planning for Linguistically and Culturally

Diverse Students

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As cultural and ethnic diversity changes in the United States, so do educational efforts, reforms, and classroom demographics. We are living in an era in which a system of standards/objectives drives instruction and curricular options. Students are being assessed against their knowledge of state standards, testing anchors, and objectives. The educational focus at the national level has been on establishing uniformly high academic standards in curriculum, practice, and assessment (NCLB, 2001). With this emphasis, inadequate or inappropriate curriculum has profound implications for students and teachers. A fast occurring demographic shift has significantly added stress to classrooms using traditional pedagogy (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) with increased challenges to address the needs of diverse learners present in classrooms.

Linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) students are overrepresented in subpopulations often times defined as "minority populations" (Darder, 1991). Nieto (2005) stated that given the inexactness of language, just one term cannot fully encompass all that composes a person. Specific terms describing racial and/or ethnic heritage include: White, African American (AA), Hispanic American (HA), American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA) as derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's categories (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). For example, the national urban student population is overwhelmingly composed of Latino, African American, and other students of color – 76% as reported by the National Education Association (NEA, 1996). Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's definitions of

race and for the focus, when discussing individuals from LCD backgrounds refers to any person who is (1) of non-White ancestry and/or (2) utilizes English as a second language.

Research has indicated that students from racial and ethnic-minority backgrounds do not perform as well academically as their mainstream peers (Darder & Torres, 2004). Sleeter (2001) reminded us that "education in many communities of color, as well as many poor White communities, is in a state of crisis" (p. 94). She continued by saying, "Students are learning far too little, becoming disengaged, and dropping out at high rates" (Sleeter, 2001, p. 94). In a climate of standards/objectives based reform, educators have to seek ways to address diversity in classrooms and employ "best practices" that concentrate on the needs of LCD student populations. An understanding of how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning relate to curriculum decision making for linguistically and culturally diverse students is important.

Background

Current education systems in the United States maintain the ultimate goal of teaching English to students, including linguistically diverse children. These LCD students struggle with community and family values relating to language and cultural practices versus values that are salient to U.S. public education. These students may not have the background knowledge or individual experiences for meaningful connections to pre-packaged curriculum. As a result, many teachers are ill-prepared to adjust and modify instruction to meet LCD students' learning and language needs.

Educators today have to manage and adjust instruction because of increased cultural diversity in classrooms. Therefore, cultural and linguistic diversity presents considerable challenges for the design and delivery of high-quality instruction. To create more inclusive

learning environments, teachers must reconfigure learning environments by regarding each classroom as a distinct space in which instructional strategies must consistently be changed, reinvented, and re-conceptualized to address the new learning needs of students (Hooks, 1994).

Standards and objectives from national organizations, states, and local districts are translated into curricula: materials, binders, and scopes and sequences. These curricular resources are geared to creating a common curriculum and set of learning experiences, which are assessed on state tests (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001). As a result, the scope of curricula has become quite narrow. No Child Left Behind (2001) requires teachers to close the achievement gap by meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state standardized tests despite the learning and social needs within schools and districts. This has caused districts to implement curriculum-pacing schedules and Timelines for grade levels to ensure standards and testing objectives are taught.

In many schools, teachers do not have the autonomy to choose curricular materials. They plan lessons that embody the values, attitudes, and biases of those in power—those who decide state standards/objectives and the prescribed outcomes for student learning (Darder, 1991). Researchers have argued that students from LCD populations may have specific instructional needs (Nieto, 2000). In order to employ differentiated instructional methods, educators working with LCD students should use pedagogical approaches to infuse students' culture throughout the curriculum to reflect students' history, culture, or background (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Teachers can reflect student culture by infusing culturally relevant practices in the classroom. Cultural relevance is "teaching that uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture, which may be through seeing one's history, culture, or background represented in the curriculum" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 15).

Culturally relevant practices support and encourage students to use their prior knowledge to make sense of the world and to work toward improving it (Gay, 2000). In other words, this as a pedagogy addresses the connections between what students are learning and their overall life experiences while they "embrace a pedagogy that respects and cares for the souls of students" (Hooks, 1994, p. 34), and therefore serves to make classroom instruction more meaningful in the context of the students' lives.

Statement of the Problem

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated a testing system that holds schools accountable for improved student performance. Aggregate and disaggregate standardized test data illuminates several issues within U.S. public schools. First, testing indicates children from LCD backgrounds are performing below their peers (Weil, 2000). Second, our public education system is stratified, with most people of a race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status differing from the White majority at the bottom of the hierarchy. NCLB stressed that public schools in America are not meeting the needs of students from low-income backgrounds, students of non-White racial categories, and English Language Learners (ELLs) as demonstrated by scores on national and state standardized tests (Weil, 2000).

As our nation's future depends on the education of today's youth, the impact of NCLB has compelled educators to begin the difficult process of closing the achievement gap. Understanding how teachers are closing this gap requires valid research to highlight pedagogy leading to achievement. NCLB (2001) requires teachers to close the achievement gap by engaging in instructional methods meant to assist students in being successful on state standardized tests in the hopes that the school will meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as measured by subgroups. In our current NCLB era, teachers are confined to the curricular

demands of the school or district, while grappling with the academic and cultural needs of LCD students.

LCD students are the fastest growing group in U.S. public schools (Samway & McKeon, 2007). Unfortunately, many students are taught by teachers who have not been specifically trained or certified to work with LCD student populations (Samway & McKeon, 2007). As a result, teachers often struggle to meet the needs of this vast group of students by connecting instruction to their linguistic backgrounds or cultural experiences (Darder, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). LCD students' cultural values and viewpoints are not validated or recognized by teachers, curricula, schools, or educational systems (Darder, 1991). In addition, educators working in classrooms have beliefs about teaching and learning that impact curriculum and lesson planning, instructional delivery, and learning experienced by students.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how teachers' beliefs influence planning and instruction for LCD students. This study began with the notion that beliefs are philosophically, contextually, and socially constructed by participants due to past experiences and interactions. This study is of importance because it explores the idea of equitable education. Knowing how teachers attempt to meet the needs of LCD students in elementary classrooms is the first step and the actualization of meeting LCD students' needs. In a NCLB era, teachers are pressured to get high test scores from their students; unfortunately, the needs of LCD students may be sacrificed in the process of attempting to improve test scores.

This case study explored how teachers in LCD educational environments negotiate their beliefs about teaching and learning and plan that learning to meet the needs of their students.

Although human diversity issues in education have been discussed in multiple forms, and studied and researched over the years, prior research has indicated that teachers feel ill-prepared to teach in LCD environments (Darling-Hammond, 2002, Sleeter, 2001). Therefore, understanding what teachers are doing in classrooms is important to understanding instructional practice and "best practice" as it applies to LCD students. This research study sought to contribute to knowledge meant to inform teachers, curriculum planners, and school-based administrators who seek to enhance student success in today's complex classrooms. In addition, this study takes on the first and the third person in reference to the researcher. The use of first person describes the insider perspective of the researcher as a classroom educator, person of color and Spanish speaker. In contrast, third person removes the individual to be viewed as a researcher or observer within the naturalistic situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Questions

The intention of this investigation was to explore how teachers negotiate between their beliefs about teaching and learning in LCD classrooms and what influences teachers' curricular decision making and lesson planning in order to meet the academic needs of LCD students. Other study-related goals included the following: (a) to ascertain ways that teachers articulate the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students, and (b) to discover how teachers adapt curricula to meet the needs of their LCD students within the current system of standards/objectives-based reform. The guiding question this study sought to answer was: How do teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence curriculum decision making for linguistically and culturally diverse students? Relevant sub-questions included the following:

1. How do teachers self-report their beliefs and instructional practices to address and meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students?

2. How do teachers self-reported beliefs and instruction and planning align with their instructional delivery?

3. How do teachers change the curriculum to meet the needs of their LCD classrooms?

4. How do teachers plan for their linguistically and culturally diverse classroom environment?

Significance of the Study

NCLB requires schools to adopt curricula aligned to state standards. Often, classroom teachers are not included or have limited input in the process of adopting curriculum. When teachers are not included in the curriculum adoption process or curriculum decision making, they are forced to plan and deliver curriculum that may neither be appropriate for meeting the needs of their diverse students nor permit opportunities for individualized instruction. Tomlinson (2000) summarized the notion of stripping from teachers the ability to create effective curricula when he wrote: "For many teachers, curriculum has become a prescribed set of academic standards, instructional pacing has become a race against a clock to cover the standards, and the sole goal of teaching has been reduced to raising student test scores on a single test" (p. 7). A disconnect occurs between the needs of children from diverse cultures and the system of instructional delivery, including curriculum, planning, and materials, in public education in the United States (Darder & Torres, 2004). The choice of curriculum materials should be based on evidence that they contribute to the production of meaningful learning experiences. Educators,

on the front lines, are attempting to close the achievement gap as judged against proficiency delineated by standards in academic areas, but need to be equipped with the proper tools. In an era of educational reform, appropriate curricula and materials are essential for embracing the background knowledge of diverse learners.

Teachers' voices and involvement are necessary when developing and adapting curricula and adjusting learning experiences and formative assessments to create educational success (Owings & Kaplan, 2001). Teachers should use appropriate curricula to create lessons that carry the expectation that students will learn. When teachers are not given the autonomy to create appropriate curricula, they informally modify instructional delivery away from planned curricula, especially scripted curricula (Tomlinson, 2000). Objectives-driven curricula provide the exact content, written in measurable terms, to which they must adhere (Darder & Torres, 2004). Thus, teachers should be encouraged to move beyond the "melting-pot" mentality and the "one-size-fits-all" approach towards differentiation of learning inclusive of language, culture, community, and socioeconomic status to best serve students (Darder, 1991). Teachers, in our current NCLB era, are confined to the curricular demands of the school or district while grappling with the academic and cultural needs of LCD students.

This study was significant because it examined ways that teachers prepare curricula and materials and orchestrate learning experiences in a LCD stetting. The study highlights the dissonance between teachers' beliefs and the mandated curriculum. The findings address LCD students' needs by illuminating how teachers can become more reflective about personal beliefs about the student populations served and understand the positive impact of culturally responsive practices in the classroom. The study also aimed to help teachers and curriculum developers see

the need for curricular negotiations and adaptations to assist in implementing instructional pedagogy appropriate to LCD classrooms.

Limitiations and Delimitations

Several delimitations in this study may affect the generalizeability of the research. First, case studies do not generalize for all circumstances or populations. Specifically, this study examined planning and instruction in two grade levels within an urban elementary school located in the Northeast with a demographic population that is 95% Latino/Hispanic and 5% Black, representing LCD populations. Due to the specific demographics of the school and the classrooms, the findings may not be completely generalizable. The anthropological tradition of using "thick description" was used to ensure that there would be enough data for readers to determine whether and how the findings can be transferred to other situations (Merriam, 2002).

Interview questions were piloted, but with teachers working with a different demographic population of students. The instrument was chosen because many of the questions give teachers an opportunity to reflect on their practices and beliefs through open-ended questions. The entire piloted instrument was not used in this study, but rather just a portion of the questions. Thus, the untested nature of the instrument is a limitation to the study.

Definition of Terms

Curriculum—Curriculum is "an interrelated stet of plans and experiences that a student
        undertakes under the guidance of the school" (Marsh & Willis, 2007)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy—a form of teaching that actively involves all participants in classroom practices that include each individual's personal subjectivities in connection to and with the present social world (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally Responsive Teaching—"a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Lasdon-Billings, 1994, p. 18)

Dissonance- "two cognitions that are inconstant with one another" and the "pressure which he seeks to remove, among other ways, by altering one of the two dissonant cognitions" (Bem, 1967, p. 183).

English Language Learner (ELL)—For the needs of this study, English language learners are students whose native language is a language other than English and who are in the process of learning English

First Language (L1)—First language refers to the students native or heritage language

Linguistically and Culturally Diverse (LCD)—Linguistically and culturally diverse students are represented in subpopulations that are often times defined as "minority populations" (Darder, 1991). Nieto (2005) stated that given the inexactness of language, we can never fully encompass who an individual is with just one term. Some specific terms to describe an individual's ethnic heritage used in accordance with this study were: White, African American (AA), Hispanic American (HA), American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA) as derived from the US Census categories (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Therefore, in this study, individuals from LCD backgrounds were referred to as any person who is (1) of non-White ancestry and/or (2) utilizes English as a second language.

Second Language (L2)—L2 is the second language in which the students are seeking to attain

      proficiency.

Summary

      This study's organization begins with the first chapter, which includes the: Introduction, Statement of Problem, Purpose of Study, Research Questions, Significance of Study, Limitations and Delimitations, and Definition of Terms. The major concern of this research was how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum planning, and teaching and learning, and meeting the needs of LCD students.The overarching question was: how do teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the needs of LCD students influence teachers' curricular decision making, lesson planning, and instructional delivery. Delimitations and limitations were discussed as a means of clarifying the generalizability and methodological issues of this study. A list of terminology and definitions were added to help readers understand concepts included throughout the rest of the chapters.

      The next chapter contains a literature review in which constructivist theory, curriculum theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy are examined as they relate to the study. The subsequent chapter offers a description of the methodology used to collect data and qualitatively analyze the results. The fourth chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the data through the presentation of themes. Chapter five looks at the data, the recommendations for further research about meeting the needs of LCD student populations, and the implications for teacher preparation programs and professional development venues as a way to enhance reflective practice for both preservice and veteran teachers.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to inform the reader about how teachers construct beliefs about teaching and learning in linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) classrooms and what influences teachers' curriculum decision making and lesson planning explored during the interview process. The background for this study was taken from a review of the literature by philosophers, theorists, and researchers with regard to the needs of LCD students and descriptions of how teachers adapt curricula, framed by standards/objectives and testing. The literature review is designed to inform readers' understanding of how people construct beliefs about teaching and learning, pedagogy for LCD students.

This review of literature provides background to support the design and basis for this qualitative case study. The first part examines how teachers decide how and what to teach in these areas: (1) theory of constructivism, (2) teachers' beliefs, (3) curriculum theory, (3) curriculum in praxis, and (4) teacher requirements. The second section discusses literature relative to the academic needs of LCD student populations. The literature in this chapter explores the needs of LCD students and issues of curriculum changes as these provide insights into the need for research on teachers' beliefs as these apply to curriculum planning when standards and high-stakes testing drive curriculum design and use. These are synthesized as: (5) needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students and (6) culture in pedagogy. The literature creates a framework for understanding how beliefs are constructed within the context of constructivism related to research on culturally relevant practices.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism from a contemporary point-of-view is used to dissect teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in elementary schools. The literature exploring constructivism has expanded, connected with educational philosophy and pedagogy, since the theorization and writings of Piaget (1954) and Vygotsky's psychological perspectives (1978). Constructivism emphasizes the active role of the learner in building understanding and making sense of information (Woolfolk, 2002). As a theory, constructivism explains a way of understanding the process of learning and acquiring knowledge (Nieto, 1999). This section discusses the following aspects of constructivism: definition of constructivism, definition of social constructivism, constructivism in education, and culture and constructivism.

Definition of Constructivism

Constructivism has been utilized to make meaning in multiple fields. As a result, it has generated many definitions of how knowledge is constructed. Phillips and Soltis (2004) often cited in the field of educational psychology and have used Piaget's theory of how learners construct knowledge as a common basis for defining constructivism. The overarching notion is that new knowledge is assimilated or accommodated from old knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is consistent and is not true or false (Woolfolk, 2002). Cobb and Bowers (1999) believed that knowledge as an entity is constructed in one situation and applied in another. Knowledge, therefore, can be reconstructed based on one's realties about their experienced world.

Constructivism operates under the premise that learners create understanding through experiences (Schuman, 1996). This study looked at teachers as learners who construct beliefs through experiences with students who represent LCD student populations. Constructivism is therefore based on the principle that individuals construct personal perspectives of the world

through individual experiences (Schuman, 1996). In constructivism, every learner's knowledge and sense making are based upon his/her experiences. This notion can apply to teachers learning to construct their own beliefs and perceptions, but it also applies to how teachers apply pedagogy with LCD students.

Definition of Social Constructivism

Vygotsky, in *Mind and Society* (1978) theorized that educators had to first understand the relevant social and cultural elements that make up student identities. Vygotsky (1978) believed that meaning making occurs through socialization. He emphasized that, "thought must first pass through meanings and only then through words" (p. 252). Vygotsky's research focused on the individual's construction of knowledge, but Phillips (1997) took it further and contextualized social constructivism as how ideas, beliefs, and commonly held understandings were communicated to members of a socio-cultural group.

Social constructivism, as coined by Vygotsky (1978), is contrasted with Piaget's definitions of constructivism. Social constructivism is based on the fundamental assumption that external forces (i.e., social, cultural, and historical) affect cognitive constructs. Woolfolk (2002) elaborated on how Vygotsky's belief that social interaction, cultural tools, and activity shape individual development and learning, suggesting that all knowledge is socially constructed (Gergen, 1997; Phillips, 1997). When applied to education, this viewpoint highlights relationships between and among teachers, students, families, and the community as needed to understand diverse viewpoints, and can be used to challenge traditional bodies of knowledge (Woolfolk, 2002).

Constructivism in Education

Constructivist theory focuses on how learning occurs through the building of schemata. Phillips and Soltis (2004) asserted that bodies of knowledge are constructed based on impressions, memory, and other knowledge structures. They viewed the mind as active, not seeking to find or discover knowledge but to create knowledge.

Teaching practices associated with constructivist views have roots in the progressive education movement, influenced by Dewey (1916/1938). Progressivism promotes democratic living through inquiry based instructional techniques (Gordon, 2005). Learning is based on students' interests and social interaction, and takes an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge construction. Dewey (1956) defined interests as attitudes toward possible experiences. He believed that teachers who understand students' individual interests can build on and cover the traditional subject areas through those interests. Progressive education gives students the opportunity to inquire about their world. Dewey discussed school as an extension of society; the curriculum should have an integrated approach honing in on interests and needs of the students.

Dewey (1916/1938) asserted that teachers should "give pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connection; learning naturally results" (p. 193). Learning and knowledge construction are by-products of experience and reflection about experience, which is actively constructed (Nieto, 1999). Progressive teaching requires teachers to actively engage in planning activities, providing intrinsically motivational learning opportunities to students.

Fundamental assumptions attributed to constructivist teaching include a specific dialogue centered on formal disciplines, a purposeful intent, and attention to students' socio-cultural and socio-historical developments. From Richardson's (2003) work comes the term "student-

centered" (p. 1626). Students presented with complex learning environments and authentic tasks, as Resnick (1987) explained, are more likely to apply what they are learning to the real world.

Culture and Constructivism

Understanding culture is an essential part of constructivism. Woolfolk (2002) explained how culture creates meaningful schemata when the tools and practices (i.e., language, maps, computers, and music) from the culture are used. In addition to tools, Richardson (2003) concluded that cultural beliefs have an intricate role within the realm of constructivism. Cultural beliefs are unique to each individual's experience with ethnic, community, and family history, skills, and dispositions towards knowledge and learning. Teachers' personal cultural constructs may cause them to make misleading assumptions about students' understandings of learning, reality, culture, beliefs, or world views.

Richardson (2003) examined characteristics of teachers who utilize constructivist theory for teaching and learning. He suggested the labeling of specific characteristics was difficult because of being grounded in teacher beliefs (Richardson, 2003). Observations from some of his work with African American populations indicated:

> The cultural critique of constructivist pedagogy may take us beyond constructivist pedagogy. Examining the goals for students, both intellectual and moral, in very different cultural contexts, and inquiring into the different strategies that teachers use to achieve those goals may provide lessons for the development of a theory of teaching that encompasses constructivist learning principles but looks quite dissimilar in different cultural settings. (2003, p. 1636).

Culture has a variety of definitions and is understood in many ways by different theorists (Banks, 2004; Darder, 1991; Erickson, 1997; Nieto 2000; Spradley, 1972). The complexity of

culture leads to the realization that a single definition of culture identifies only one perceived

conceptualization of its meaning. Though many definitions of culture have been created through

extensive studies, Spradley (1972) defined culture as "the acquired knowledge people use to

interpret experience and generate behavior" (p. 6). In Erickson's (1997) view, cultural attributes

in relation to education are both explicit (such as habits of people) and implicit (such as values,

assumptions, and beliefs):

> Culture, as it is more or less visible and invisible to its users, is profoundly involved in
>
> the processes and contents of education. Culture shapes and is shaped by the learning and
>
> teaching that happen during the practical conduct of daily life within all the educational
>
> settings we encounter as learning environments throughout the human life span, in
>
> families, in school classrooms, in community setting, and in the workplace. . . .Educators
>
> address these issues every time they teach and every time they design curriculum. They
>
> may be addressed by educators explicitly and within the conscious awareness, or they
>
> may be addressed implicitly and outside conscious awareness. But, at every momentum
>
> the conduct of educational practice, cultural issues and choices are at stake (pp. 33-34).

From an educational perspective, Davis (2006) defined culture as "everything an

individual learns by growing up in a particular context and results in a set of expectations for

appropriate behavior" (p. 4). Davis reiterated that educators' interactions with students and/or

colleagues consist of expressing thoughts about past experiences, prejudices, preferences, along

with familial ties and other factors that impact how we view the world.

According to many researchers and theorists who have added to the discussion of

multicultural education (Banks, 2004; Nieto, 2000), culture includes the values, beliefs,

knowledge, and traditions, including all ideas, thoughts, theories, and concepts of ties that are

influenced by a person's culture and how people live (Moll, 2000, p. 258). The definition of culture used in this study came from Antonia Darder's (1991) work. In her view, culture is not devoid of power, when there is an inherent relationship between culture and power. Culture is actualized as more than the knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, and customs shared by members of a society (Darder, 1991); it is as Gay (2000) states, that social values, behavioral standards, and world views, and beliefs give order and meaning to each individual's lives and the lives of others (p. 8).

Summary

This section shed light on constructivist theory, social constructivism, and constructivism as they relate to education and culture. Constructivist theory is important to understanding how educators make decisions about planning and learning in their classroom environments. Constructivism assists in breaking down constructs where teachers' assumptions about students' understandings of learning, reality, culture, beliefs, or world views resemble their own by using the research of Piaget (1954) and Vygostky (1978). Constructivism is based on the premise that individuals, through their experiences, construct knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of the world and others. Social constructivism builds on constructivism in that knowledge construction is a social experience and makes use of interaction, cultural and historical constructs. Constructivism as it relates to education focuses on the learning activities used to facilitate knowledge construction and learning. Finally, culture and constructivism tie in viewpoints from social constructivism and link it to its role in education. It focuses on the use of cultural artifacts, language, technology and music as a means to assist in constructing knowledge in the classroom. Aspects of constructivism were used in developing questions to be asked of study participants.

Teachers' Beliefs

This study focuses on teachers' beliefs about curriculum planning for LCD populations. Individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about learning draw on a combination of psychological, philosophical, sociological, political, and scientific principles. Teachers develop philosophical and pedagogical understandings based upon knowledge of students, language, cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and instructional needs (Soto, 2002; Ladson-Bilings, 1994). Phillips and Soltis (2004) discuss teachers' articulation of beliefs about teaching and learning coming from personal values, assumptions, and viewpoints. These cultural construction tools are then imbedded into the development of personal instructional practices used in the classroom.

Teacher beliefs are critical to promoting meaningful educational experiences because their beliefs about teaching and learning guide their practice (Soto, 2002). Unfortunately, Charlesworth et al. (1993) revealed that teachers' beliefs are not aligned with practices. Teachers have various beliefs about teaching and learning that directly or indirectly influence their decisions. In other words, teachers utilize constructs from theories and pedagogy about how students learn, as well as socially and culturally contextualized knowledge of how the world works. The definition of teacher beliefs and intersections of beliefs and practice are expounded in this section.

Definition of Teachers' Beliefs

Teacher beliefs have been studied in various contexts and defined in many different ways. Dewey (1916/1938) described beliefs as " all the matters of which we have not sure knowledge and yet which are sufficiently confident to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true, as knowledge, but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future"

(p. 6). In the context of education, teachers implement beliefs about teaching and learning into classroom design and instructional pedagogy, which influence the scaffolding of learning. The process of implementing teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, curriculum, and students' needs bias the platform for enacting learning experiences for students.

Parajes (1992), in his writings about the beliefs of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents) in education as well as the issues of understanding beliefs by educational researchers, called for a distinction between knowledge and beliefs. Bennett (2003) used the term "belief" to signify the "opinion, expectation, or judgment that a person accepts as true" (p. 235). Nisbett and Ross (1980) suggested that beliefs are a type of knowledge representing "explicit propositions based on people's understanding of objects, people, events, and relationships (p. 28). Parajes (1992) explained how "a view of belief speaks to an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of proposition" (p. 316).

The term "belief" has many meanings and implications. It is often associated within the context of knowledge or disciplines unrelated to education, such as religion; some researchers (Parajes, 1992) have suggested using other terms than belief. Nisbett and Ross used the term "theories" in addition to "beliefs," but did not distinguish between theories and beliefs. Richardson (2002) argued that "attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that describe the structure and content of mental states thought to drive a person's actions" and include other constructs such as "conceptions, perspectives, perceptions, orientations, theories, and stances" (p. 102). The literature indicates a lack of consistency and clarity about the term "beliefs." For this case study, the word belief was emphasized rather than attitude or value to accentuate individualized perspectives within constructivist views about knowledge derived from

personal experiences and curricular mandates. Therefore, beliefs as used in this study are individual's perspectives of understanding which influence decision making.

Intersections of Beliefs and Practice

Despite the difficulty in defining and measuring "beliefs", their influence on curriculum planning and daily pedagogical approaches is significant. According to Van den Berg (2002), knowledge of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as these frame decisions made in the classroom is critical to understanding teachers' decisions and practices. More recently, a renewed focus on teachers' beliefs about teaching learning influence classroom practices (Fang, 1996; Yero, 2002). Commins and Marimontes (2005) discussed the realization of how understanding beliefs influences decision making and quality instruction. Teacher expectations play a vital role in student success and day-to-day practices (Commins & Marimontes, 2005). Gay (2000) asserted that instructional behaviors of teachers are shaped by their beliefs about students.

Beliefs are influenced by pre-service and current teaching experiences, including culture, climate, organization, and policies governing schools and classrooms, as well as by professional values and prior personal experiences (Fang, 1996; Yero, 2002). Fang (1996) stressed that teachers' daily interactions with children are guided by personal philosophies and/or an internal belief system. Clandinin (1986) proposed that "a teacher's special knowledge is blended by the personal background and characteristics of the teacher and expressed by her in particular situations" (p. 361). According to Bennett (2003), beliefs, attitudes, and values, developed out of shared and unique past experiences, and influenced by behavior and perceptions of the world, are at the heart of culture.

Summary

Teachers' beliefs are influenced by the understandings and experiences educators bring to the classroom; in other words, they are constructed based on theories of how the world works, as well as teachers' social and cultural backgrounds—combined, these act to mold teachers' thoughts about teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs are complex because they are individually constructed. These beliefs influence curriculum planning and pedagogical approaches used daily in their classrooms. Beliefs constructed via experiences as K–12 learners, through preservice teacher programs, and as classroom teachers, guide practice.

Curriculum Theory

Educational scholars (Marsh & Willis, 2007) believe curriculum facilitates conditions necessary for meaningful learning experiences. Scholars define theoretical foundations to increase understanding of curriculum within a school setting. Theory, as Hlebowitsh (2005) warned, should not prescribe one way of approaching curriculum, but provides multiple ways of teaching. Marsh and Willis (2007) elaborated on how theory directs and does not dictate curriculum and instructional practices; therefore, theory informs the meaning and purpose of curriculum rather than serving as a method for creating curriculum. Curriculum theory frames the role of curriculum within the instructional process (Marsh & Willis, 2007) of understanding, along with other forms of information, and thus influences curriculum decisions. In relation to curriculum theory the preceding topics are discussed: definitions of curriculum, the planned curriculum and implemented curriculum, intention of the curriculum, and curricular issues.

Definitions of Curriculum

The term curriculum is difficult to define because curricular implications can be perceived as incorporating: intended educational objectives, knowledge about content, canned programs for teaching subject matter, experiences, goals, outcomes, and processes for learning (Bennett, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Marsh & Willis, 2007). Bennett (2003) defined curriculum as "the experiences, both official and unofficial, that learners have under the auspices of the school" (p.3 3). In contrast, Ladson-Billings (2006) described curriculum as a set of cultural artifacts and as a result it is not a neutral document, but holding a set of ideologies. Marsh and Willis (2007) defined curriculum as "an interrelated set of plans and experiences that a student undertakes under the guidance of the school" (p. 15). Marsh and Willis (2007) identified five major components of curriculum: the planned curriculum, the implemented or taught curriculum, experienced curriculum, the hidden curriculum and the null curriculum. These definitions encompass elements of curriculum as interrelated rather than isolated phenomena. For this study, the definition of curriculum that was adopted is the experiences of students in relation to when, what and how knowledge is created through academic and non-academic interactions (Gay, 2000; Goodlad, 1984).

The Planned Curriculum and Implemented Curriculum

Bennett (2003) described the planned curriculum as intended experiences meant to develop students' understandings related to content areas. The planned curriculum, according to Marsh and Willis (2007), is not just the practical aspect of the curriculum, but also holds political and social implications. Planned curriculum is created to assist teachers in focusing instruction. In describing the one-size-fits-all mentality of many curriculum companies, Marsh and Willis (2007) described how curriculum materials are developed and slightly modified to address

standards and objectives adopted by many states or the entire nation. The planned curriculum is a written document designed to give teachers a prescription for planning and implementing learning. For example, core reading programs purchased by many schools serve as the planned curriculum for specific content areas. Core reading curriculum is defined as planned learning and literacy experiences for developing skills and knowledge in reading and writing (Marsh & Willis, 2007). Maslin (2007) stated that "basal reading programs [currently known as core reading programs] are estimated to be used in more that 95% of all school districts" (p. 1).

The implemented or taught curriculum is how teachers interpret the planned curriculum and "maximize the value of their lessons in light of the dynamics of their classroom" (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.185). The implemented curriculum is a manifestation of the planned curriculum for teaching and learning experiences with students. Both the planned and the implemented curriculum are explored in this study.

Intention of the Curriculum

Gay (2000) discussed the goal of curriculum as "a tool to help students assert and accentuate their present and future powers, capabilities, attitudes, and experiences" (p. 111). According to Dewey (1902), an effective curriculum incorporates interest and relevance in such a way that the dichotomy between the curriculum and student is broken down. Curriculum, therefore, should be meaningful to students.

Nieto (2002) articulated how the intention of curriculum with a curriculum-as-process approach has greater impact on learning than a curriculum-as-product approach. Curriculum is also ever changing, and needs to be developed in a way that it is "rigorous, informative, and engaging to students" (Nieto, 2002, p. 190). Despite historical and contemporary issues with

curriculum in schools, most researchers conclude that curriculum is vital to academic performance (Gay, 2000).

Curricular Issues

Teachers use the planned curriculum to create lessons that are anticipated to result in student learning. Unlike the planned curriculum, the taught curriculum should not consist solely of planning lessons, activities, and materials mandated by curriculum developers and district administrators. Tomlinson (2000) explained that, "For many teachers, curriculum has become a prescribed set of academic standards, instructional pacing has become a race against a clock to cover the standards, and the sole goal of teaching has been reduced to raising student test scores on a single test" (p. 7). Researchers claim that curriculum design ignores the experiences and backgrounds of students from linguistic and cultural groups who are not European-American or from a mainstream culture (Delpit, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto; 1999).

According to Gay (2000), the most common source of curricula comes from textbooks and this practice is prevalent across content areas. Research on textbooks and their correlation to curriculum has been deliberated since the 1980s. Goodlad (1984) discussed textbooks as un-engaging and reinforcing memorization and rote learning rather than creativity and critical thinking, when used as part of the curriculum. Textbooks support a teacher-centered approach to learning versus a student-centered approach to learning (Goodlad, 1984). Planned curricula, like core reading programs, remove both teachers and students from the decision-making process (Marsh & Willis, 2007). Textbook-driven environments re-enforce curriculum-in-place learning environments that lacking meaning and interest for students (Nieto, 2002).

Aside from textbooks, another curricular issue in curriculum studies and research arises from Apple (1993) and his notion of the non-neutrality of curriculum. Apple discussed bias in

the selectivity and partiality of curriculum—some subgroups are included and others are excluded. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) found that curriculum reflects the perspectives and world-views of powerful groups in society. As a result, marginalized groups are omitted or misrepresented in the curriculum. Often, curriculum ignores the experiences and backgrounds of students from different linguistic and cultural groups, reflecting only European-American or mainstream culture (Delpit, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto; 1999).

Summary

Curriculum theory is important in this case study in framing the role of curriculum as an integral part of the instructional planning process. Curriculum theory conceptualizes who is responsible for curriculum decisions and how educators must continually explore new procedures for curriculum to ensure its alignment with students' learning. Curriculum therefore is the set of interactions students experience in and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, the planned curriculum consists of documents, such as textbooks, that encompass standards, objectives, or skills intended for instruction. Moreover, the implemented curriculum is what is actually taught in the classroom—the educator's interpretation of the planned curriculum. While the intention of the curriculum is to promote student achievement, multiple variables inhibit LCD students' ability to achieve in current educational experiences and settings.

Curriculum in Praxis

Nieto (2002) stated that, "teachers sometimes view curriculum development as little more than a technical activity rather than as a dynamic and potentially empowering decision-making process" (p. 190). Curriculum should challenge students to think creatively and critically (Nieto, 2002). According to Nieto, teachers have tremendous power when deciding how to execute a

curriculum. Effective learning occurs when teachers "learn to view curriculum as a decision

making process in which their own creativity and talents can be used" (Nieto, 2002, p. 191). This

section explores curriculum within the following contexts: curriculum adoption and teacher

voice, NCLB requirements, effects of standards/objectives-based reform, scripted curriculum,

addressing student academic needs through individualizing instruction

Curriculum Adoption and Teacher Voice

Teachers' voices in curriculum decision making is paramount to student outcomes and

the ability for teachers to meet individual student needs. Shelveson (1983) believed that a unique

feature of teacher decision making is that most decisions are made in front of the class during the

instruction process. He called this *real time* decision making (Shelveson, 1983). Because many

teacher choices are done spontaneously in front of the classroom, teachers must rely on their own

knowledge and experience to determine the appropriate path to take (Shelveson, 1983).

Owings and Kaplan (2001) found that teachers who have an active voice in curriculum

development or leeway to adapt and adjust curriculum are able to design creative and unique

learning experiences and formative assessments so learners experience success. Teachers

demonstrate their ability to make professional decisions about curriculum in the process of

constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As Ladson-

Billings (2006) explained, this process is never to "tear down" (p. 32), but to expose weaknesses,

discover ways to address weaknesses, and then, through critical analysis, make decisions about

the best ways to fill the weakness.

NCLB

Communities and neighborhoods in the United States are becoming more diverse,

especially in schools. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (2001) emphasized that the education of

LCD students, as demonstrated by state and local tests, was unacceptable. NCLB (2001) stressed the disparity in the achievement gap between upper-middle and middle class White students compared to marginalized students, especially LCD students. Goodland (1984), for example, stated that the purpose of public schools is to prepare students to become literate contributing members of society. The expectations and instruction for LCD, especially in urban settings, was identified as being at a subpar level.

Classroom teachers and school support personnel often struggle to meet the needs of LCD students. NCLB recognizes that students' needs are relative to two categories; academic and social (NCLB, 2001). Academic progress is assessed in specific grades and academic needs are monitored. Social needs, are needs such as food, housing, and health care. These needs are identified by NCLB however, these are not assessed and just mentioned as social issues that may impact learning, leaving the responsibility of these issues to another agency. Instructional practice consists of starting with an objective or standard and trying to connect them to students' linguistic backgrounds or cultural experiences instead of identifying the specific learning goals of those children (Darder, 1991). Teachers in many mainstream classrooms, designed for a set number of learners without IEP identified needs, struggle to meet students' basic needs due to a lack of training or certification in working with LCD student populations (Samway & McKeon, 2007). NCLB (2001) requires teachers to close the achievement gap of students, for all subgroups, by meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the state standardized tests.

Weil (2000) pointed out how NCLB (2001), using national and state standardized tests, concluded that U.S. public school systems are not meeting the needs of students: from low-income backgrounds, of non-White racial categories, and who are second language learners of English. The disproportion between learners who are not evaluated to be at an acceptable or

unacceptable level is currently known as the "achievement gap." Davis (2006) defined the achievement gap as "the gap in academic achievement between and among student groups" (p. 24). Johnson (2002) characterized the gap as a ladder with higher percentages of low-income African American, Latino/a, and Native American students at the low end and students from middle-income and high-income White and Asian households at a higher percentage at the top of the ladder. Davis (2006) stated that ten years ago the achievement gap was not heard of, but now is at the height of conversations regarding education, high stakes testing, and standards. Davis further explained that the achievement gap persists in achievement on standardized tests, grades, class rank, SAT, and AP scores.

Researchers have found a myriad of factors that contribute to the achievement gap (Davis, 2006; Johnson, 2002; Marzano, 2004). Davis (2006) focused on these areas of concern: poverty, academic coursework, test bias, teacher expectations, and teacher quality. Poverty contributes to the achievement gap in regard to lower test scores and lack of language acquisition among second language learners (Marzano, 2004). According to Davis (2006), some students are either tracked according to ability and have no possibility of taking academically rigorous coursework and or in some urban schools academically challenging courses are not even offered. Test bias, according to Payne (2002), has not been eliminated demonstrated by the testing of children using contexts they have not experienced in their cultures or lives.

Teacher expectations, as informed by Ladson-Billings' (1994) work with teachers, are most beneficial when coming from a no-deficit model, but this is not always the case. In this model, teachers focus on instruction and the care of their students, extend students' thinking, and engage learners in the content. Johnson's (2002) research reflects how students can achieve at

high levels if they are taught at high levels, which means teachers must be knowledgeable in their subject matter, the curriculum is rigorous, and expectations must be high.

NCLB (2001) requires schools to use state assessments as a means of rating student achievement and school progress (Hess, 2004). NCLB (2001) is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) which requires states to test students annually in second through eighth grade to ensure that students meet proficiency standards. States are required to participate in the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) every two years. This law marks one of the first times the national government has played a prominent role in education policy by mandating accountability measures that drive school improvement in a high stakes atmosphere (Hess, 2004). According to the Center for Education Policy and Leadership (CEPAL, 2005), "high stakes accountability initiatives seek to instill dramatic improvements in school performance" (p. 1).

Saunderman, Kim, and Orfield (2005) discovered that assessments drive curriculum due to the influence of NCLB. As a requirement of NCLB, curricular materials are based on quantitative research or evidence of effectiveness. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) explicitly outlined what and how teachers are supposed to teach through learning standards, scripted curricula, high-stakes testing for promotion, retention, and graduation, and instructional methods that are scientifically proven.

Effects of Standards-Based Reform

In an era of standards/objectives based reform, curricular focus is on alignment to state standards/objectives with state testing as the anchor. Standards and objectives suggest a "one-size-fits-all" approach (Samway and McKeon, 2007). Decisions of curricula creation and "pedagogical imperatives of the classroom" are founded on state standards and objectives

(Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 80). The curriculum, as a result, has become a prescribed set of skills leading instruction (Tomlinson, 2000). The intent of standards/objectives based curriculum is for all students to become competent skills connected to content matter. Standards/objectives based reform in American public schools are a response to criticisms that schools were not preparing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for college or full-time employment (Owings & Kaplan, 2001).

Standards based instruction is believed by some to be the most effective way to raise student achievement as assessed through high-stakes testing (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001). A standardized approach to school curriculum gives teachers exact content to which they must adhere (Darder & Torres, 2004). In contrast, Kaplan and Owings (2001) argue that standards and objectives deprive students and teachers of a broad range of creative learning experiences.

With the combination of standards-based learning and outcomes-based learning controlling curriculum and instructional pedagogy, students are often forced to learn curriculum and use textbooks reflecting educational values of the dominant culture (Soto, 2002). Often, students who represent diverse populations are not presented with curriculum promoting learning opportunities incorporating their cultural beliefs and values and creating a new shared classroom cultural (Soto, 2002). According to Soto (2002), standards/objectives based "pedagogy of classroom practices and instructional materials silenced the voices, language, and perspectives of non-White people and students of color" (p. 5). Curriculum and texts reinforce stereotypes keeping LCD populations invisible (Soto, 2002).

Scripted Curriculum

School districts, under the pressure of accountability of *NCLB,* are choosing scripted curriculum; this not only takes away the decision making ability of teachers, but also articulates

the exact words teachers are to say during instruction (Ladson- Billings, 2006). Scripted curriculum, epitomizing Hall's concept of the United States as a low-context society (Bennett, 2003), is often viewed as teacher proof curriculum that prescribes a particular sequence and format, and is often skill driven (Darder & Torres, 2004). In support of standardized curriculum, one study (Clemente, et. Al., 2000) has raised a concern that excessive teacher autonomy in curriculum development can lead to redundancy and gaps in the content that teachers cover. The system of high-stakes testing and standards/objectives based instruction has permitted the federal government, state governments, and school districts to "deprofessionalize" teachers through scripted curriculum (Darder & Torres, 2004).

"Deprofessionalizing," or what Shannon (2007) calls "deskilling," is where planned or mandated curriculum reduces teaching to a technical skill. With teachers being accountable for student learning as demonstrated solely on high-stakes tests, there is pressure for instruction to center around skills transferable to testing. Hence, teaching becomes the science of teaching skills in a similar fashion to a technical job where success is based on a job being done correctly or incorrectly. The emphasis on skills supports traditional melting-pot and the one-size-fits-all approaches to instructional delivery. Differentiation, from a standards/objectives based model, is not grounded in the appreciation of language, culture, community, and social economic status as Darder (1991) suggests, but instead is anchored in multiple approaches meant to teach and reteach skills until "mastered" by students.

Darder (1997) states how scripted curriculum "fails to acknowledge the creative potential of educators to grapple effectively with a multiplicity of contexts found in classrooms and to shape environments according to the lived experiences and actual educational needs of their students" (p. 332). This approach to curriculum planning employs banking methods to teach

basic skills, with the assumption students will score higher on standardized tests (Darder &

Torres, 2004). Not only does scripted curriculum reinforce instruction with Freire's (1970)

notion of "banking," (p.72). Freire's (1970) notion of "banking" describes a process where

teachers, the depositors, make deposits of knowledge and information into the minds,

depositories, of passive students. This type of curriculum assumes teachers need to be directed in

what and how to teach while students need specific skills to contribute successfully to society.

A major effect of scripted and planned curriculum, according to Kayes and Maranto

(2006), is that recently graduated preservice teachers are leaving certification programs with the

expectation that "the curriculum people will tell you what to teach" (p. 41). When teachers are

required to use scripted curriculum, both "students and teachers, as subjects of classroom

discourse who bring their personal stories and life experiences to bear on their teaching and

learning, are systematically silenced by the need for the class to 'cover' a generic curriculum at a

prescribed pace established by the state" (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 87). Nieto (1999) summed

up the backlash of planned and scripted curricula as learning environments in which students are

subjected to "stale teaching and irrelevant curriculum" (p. 78).

Addressing Student Needs through Individualized Instruction

Brisk and Harrington (2007) elucidated upon the constructs related to teaching and

learning when they said, "Students are individuals very different from each other" (p. 16).

Individualizing instruction is not a means to water down curriculum (Nieto, 2002). Nieto claims

"good teachers know that learning begins where the students are at" (p.192). Individualizing

instruction means skills are recognized as strengths and not weaknesses. Pang and Kamil (2004)

suggested that instruction should build on students' knowledge and experiences as well as

present opportunities for students to make connections between school and community-based

knowledge sources. Perez and Torres-Guzman (1996) discussed setting up learning environments where instruction does not consist of drills, but projects, dramatic presentations, storytelling, and encouraging teachers to seize teachable moments when students have real purpose for learning.

Another way to individualize instruction is through an understanding of students. Brisk and Harrington (2007) discussed teachers' knowledge of students' personal life, home and situational factors, in establishing individualized instructional techniques help to teach, motivate, and evaluate students. Past experiences, likes and dislikes, and teaching judgments are used to make teaching choices (Shavelson, 1983). An active voice in curriculum development increases teachers' ability to adapt curriculum and adjust learning experiences, including formative assessments so each learner experiences success (Owings & Kaplan, 2001).

Summary

Curriculum in praxis is important for understanding one of the main responsibilities of a teacher relating to everyday teaching and learning. The goal of curriculum is to increase student learning and understanding and by default improve students' achievement as measured by standardized tests. Standards-based reforms have led many schools to make curriculum align to state standard as evidenced by Samway and McKeon (2007). Curricular materials should be based on sound evidence that ensures students' ability to be proficient in academic content areas, and drive planning in many classrooms due to NCLB. As a result, some school districts are choosing scripted curriculum as a means to raise test scores.

The main goal of teacher decision making focuses on student needs. Reflective considerations of teaching practices and knowledge of successful teaching methods are needed in effective decision making. Student needs are not uniform; they have unique characteristics to

which teachers must adapt their pedagogical style. Teachers' voice in curriculum decision making is paramount to student outcomes and meeting individual needs of students.

The Needs of the Linguistically and Culturally Diverse

Linguistic and cultural diversity is changing the face of public education in the United States. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education predicted that by 2010 minority populations will be the majority in public schools. Yet, there are many opinions about whether students in the United States are not performing at acceptable levels, or at least as well as their peers in developed nations; and if they are not, why?

According to Davis (2006) in *How To Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You*, nearly 40% of public school students represent LCD or minority (Darder, 1991) backgrounds. These students are Latino/Hispanic, African American, Asian American, and American Indian or Alaska Native, or other racial groups. Artiles and Ortiz (2002) asserted that nearly 10 million children come from a home where they speak a language other than English. Nieto (2004) described inexactness of language as a mode to fully encompass who an individual is. Terms to describe racial and ethnic heritage include: White, African American (AA), Hispanic American (HA), American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA) (US Census Bureau, 2000). This study utilizes the term LCD depicting those who represent linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Individuals from LCD backgrounds refer to any person who is (1) of non-White ancestry and/or (2) utilizes English as a second language.

When working with LCD populations, identifying and understanding the needs of students helps create learning experiences. The literature presented in this section discusses three

areas of LCD students' needs of students: role of native language, student voice, and centrality of culture. This section is framed to highlight the capacities in which teachers have responsibility in meeting the needs of LCD students.

Role of Native Language

Currently, 18% of residents in the United States speak a language other than English at home and over half of the immigrants to the United States are from Latin America (CAL, 2008). Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic minority population in the United States. Linguistically diverse students are found largely in urban communities as well as suburban settings and rural communities throughout the nation (Nieto, 2002). Not only are Hispanic students culturally diverse, but many are linguistically diverse as well. Nieto (2002) describes language as one of the most important aspects of culture. Language is a salient aspect of culture and identity validated or invalidated in the classroom and curriculum.

Sleeter (1997), in *Language, Culture and Power,* showed how teachers need pedagogical knowledge and skills to assist children in using their linguistic abilities to build on rather than repudiate their first language or dialect. Similarly, Freire and Macedo (1987) pointed out that "the English only movement in the United States points to a xenophobic culture that blindly negates the pluralistic nature of U.S. society and falsifies the empirical evidence in support of bilingual education, has been amply documented" (p. 154). Baker (2001) asserted that instruction taught through the language of the dominant transmits not only cultural bias but may "make minority language children feel less confident in their cultural background, their language community, their home values and beliefs, and even less confident in themselves" (p. 405).

Whereas the goal of bilingual education, according to Soto (1997), is to ensure that students do not fall behind in content matter while learning English. Baker (2001), in researching bilingual education and bilingualism, investigated issues of language. LCD students, whose native language is not English, in the United States are in environments where education is taught primarily through the dominant language. Nieto (2002) described LCD students as having many positive experiences overlooked due to a deficit mentality in respect to students acquiring English as a second language. Research describes how maintaining language and culture is essential for sustaining and supporting academic achievement (Nieto, 2002).

Linguistically diverse students in the United States are currently in an educational system in which children must learn English (Soto, 2002). Soto noted students' home languages and cultural attributes as not valued, but seen as barriers to English acquisition. In many states, like California and Arizona, bilingual education programs are being removed from schools leaving students linguistically handicapped as they try to acquire English (Soto, 2002). Students representing linguistically diverse populations are struggling with learning content because of language and teachers are ill-prepared to adjust and modify instruction to meet their needs (Soto, 2002).

Most curriculum and educational programs do not incorporate instruction recognizing that students' native language may be different from the dominant. Despite implications about language embedded within curriculum, it is important that "teachers should never forbid the use of the home language" (Brisk & Harrington, 2007). Brisk and Harrington (2007) claimed that the use of one's native language is not a detriment to learning English because it will always be in the minds of students. Situations call for infusion of native languages other than English as necessitated by instruction and functions of language within concepts and contexts. Various

positive reasons for infusing native language are identified by Brisk and Harrington (2007), ascertaining that language infusion by teachers and/or students builds connections with academic content and students' culture; the status and value of a students' native language, elevated through its use during instruction, is a demonstration of respect for LCD students and families.

Ladson- Billings (1994) found that LCD students' language and speech patterns may not be the same as those used by their peers. Moreover, teachers who acknowledge and value language diversity find opportunities to alter personal speech patterns, communication styles, and/or participation structures to resemble students' culture. Altering one's speech does not negate the communicative terms accepted and used by the dominant culture, instead it contributes to building a community of learners with a recreated culture of individual classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1994) also claimed that the altering of speech in class dialogue and permitting its use in writing exercises allows students' culture to be maintained while transcending the negative effects of the dominant culture. It is also important for LCD students to see their history, culture, or background represented in the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The validation of the culture students bring to the classroom is made possible when teachers integrate it into the curriculum, allowing students to experience a sense of value and worth.

Student Voice

Darder (2001) found that when teachers respond to culture in the classroom, students' voices are activated. Brisk and Harrington (2007) explained that "culture is the foundation for new learning" (p. 28). Continuing with the thought teaching and learning is benefited by appreciating students cultures, Darder (2002) stated that "students come into the classroom as a whole person and should be respected and treated as such" (p. 98). LCD students see the world

through a different lens in an attempt to make it socially just rather than disillusioned and without agency (Banks, 2004). Implementing interests of students contributes to effective instruction of students by engagement of learning challenging them to understand and make meaning, as well as the enjoyment of learning (Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1996).

Centrality of Culture

Ladson-Billings (1994) advocated making culture central to student learning "is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically, by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 18). Gay (2000) concurred that using "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). Pang and Kamil (2004) asserted that accessibility to literature and culturally rich material is important for development of LCD students. Teachers who incorporate students' cultures and experiences into curriculum and learning as described by these authors contribute to more meaningful and successful learning.

Davis (2006) highlighted the centrality of culture when stating, "our culture is the lens through which we view the world" (p. 3). Teachers who understand the cultures represented in their classroom, how lived cultures and realities are valued and articulated in the curriculum, and how teaching practices suppress or affirm diverse students' understanding of their world are able to employ various instructional approaches addressing the needs of diverse learners (Darder, 1991). According to Davis (2006), "students must feel included in the academic school culture" and "teachers must see their cultural differences as assets to their achievement" (p. 73). Brisk and Harrington (2007) reinforced the centrality of culture in shaping instruction for meaning and impact. When culture is ignored by teachers, students become trapped in classrooms denying them a voice and depriving them of a relational or contextual understanding of knowledge and

skills for success in the public sphere (i.e. higher education; employment) (Howell & Tuitt, 2003). For these reasons, teachers need to adjust curriculum planning, teaching, and learning to incorporate the cultures of students, including those who are LCD.

Summary

This section explored the role of native language, student voice and centrality of culture. Needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students are important because educators incorporating the needs of LCD students create an empowering learning environment through the infusion of language across the curriculum, providing opportunities for students to develop a voice by exploring their own world, as well as by making culture central to learning. Educators who are unable to acknowledge the significance of their culture in the teaching and learning process have difficulties teaching children in a multicultural manner through the use of culturally responsive strategies. Language, a salient aspect of one's culture, is not validated in the classroom when English is the focus of instruction. According to Soto (1997), students' language is a foundation for scaffolding students' learning and language acquisition. Student voice refers to including interests of students into the learning process. Connected with curriculum in praxis, reflection on students' interests when planning incorporates teachers' abilities to make informed decisions about what is best for students as a means of engaging in the learning process. Teachers who believe in the centrality of culture utilize cultural referents of students' lives, the realities of the community, the school, and the educator for learning experiences. Culture imbedded throughout the planning and teaching process connects students' learning to their lives.

Culture in Pedagogy

Ethnic, cultural, social class, language, and racial diversity in the United States have increased over time. As a result, educators are faced with the need to recognize that diversity and culture can not be isolated from educational curriculum and learning experiences. Davis (2006) affirmed, "diverse learners need to know the reasons they are doing class work and need it tied to their personal experience" (p.98). Nieto (2000) situated the argument for identifying the needs of LCD students in the context that many may practice different communication styles and require different teaching strategies. Payne (2001) added to the argument, noting that students may require a relationship with the teachers before deciding to learn from the teachers, and may be wrestling with personal issues which some teachers are unfamiliar.

Culture in pedagogy refers to practice, both in planning and instructional delivery. Understanding educators' position related to culturally relevant teaching included the role of the teacher, cultural competence, and the use of language along with relevant literature associated with culturally responsive teaching. Culture in pedagogy is discussed in this section includes the following: the role of teachers, culturally competent/proficient, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant teaching, and infusion of language.

Role of Teachers

The role of the teachers eludes to understanding teachers' perception of culture and how it operates in the classroom, while facilitating high levels of academic achievement (Gay, 2000). Commins and Miramontes (2005) elaborated on the role of teacher by recognizing responsibilities and time constraints that may bind teachers, and transform their focus from "What does the student need?" to "What is best for teacher?" (p. 11). Educators, who are conscious of the predominance of distorted and overwhelming negative images of culture,

history, and the possibility of students who represent LCD student population, use curriculum and instruction to address those injustices. Delpit (1996) asserted that those teachers who see their role as creating environments in which values and power imposed by the dominant culture are critically analyzed while recognizing the values of students, families, and communities. Gay (2000) emphasizes the need for teachers to use a variety of approaches in instructional delivery, assessment, and curriculum.

Darling-Hammond (2002) explained the impossibility of preparing teachers to succeed with all students without exploring how students' learning experiences are relate to their home cultures, languages, and contexts, as well as their race and class in the United States. Brisk and Harrington (2007) discussed the importance of teachers knowing their students as a means to "consider language and culture within the approaches used" (p. 15) in planning instruction and gathering culturally responsive materials for classrooms. Brisk and Harrington (2007) defined these as lessons and activities that " give students opportunities to think critically about different cultures, compare and contrast different cultures, and draw comparisons to their own" (p.30). They described "bringing culture to life" in the classroom through various artifacts such as "books, artwork, photographs, music recordings, and flags" (p. 31). They also believe all their students can succeed and provide the structure to make their beliefs possible.

Culturally Competent/Proficient

Teachers engaging in culturally relevant teaching develop an insider perspective of a cultural community (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). According to Neito (2005), teachers working with LCD populations need to possess a level of cultural competence to fully appreciate the link between culture and the manner in which people interact with others. Gay (2000) states that "teachers must recognize the influence culture has on learning" (p. 43). Darder (1991)

advocated enabling teachers to seek ways to: (a) understand the cultures represented in the classroom, (b) understand how lived cultures and realities are valued and articulated in the curriculum, and (c) how teaching practices may suppress or affirm diverse students' understanding of their world.

McLaren (1989) promoted cultural exposure as a means to developing cultural competence. Participating in the students' community is a way for teachers to gain a greater insight about students' lives outside of school (Darder, 1991). Also, teachers are able to see "culture as the lived experiences of students" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. 40). Teachers are then in a position to see how power and politics go hand-in-hand to reinforce social inequalities prevalent throughout standards/objectives based curriculum by engaging in a dialogue where knowledge is shared between teachers, students, and families (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Educators committing time and energy to becoming knowledgeable about the communities in which students live better understand the learning experiences in their classroom community and provide a new frame of reference when approaching pedagogy (Darder, 1991).

According to Davis (2006), the term culturally proficient is preferred over cultural competency as it signifies an approach rather than a theory. Davis recognized teachers are not going to know everything there is to know about others, but "you [teachers] have the self-awareness to recognize how you, because of your ethnicity, your culture, and your life experiences, may offend or otherwise affect others" (Davis, 2006, p. 5). Cultural proficiency means "you use teachable moments to share yourself and learn from others" (Davis, 2006, p. 5). Artiles and Ortiz (2002) considered the meaning of having teachers acknowledge, respect, and accommodate cultures and values of families in gaining cultural competence. Teachers who learn

about student cultures and identify their own biases within their beliefs about teaching and learning become culturally competent.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

As a means to address the growing diversity in classrooms, culturally responsive teaching, stemming out of multicultural education, is designed to support and extend concepts of culture, difference, equity and democracy in school settings (Garcia, 2000; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000). The term culturally responsive teaching, according to Cochran-Smith (2001) " is used interchangeable with several terms such as culturally responsible, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally compatible, and culturally relevant to describe a variety of effective teaching approaches in culturally diverse classrooms" (p. 91). The five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching according to Gay (2000) are: (a) the development of a knowledge base about cultural diversity, (b) the inclusion of ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, (c) the demonstration of caring and building learning communities, (d) communicating with ethnically diverse students, and (e) the response to ethnic diversity in delivery of instruction.

Researchers (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2001) posit the need for culturally responsive teaching as a means of going beyond cultural stereotypes to explore literature and events using students' voices to illuminate and analyze descriptive portraits of the experiences of students. Nieto (2002) summed up the meaning of cultural responsive teaching by saying:

> Knowledge of another culture does not mean to be able to repeat one or two words in a student's language, nor is it to celebrate in activity or sing a song related to their culture. To acknowledge and respect is to be able to make changes or modifications in one's

curriculum or pedagogy when the needs of students have not been served. It is to be

patient, tolerant, curious, creative, eager to learn, and most important, non-authoritarian

with students. In order for a teacher to promote excellence in education, there needs to be

real and honest connection between the needs and cultural values of teachers and

students. This is culturally responsive education (p. 1).

Culturally responsive teaching provides opportunities for teachers to see instruction as

the art of building bridges between goals of instruction and students' local, national, racial,

cultural, linguistic, and global identities (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Ladson-Billings

(1995), the focus of culturally responsive teaching is to improve schooling and society for all

people. It also challenges teachers to personally question assumptions and restructure their

perspectives in order to improve their scaffolding of LCD students' learning.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching is defined as, "a pedagogy that empowers students

intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart

knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 17-18). Teachers who use culturally

relevant teaching realize the need for a variety of pedagogical approaches to address the needs of

students. In some classrooms, culturally relevant teaching means altering speech patterns,

communication styles, and participation structures to resemble those of the students' culture

(Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings emphasized the importance of having teachers become

part of a community of learners not privileged by the cultural norms of the dominant culture.

Culturally relevant teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and

politically by making connections between students, teacher, and content (Ladson-Billings,

1994). To effectively accomplish this, teachers must be mindful not to depend solely on their

personal life stories while being cognizant about glorifying individual accomplishments or emphasizing the autonomy and strength of social groups (Howell & Tuitt, 2003). Moll (2000) asserted, "The purpose of culturally relevant teaching is for teachers to develop both theory and methods to identify and document cultural resources found in the immediate school community representing children's households" (p.2 58). "Pedagogy should invite student interaction and provide academic challenge while serving to help students affirm their own cultural identity and develop an appreciation for the cultural heritage of others" (Radencich, 1998). Culturally relevant teaching should be centered on students' experiences and encourage students to investigate individual life experiences (Radencich, 1998).

Culturally relevant teaching is a concept Ladson-Billings (1994) professed would improve schooling and society for all people. Ladson-Billing (1994) considers teachers' ability to question personal assumptions and perceptions through reflective practices an important element of culturally relevant teaching. Researchers (Gay, 2000; Ladson- Billings, 200; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2001) suggested implementing teaching strategies effective with students from diverse backgrounds in a variety of settings. Teachers who are effective instructors of LCD students address issues of race and culture, allow students to use multiple languages, and are familiar with students' dialects (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 200; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). In addition, educators who use culturally relevant teaching celebrate and value students as individuals and cultural members by incorporating instructional activities like sharing and discussions as a classroom community in a variety of ways.

Summary

Culture in pedagogy refers to practice, both in planning and instructional delivery, related to: the role of teachers, culturally competent/proficient, culturally responsive teaching, culturally

relevant teaching, and infusion of language. The role of teachers challenges the ideology that teachers are transferors of knowledge versus facilitators who challenge students to create their own understandings. Cultural competence is a process of understanding, respecting, and affirming cultural differences. Culturally relevant teaching is various pedagogical approaches used in the classroom incorporating students' home live, language, cultural artifacts in the classroom in order to empower students and make use of student voice.

Summary

Chapter two investigated the issues related to identifying the needs of LCD students. It specifically addressed research related to constructivism, teachers' beliefs, curriculum, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive teaching. The key ideas from the literature review link concepts and research to provide a framework for gathering and exploring data in this case study and provide research, theory, and beliefs in which to compare and contrast findings.

Research is needed to explore whether teachers in LCD classrooms, as Davis (2006) stated, "examine their own culture, and its inherent values, consider the different cultures and values of their students and the student's families, and explore how to meet the needs of each student" (p. 3). How teachers describe culturally responsive teachers' articulate ideas like LCD students can succeed and provide the structure to make their beliefs possible is important (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2002).

In an era of accountability and high stakes testing, teachers are faced with the ongoing process of planning instruction and learning knowing students, teachers, and schools will be evaluated using state and district assessments. The complexity of planning increases when classrooms are linguistically and culturally diverse. Influences from standards/objectives, testing,

and teachers' beliefs develop from past experiences in curriculum decision making and lesson planning were described within constructivist theory. Constructivist theory provides the rationale for how beliefs are understood within the context of education and culture.

NCLB (2001) has influenced educational policy and instructional practice. Santman (2002) sums up the effect NCLB has had: "teachers across the nation have abandoned what they knew about good teaching and learning" (p. 204). With tests as an accountability measure driving instruction, there is a need to understand how teachers apply their beliefs about teaching and learning and the needs of LCD students. Several studies (i.e., Charlesworth et.al., 1993; Commons & Marimontes, 2005; Gay, 2000; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2002; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Parajes, 1992;) discussed teachers' beliefs and the use of culturally relevant practices. Few studies were found of teachers' beliefs about the challenges of working with LCD students in the midst of standards-driven curricula. Research continues to explore the impact of NCLB (2001); however, most studies focus on schools, states, or testing, not teachers, and specific practices with students, particularly LCD students. The literature review connects past research methodology and findings with this current case study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This qualitative study focused on how teachers in a small, urban elementary school in the Northeast negotiate their beliefs, teaching materials, and instructional delivery in Linguistically Culturally Diverse (LCD) classrooms. A qualitative approach, according to Creswell (1998), "is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p.15). Qualitative research is meant to "make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). Specifically, this research was designed around a case study approach.

The purpose of this case study was to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in LCD classrooms and how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum decision making. This chapter will describe the methods used in this qualitative case study including: research questions, why case study, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and validity. The organization of this case study follows research from several researchers (e.g., Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995) prominent in case study and basic qualitative research.

Research Questions

The central focus of the study was based on the "overarching" research question (Creswell, 1998, p. 99): How do teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence curriculum decision making for LCD students? This question, as it applies to everyday classrooms, seeks to understand what it means when teachers use rhetoric such as "every student can learn." Understanding how teachers make use of textbooks, mandated curriculum, and state- or district-created assessments to drive instruction is essential to investigate teachers' beliefs

about teaching and learning in the context of curriculum and assessment. This broad research

question allowed for in-depth interviews of participants who identified ways that they as teachers

adapted curriculum to meet the needs of the LCD students in their classrooms. Under the

umbrella of the "overarching" research question were the following sub-questions to guide the

study:

1. How do teachers self-report their beliefs and instructional practices to address and

   meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students?

2. How do teachers' self-reported beliefs, instruction, and planning align with their

   instructional delivery?

3. How do teachers adapt the curriculum for their LCD classrooms?

4. How do teachers plan for their LCD classroom environment?

Why a Case Study?

Educational researchers select a research method based on the nature of inquiry and

questions to be answered (Merriam, 2002). As a result, a case study was selected as the data

collection method for this study. This approach to methodology addresses "how" and "why"

research questions when the researcher has little control over the event and the focus is on a real-

life situation bound in a modern phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Case studies are heuristic in nature,

assisting in explaining the researchers' understanding of the event or situation under study.

Concepts or hypotheses emerge from the examination of data, which is an inductive process

found in case study research (Merriam, 2002). A case study requires the researcher to be the

primary observer in a contemporary event or situation within its real life context (Yin, 2003).

This approach allows the researcher to describe the activities of the program, group, or activity instead of identifying the shared patterns of behavior by the group (Yin, 2003).

This study followed the case study tradition described by Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) in examining the phenomenon of how teachers address the needs of their LCD students within the bounded system of an elementary school. The study occurred in a naturalistic setting in an attempt to void any control or manipulation of participants' behaviors and actions by the researcher (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995). Because this approach was holistic in nature, it sought to define, describe, and interpret the case under study, using as much detail as possible, so that the representation was complete (Merriam, 2002). This method allowed for a focus on teachers' articulation of their beliefs and their planning process for their classrooms. Using case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), the researcher interpreted and evaluated the perspectives of the participants based on various data sources including: observations, interviews, field notes, and documents.

Methodology

Investigation Site

Qualitative research is a situated activity that takes place in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998) involving the holistic depiction of: phenomena, cultures, people, or organizations. The elementary school featured in this case study was chosen because it serves a LCD community in an urban area, which is of interest to the primary investigator. The researcher identified this school through a "gatekeeper" (Creswell, 1998, p. 60) at the university the researcher attends. The school site serves a low-income, inner-city, K–4 school in a predominantly Spanish-speaking community. The building is over one hundred years old and was built to serve 125

students, but home to 334 students at the time of the research. The largest demographic group represented in the school was Latino/as at 93.4%, while the remaining population was 3.3% African American and 2.7% Caucasian. Although the student population was largely Spanish-speaking, all classes are taught in English with an emphasis on English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies. According to the school district, 12.57% of the students receive special education services and 91.6% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (unidentified source for purposes of anonymity and confidentiality as prescribed by IRB).

Participants

Underscoring the anonymity of the school and participants prior to beginning data collection, the school was called Northeast Elementary and the teachers were identified as 3a, 4a, and 4b. The participants invited to take part in this research were state certified third- and fourth-grade teachers. Four teachers were asked to participate in the study, two fourth grade teachers and two third grade teachers. Three teachers agreed to participate; one third grade teacher and two fourth grade teachers. One third grade teacher decided not to participate because of her first year in the grade level and needing time to transition. These teachers hold teaching certificates in their content areas and each have over ten years of teaching experience. Each has worked in this school for a minimum of four years. All three of the teachers identified as Caucasian and one spoke Spanish. All other demographic data regarding teachers and students was collected through interviews to understand the background characteristics of the teachers and the classrooms where they teach. It is important to mention that according to the IRB permission and for teacher anonymity, in-depth demographics about the teachers won't be disclosed.

Table 3.1

Profile of Participating Teachers

Teacher	Grade	Years at Northeast Elementary	Total Years of Teaching Experience
3 A	3	4	10
4A	4	9	12
4B	4	5	16

Role of the Researcher

One of the defining characteristics of qualitative research is the role of the researcher. In data collection, "the researcher is the primary instrument" (Merriam, 2002). The researcher decides who to interview, what documents to collect and what to observe. The role of the researcher in this study is that of participant-observer. However, a major challenge of the researcher role in a qualitative case study is the potential for bias.

The biases of a researcher, based on his or her own experiences, must be recognized and reflected on. This researcher has clarified bias by disclosing and recognizing her background as an African- American female, a former teacher of students from Spanish-speaking homes, as well as one who speaks Spanish and has studied the culture at the university level. Currently, this researcher is teaching elementary school at an inner-city school, with a majority of low-income African-American students, on the east coast. As the researcher, reflected on her own experiences as a student and a person of color it was evident that this study held personal significance to the researcher.

The researcher disclosed her experiences as a classroom teacher with participants, including grade levels and different communities. This discloser with participants also helped to build what Merriam (2002) called an "atmosphere of trust" (p. 23). Prior to the first day of school for students, the researcher spent non-instructional professional development days with

the participants. To build a relationship of trust, the researcher had lunch daily with the

participants, assisted in classroom set up, attended school wide professional development

activities, and engaged in informal conversations. As a result, potential researcher bias was

acknowledged and considered especially with regards to validity.

Data Collection

Procedures

The researcher contacted the principal of the school via email and explained the nature of

the study. Based on the positive relationship between the institution of higher education and the

school, the principal was open to having the study conducted at the elementary school. The

administrator wrote the consent letter for the school, agreeing to participate. The letter of consent

for the school to participate in the study is on file with the IRB office of the researcher's

institution of higher education. The principal and the researcher met to discuss the study during a

professional development day prior to the start of the academic year. During a school wide

professional development day, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the third- and

fourth-grade teachers at the school and they were given the Recruitment Letter (see Appendix B)

that outlined the study. The teachers who agreed to participate were asked to read and sign the

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research (see Appendix C).

Observations

The focus of the research was on teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in LCD

classrooms and how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum decision for LCD student

populations. The purpose of observations was to understand the instructional intersections

between the written curriculum, curriculum planning, and instructional delivery. Observations

were conducted on a daily basis for approximately eight weeks during literacy instruction. The researcher conducted field observations of literacy instruction, when class was in session. Each observation lasted 45 minutes to one hour and included a detailed written record of each teacher, seen daily unless there were interruptions such as fire drills, student meetings, conflicting preparation periods or student interns teaching the lesson. The observations established a contextual basis for understanding, validating, and interpreting participant statements from the interviews.

The literacy period was chosen because of the variety of lessons taking place during literacy time in these elementary classrooms. During this time, students receive instruction in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, fluency, and writing. Moreover, this is also an important instructional time because the content area is assessed as part of the state standardized testing system. These observations allowed the researcher to see the instructional process and patterns of similarities or differences within individual teachers and between teachers (Glesne, 2006).

The observations provided an opportunity for the researcher to study the setting, participants, events, and acts to make sense of everything happening within the site (Glesne, 2006). The researcher was able to gather data on: classroom atmosphere, resources used, instructional setting and design, instructional strategies, and teacher behavior. While observing, the researcher kept what Emerson (1995) called "jottings" (p. 19) and transcribed them into formal field notes that included in-process memos. The jottings consisted of phrases or one or two word observations that were recorded while at the site (Emerson, 1995, p. 19) and served as a means of sources for constructing field notes. This also assisted in the chronicling of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perceptions throughout the research process (Emerson, 1995).

Field notes described the ways teachers' beliefs were validated or invalidated in the instructional process based on researcher observations (Glesne, 2006). They documented how curriculum was implemented, how pedagogical processes were used, and how teachers address the needs of LCD student populations. The descriptive field notes served as a source of data explaining how teachers negotiated between their beliefs and effective instructional delivery in the classroom. Field notes were transcribed to search for patterns of behavior and events that suggested further attention during observations.

Interviews

The primary source of data for teachers' perceptions was in-depth semi-structured interviews. The data collection process began with an initial teacher interview in order to gather demographic data about the teachers and their classrooms. Teachers were interviewed to collect information about their experiences and assisted the researcher in understanding the participating teachers' beliefs and philosophies about teaching and learning. In addition, teachers reflected on their instructional practices and defined their beliefs about teaching and learning for LCD students. Subsequent semi-structured interviews were used to understand how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum planning and how teachers perceived their beliefs to be actualized in the delivery of instruction. The interviews were scheduled, securing a time and location, to occur after the first week of the school year. The interviews took place at the school site during the school day or at the end of the school day.

The follow-up interviews were intended to draw explanations about teachers' instructional delivery based on observations and data from the initial interview. The explanations created an understanding how teachers negotiate between their beliefs and the needs of their classrooms in planning and delivering instruction. Each follow-up interview lasted about thirty

minutes. Follow-up interviews were designed to obtain clarification of teachers' beliefs about practices, addressing the needs of LCD students, observed and statements made during previous interviews.

An interview protocol (Appendix A) was used to conduct the initial, follow-up, and concluding interviews. The questions were developed by the researcher based on the review of literature and in collaboration with committee members. Teachers were asked about their beliefs, how they plan, the curriculum they use, and how they define and meet the needs of LCD student. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analytical purposes.

Document Analysis

Emic issues are what Stake (1995) called the issues of "the people who belong to the case" (p. 20) and evolve within connections between people and documents of particular cases. Yin (2003) described how inferences evolve from documents analysis (p. 87). In this study, the researcher collected and analyzed documents relevant to curriculum planning, such as district time lines, also called pacing schedules, in the content areas observed. The purpose of engaging in document analysis was twofold: to corroborate the researcher's observations and interviews, making the findings more trustworthy, and to investigate the documents guiding and influencing teacher pedagogy. As Merriam (2002) pointed out, "the strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation; they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might" (p.13). This is of importance because all of the documents are used to for either planning, instruction or for both. They are available on the district's website and are expected to be used by teachers in daily classroom instruction.

Table 3.2

District Created Documents and Its Correlation to Curriculum Development

Document	Grade Level	Used for Planning	Used for Instruction
Sample Benchmark Test	4	Yes	No
Marking Guidelines	3, 4	No	No
Story Town Planning Guidelines	3	Yes	Yes
Literacy Guidelines	4	Yes	Yes
State Test Countdown	3,4	Yes	Yes

Data Management

As recommended by Merriam (2002) and Yin (2003), a method for managing and organizing data was created. A file was created for each grade level and within each file were separate files for the teachers. Included in each teacher file were observational field notes, interview questions, and transcriptions of interviews, confidentiality statements, and any other documents that added to document the validity and reliability of the study.

Table 3.3

Data Organization

Week of	Classroom Observations	Grade Level	End of Week Interview	Grade Level	Additional Notes
August 27	No	-	Yes	Principal	Professional Development
September 8	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	Initial Interviews
September 15	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	
September 22	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	
October 6	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	
October 13	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	
October 20	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	
October 27	Yes	3 and 4	Yes	3 and 4	Concluding Interviews

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) defined analysis as the taking apart of something as a way to make sense of the data. In this study, data analysis was recursive and flexible in order to integrate and synthesize the emerging themes. The process allowed for clarification of themes within the data and created meaning from the collected data (Yin, 2003). In addition, the analysis process served as the search for "correspondence or patterns for consistency within certain conditions" (Stake, 1995, p. 78). To organize data for each participant the following grid was used for each participant's file during the data collection process (see Appendix D).

Analyzing Interviews and Observations

Using Yin's (2003) analytic strategies for observations and interviews, a descriptive framework for organizing this case study was developed. First, interviews and field notes were transcribed. The researcher searched for patterns of behavior and outcomes that generated a list of categories. After categories were identified, the data were manually coded to visually denote the patterns and the contradictions.

Coding and then sorting into categories, creates themes representing common insights (Stake, 1995, pp. 29-33). The themes were linked by a common topic that allowed for a more focused and precise analysis (Emerson, 1995). In order to find the core themes, the researchers gave "priority to topics on which substantial amounts of data has been collected and which reflect recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study" (Emerson, 1995, p. 157).

Validity

Qualitative research provides a unique perspective on reliability and validity. In order to account for the internal validity of the study, the researcher sought to determine the credibility of the findings in the study and ask; "How congruent are one's findings with reality?" (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). In addition to internal concerns, external validity questions what is learned from an in-depth analysis of a particular situation or incident and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation (Merriam, 2002).

The researcher's understanding of reality is based in the participants' interpretations (Merriam, 2002), member checks and peer review ensured the validity of this study's data. Once the interviews were transcribed the participants were contacted via email and asked to respond to the raw data in the form of transcriptions. Once clarifications or additions were made to the raw data the participants were contacted once more with an interpretation of the researchers findings to see if it "rings true" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26). Peer review, on the other hand, was conducted by two individuals one with a background in the topic of investigation and the other new to the topic. The reviewers reviewed the raw data along with the initial findings verify if the "findings are plausible based on the data" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26).

Two strategies used to establish the validity for this case study were "thick description" and triangulation (Stake, 1995). In addition, the case study methodology used thick description to ensure there was enough description and information so that readers would be able to determine whether the findings can be transferred to their situations (Merriam, 2002). Thick description is a strategy to ensure external validity and provide context for generalizablity within qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2002). Triangulation is a technique where multiple sources of data, in this case about teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their influence on curriculum planning

for LCD students, are collected to establish validity and reliability (Merriam, 2002). Sources of

data analyzed from this study included: interviews, district timelines and planning documents,

and observations to understand the process that teachers implement in order to plan for LCD

students, based on students' needs and teacher beliefs (Yin, 2003).

Table 3.4

Rationale for Collecting Multiple Sources of Data

Characteristic of qualitative research	Assurances of validity and reliability	Rationale for using the data source
Interviews	Interview protocol Recorded Member checks Peer review Transcribed verbatim "Thick descriptions"	The understanding of the participants' beliefs being situated in specific contexts. Teachers made meaning of their planning and teaching as it related to the needs of their students.
Observations	Field notes Member checks Peer review Transcribed notes	Allowed for consideration of the total context of the circumstances. Teaching was observed in the natural setting. Used for probing during interviews to gain deeper understanding of the case.
Documents	Content Analysis	These outside data sources that were provided by the district allowed for understanding of how teachers planned for their diverse environments.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used for the study. Research questions directed this study towards a qualitative case study research design. Procedures and data collection followed the tradition of case study. Data analysis involves the process of coding and thematically interpreting the nature of how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum decision making. The research design followed allowed for dissemination for detailed and specific information to provide a vivid picture of the site, participants and overall cases. In this chapter, the researcher's role was examined. The data sources and collection process were discussed within the context of the site. Triangulation and thick description were used to establish the validity of the findings. Ethical considerations involved protecting the anonymity of the participants. The next chapter provides a detailed description of the themes that emerged and the data contributing to the themes.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this case study was to explore how teachers' beliefs influence the planning and instruction of LCD students. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in an urban, northeastern elementary school were examined. The research was guided by the following overarching question: "How do teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence curriculum decision making for linguistically and culturally diverse students?" The following sub questions assisted in guiding the research for this study: (1) How do teachers self-report their beliefs and instructional practices to address and meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students? (2) How do teachers' self-reported beliefs and instruction and planning align with their instructional delivery? (3) How do teachers adapt the curriculum for their LCD classrooms? (4) How do teachers plan for their linguistically and culturally diverse classroom environment?

As explained in chapter three, data collected by the researcher consisted of an initial and concluding interview, observations of each teacher's literacy instructional period along with a follow up interview after each week of observations, documents such as district Timelines and assessment materials, and the researcher's observational field notes. Data was collected and subsequently analyzed for major codes, categories, and themes.

The sections of this chapter discuss themes emerging from the data. Those themes include two major themes and various sub-themes related to the major themes. The three major themes are: (1)influence of personal experiences, (2) perceived needs of students and (3) influence of mandated curriculum. The following sections identify and describe each of the

themes and the sub-themes associated with them. Figure 4.1 outlines the themes and sub-themes

that emerged out of the study.

Figure 4.1 Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes
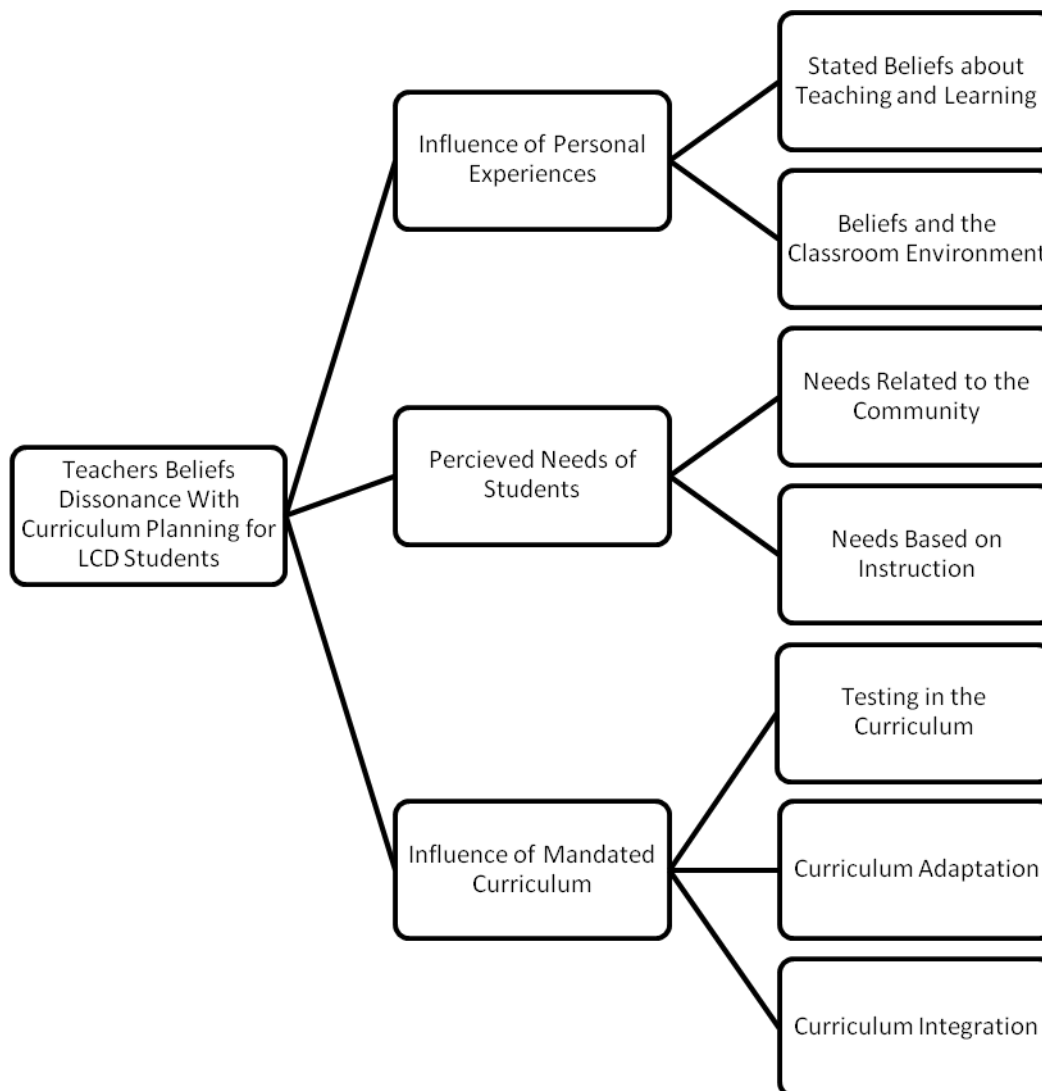
Influence of Personal Experiences

Participants' reflections regarding teaching and learning and their student population, highlighted connections to personal experiences as a salient influence on pedagocial approaches and instruction.Teachers participating in the study articulated their beliefs and defined their instrucitonal practices by describing personal experiences linked to their past and present.

A third-grade teacher reflected on how personal experiences influence her beliefs about meeting the needs of students. This teacher reflected on the development of her instructional delivery style in these comments:

> I think being in the classroom has a big influence. I have been teaching for 12 years. Being in the classroom room has made a big difference, but also talking to other teachers and finding out what works for them. Professional resources, reading up and being up on everything new that is coming in. You have to try things. You have to try to change with the kids because kids are different every year.

Continuing, the teacher stated:

> I guess, what influenced me is the staff that I work with and definitely my own beliefs, now that I have children. That definitely has influenced me. Everything I feel has molded me, different and new experiences along with things that I have seen in other classrooms, student teachers, everything I learn new, and talking to other teachers. By being a teacher, I feel like it you are a lifelong learner too. You have to learn everything new. Different things come along all the time. You can't be stuck doing the same stuff you do. Children learn differently. You need to move with the years, I guess.

Teachers' beliefs and how they perceive the needs of students can be directly linked to the lived experiences of the teachers.

A fourth- grade teacher reflected on past educational experiences as influential in the construction of her beliefs:

> My own education was very, very structured, very rigid. You had your responsibilities and you did them. If you didn't then there were consequences. I think my upbringing and my family have a lot to do with it, on how I handle a class and my philosophies. There were certain ways to act, there were certain things to do things and if you didn't do it, there were consequences. When I was growing up throughout my education, discipline was everything. Once you had that, and you got that every year, and once it was in your head it stuck with you and you were able to be in the classroom and enjoyed learning. I think of my own upbringing has a lot to do with how I am now.

Through the teachers' lens of beliefs about instruction, they developed their classrooms, decided on instructional methods, and interacted with students.

All of the teachers had over ten years of teaching experience and at least four years in the school in which they were currently teaching. They reflected on past schools, students, and classes influencing their beliefs about teaching and learning as well as describing and defining needs of their students. Teachers' reflections illuminated how their personal experiences influenced beliefs about teaching and learning and expectations regarding the classroom environment and students.

Stated Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

To contextualize the participants' instructional approaches and interactions within their diverse learning environment, understanding how their beliefs, including teaching philosophies, are constructed is important. During interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on their beliefs about teaching and learning as applied to philosophies of education. Beliefs about teaching and

learning, although individual to each participant, had some commonality. Similar sentaments

from participants about beliefs included phrases like: "hard work gets you success", "I believe

that hard work is important", and "I believe responsibility is important." One teacher stated a

core belief of hers as:

> I think every child can learn. I have seen it. I have had children that have started at below
>
> kindergarten or pre-primer level and have left here on a second grade level. I believe that
>
> every child has it in them to do it. I just believe a lot of them need a self esteem check.
>
> Need the confidence built into them to do those things. I believe that if you don't know
>
> something you should do everything that you can to learn it.

Another teacher shared a similar sentiment:

> I think your beliefs change when you get a child, who can't read or write. By the end of
>
> the year, they are reading and writing. So you start to feel good about what you have
>
> achieved and about what they have achieved, how much work it took, and how much
>
> progress they've made. All the children are different, so not all of them achieve the same
>
> level, but I feel all my kids leave with something. They have achieved in some way.
>
> They've learned more math, or they've learned comprehension skills or something. Since
>
> all kids are different, you have to see them all differently. You have to work with them
>
> differently. You want to help where they need it.

All the participants stated they believe that every child can learn. As one teacher put it:

"they [students] learn at different rates and different speeds." Although the participants believe

every student can learn, they recognized the learning outcomes may look different from student

to student. A particpant described that "all the students can read," "some have low

comprehension," and "some are going to need intense remediation." These sentements recgonized students come in on different levels.

In describing their beliefs, participants explained what responsibility they have as related to promoting teaching and learning. For example one particpant shares:

My beliefs about teaching and learning are that every child should have an opportunity, the same opportunity as everyone else in the class. I am a strong believer in, if you are a student who is stopping someone else from getting their education, I believe something needs to be done about that.

The responsibility and initiative is expected to be self-regulated as reflected:

I also believe that if you don't want to help yourself then there is really not a whole lot a teacher can do. I believe that a child has to come into a classroom wanting to learn something or at least if they come into the classroom not wanting to learn, I do think it's my job to try to at least make them want to learn, make education more interesting to them.

Intepreting these statements as judged by what occurred in the classrooms, the researcher found the statement "every child can learn" was a belief articulated by all, but translated into instructional practice differently. Participants described the responsibility of getting all students to learn; however, there was no concensus as to the extent they perceived their role. A particpant also shares, " they [students] need to want to get better at something. They have to raise their hand and ask for help or drop me a note and ask for help." The expectations of teachers indicates a "banking" (Freire, 1970) method, where the particpants expects the student to open up so the teacher can impart knowledge. A different participant explained " you don't want them to not enjoy learning, you want them to leave each day with hope. Something you know they can

achieve." Within the above sentiments, particpants recognized cultural relevance as a means to construct opportunties inspiring "hope" within the learning process. The notion is negated when paralleled alongside achievment, based on standards and objectives.

Beliefs and the Classroom Environment

Instructionally participants found different ways to demonstrate their beliefs. Observational data showed how individual beliefs influenced everything from teaching, to organization, to management styles. One participant, who teaches third-grade, used tables in the classroom versus desks. This classroom had a classroom library labeled by genre as well as by popular authors to whom students in the class have been exposed. The library is built on the teachers constructivist views of literature that she found to be important. Also, books were provided by the school. There were many Marc Brown, Patricia Polacco, and non-fiction texts. A carpet served as the location where most whole group instruction occurred. At times the carpet was a place where students were allowed to read independently during Reader's Workshop.

During observations, a fourth-grade teacher started the school year with the classroom desks in rows, traditional to a "banking model," where students wait to receive knowledge. Towards the last two weeks of the study transitioned student seating into groups. Students spent the majority of their time in their seats working independent on individual or whole group activities versus collaborating, sharing, or working together. The other fourth-grade teacher also began the observational period with the desks in rows; after the second week into the study, this participant changed the desks from rows into a horseshoe configuration. This participant kept the classroom covered with process charts from previous years for all the content areas. The other participants had blank walls and as they taught concepts they added process charts to the walls. A teacher reflected on her beliefs vis-à-vis organization of the learning environment as "here is

so much more teachers can do with if there is an organized classroom and a disciplined classroom. If you are in a classroom with absolute chaos, you are missing an entire year."

In culmination, the stated beliefs of teachers support the idea that experiences play a role in how teachers apply teaching and learning with LCD students. Some participants discussed their beliefs in regards to their "role as an educator" while others focused on "how their learning experiences shape how they plan for instruction." All participants shared the belief that all students can learn and part of their teacher role is to provide them with an environment where students can be successful.

Perceived Needs of Students

Being able to meet the needs of students begins with defining needs using terminology of participants. Participants defined the needs of their students in the context of their own personal experiences in the classroom, with parents, with students, and with the outside community. Instructional needs were derived from student and community needs.

Beginning with community needs, the researcher observed the neighborhood environment consisted of large amounts of trash on the streets, on the sidewalks, and in front of homes. Many of the homes windows were covered sheets. During the day people could be seen sitting or standing on the front steps of homes or out on the streets. The noises that surrounded the community included car alarms, car horns honking, and roosters crowing in the early morning. The community as a result holds the "funds of knowledge" that many studnets bring to the classroom but was not recgonized as a means to scaffold instruciton (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005)

 Students' Needs Based on Needs of the Community

As teachers responded to the needs of students, they reflected on the impact the community has on student needs. Inside the gates of the school, the grounds were kept clean from this outside debris. Alongside knowing the school is a Title 1 school and all students receive free or reduced breakfast and lunch, poverty was present in the community as witnessed by the wear and tear of homes and vehicles.

It was stated, "There is a need for more parental involvement, more parental participation in the students' lives not just their education. If there was more involvement in their lives it would make our [the teachers] jobs a lot easier." Perceptions of the community led one participant to explain:

> … a lot of our day is taken up by character building. A lot of it is taken up just by modeling, what the appropriate behavior in certain situations, respecting someone, that's a big part of the day; it's not just the math and reading. You really have to push because they don't see a lot of it outside, I think. Not because the parents don't have any skills themselves. They don't see themselves in those roles. So I definitely feel like we are raising kids, or taking apart and, not solely raising the kids, but I mean kind of raising kids, in addition to the people at home, which is fine; I enjoy it."

Another participant responded:

> The bigger challenges are outside of here [school] that the kids receive in this neighborhood is in home support. That's a huge challenge, not that the parents don't want to but they are not equipped academically, financially, and for other reasons to help them. There is a lot of depression and a lot of anxiety in the neighborhood and this affects what we can do.

Beliefs about students' homes also led to misperceptions and unrealistic expectations as demonstrated by one participant:

> That's like one week's lesson; these kids are not coming from home where they are sitting constructing angles. They have never used a protractor, they have never seen a protractor, if they have it as the previous years here and they haven't spent any time really learning it.

Learning gaps, as described by the teachers, are attributed to lack of home experiences rather than being linguistically and culturally unimportant.

A third participant said:

> In this area, education is not top priority. It's actually a third or fourth of importance in the family. So if there is anything that I can do to make, to bump education and even one step up on the ladder than I think I've done a good job. I also find it disheartening. When parents come in and feel the same way as the child. I believe there is only so much that I can do in a 6 1/2 or a 7 1/2 hour day with these children. A lot of their education, I believe, has to come from home. Unfortunately, it's not with these kids. I try, sometimes and I have some strange ways of doing it but I try to get them all interested in something to increase their learning.

Understanding the needs of students from the perspective of what is going on in the community and in their homes can help make sense of why students react, with resistance or lack of understanding, to expectations or strategies of instruction used in the classroom. This same issue comes up again later in this chapter when discussing the importance and influence of mandated curriculum.

Although not stated as community deficiencies, teachers perceived the local neighborhood contributing to the lack of background knowledge and creating distractions that limit student learning. The following vignette provides evidence of how one teacher perceived *student needs* as social needs, meaning needs as it relates to housing and its impact due to the community:

> A lot of them [students] don't have a quiet place to do their homework. A lot of them don't have a nice bed, a warm bed to sleep in. A lot of them are sharing rooms, and it's loud, and they don't have time to do their homework. They have babies in the house that are real loud, and they stay up. I just found out one of my students has a baby in the house. That's why they're falling asleep, because there is a baby in the house that's up all night long; and they live in an apartment. So students have different needs when it comes to the basic needs.

> Based on observations of teachers' interactions with students and interviews, the researcher identified what teachers perceived as a disconnect between the impact of what students experienced in the community and the role those experiences, or lack of experiences, played in the instructional needs of students:

> But these children, I hate to group them all together and say something like this, but they haven't built that critical thinking, they need structure. Their life is so chaotic. The only structure they can get is in school, and they respond well to structure. That is the only thing they respond to. When it's chaotic, it's just like home. They don't understand that, they can't understand the chaotic.

Also, teachers' beliefs about the impact of student relationships with other students and school staff were described by one teacher as:

> For some kids is it not reading, writing, math, science, and social studies that they are going to need, it is the clean shirt, the soap, and the toothpaste that they are going to need. Some of the kids need different things. It is not always just book learning, some of them need to you to tell them every day to try, that they are doing good, they look nice and that they are making some effort.

The data demonstrates assumptions made by participants due to their experiences with students and the community. The data signifies participant's perception of students' cultures as deficient and not supportive to the culture of schooling. Some participants demonstrated sensitivity towards understanding student culture in context of not supporting the culture of school. Culture was not discussed as a means to motivate students by integrating it into the learning process.

Student Needs Based on Instruction

Student needs were often described in terms of what was lacking academically, as a means to define student needs. From an instructional perspective, participants used phrases like: "I seem to get the bulk of students with very low comprehension in reading," "some of the children that are ESL will need basic concepts," and "the current needs are going to be math."

When teachers described the instructional needs of their students, the focus was on the needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) students, including those who did not receive pull-out services. In addressing the needs of teacher identified ESL students, one participant said, "Not all the students on are on the same level and they don't all come in with the same background knowledge." Particpant discussion on achivement highlights the categorization of students' abilities based on performance and mastery of standards/objectives. As a result, particpants described students as "on level or above level."

As participants talk about their students in relation to being readers, words describing categories of ability included, "beginners, emergent, or pre-emergent." Continuing in explaining academic deficiencies, students were said to be, "lacking the writing and reading skills in both languages." The "lack" described by the participants is an assumption because students were only assessed (district benchmarks and state assessments) in English not in Spanish. If participants were demonstrating culturally relevant practices, then they would have assessed students in both languages to determine if literacy deficiencies translated across languages. According to a fourth-grade teacher, "they [students] stopped learning their first language and are trying to learn a lot about the new language." Additional statement confirming teachers' beliefs that instructional needs vary between students was, "some of the children that are ESL will need basic concepts. Some of them are the lower readers. I will need to work with them with basic sight words." Another participant adds similar sentiments of "my biggest problem this is going to be reading levels" and "the needs of the class right now is basically comprehension strategies."

As participants reflected on students' instructional needs, many of them discussed how they were going to "attack the issue" in the best interest of students. Students' experiences as indicated by particpants did not assist in students ability to connect to learning experiences or the curriculum. A particpant explains, "you take for granted with what you know. I have lived here all of my life. You take for granted basic words that they don't understand," as he discusses language as a need and a reason why students struggle connecting with the curriculum. Another particpant adds, " they [students] have not been read to, challenged, or socialized, because of the way they've grown up." A different particpant added , "I think the kids need a lot of reference, because they don't have a lot of stuff at home." Particpants impose ideas of what good learning

enviroments look like inside and outside of the classroom, constructed from personal experiences. Personal experiences of particpants were overvalued as compared to the lived experiences of students including home and community referents.

Ways to meet *students needs*, as it relates to academic needs of students, were elaborated on by a particpant reflection:

> I try to build background information, to build connections outside of their own world, and give them another idea of things that are happening in their world that they don't necessarily have contact with or know about. It gives them a little bit of personal background. I believe the background knowledge helps with comprehension across the subjects. It allows them to understand what I'm talking about so they don't get stuck on any one idea that they can't get over. So the more background knowledge they have, the easier comprehension will be, and unfortunately they don't have a lot of background knowledge outside of this immediate community. I try to give them that knowledge just a little bit at a time, even if it is just a word, a vocabulary word, an idea, or an experience I had in my life so that they are able to connect what we are doing in class with what they may already know.

Another participant indicated that she "had a list of children going through the teacher referral process with the hope of interventions to solve some of the problems the children have." The other participant indicated "intense remediation" for students. Teachers used various instructional strategies like the above mentioned to connect learning experiences they had with student experiences. Strategies to connect students to the curriculum or learning experiences were not always connected to the curriculum or validated by the curriculum documents or included in planning due to the mandated curriculum. The assumptions made by participants

indicate the need to build background knowledge. Rather than looking at students backgrounds and finding materials to support what students bring to the classroom, participants utilized materials aligned with standards and objectives.

Influence of Mandated Curriculum

The particpants described the district's "core curriculum" required for instruction as, "mandated curriculum based on the state standards." As participants thought about how they planned for instruction often they referred to the district's pacing guide or pacing schedule. All participants criticized how the mandated curriculum "may not always fit every student or everyclassrom because *student needs,* academic and social needs, are not taken into account." The "core curriculum" outlines instructional standards and materials used in the content areas. Teachers described tension from attempting to address learning needs of individual students, their own beliefs about teaching and learning, and what the mandated curriculum intended for them to teach and their ability to do so.

While all teachers stated they followed the mandated curriculum, they explicated because of deficiencies in the curriculum scaffolding of daily instruction was necessary. From teachers talking about the impact of the mandated curriculum emerged several sub-themes. These sub-themes encapuslate how teachers described how the mandated curriculum, which the district prescribed for them to follow, influenced their planning and instructional delivery of learning experiences. Issues of testing also emerged and described in the ways testing is connected to the curricuum and how teachers plan for instruction. Curriculum adapation and integration portrays the way that particpants "tweak the curriculum." "Tweaking the curriculum defined by

participants are ways curriculum is perceived to be adapted to create a "good program" with "what works in the classroom and what doesn't."

The Mandated Curriculum

The document identified by the district as the "Planning and Scheduling Timeline" is referred to it as the "pacing schedule," "pacing guide," or "core curriculum" by the teachers. This research discovered the terms were used interchangeably. The Planning and Scheduling Timeline was framed from state standards for content areas. A fourth-grade teacher described the curriculum as, "mandated curriculum based on the state standards." The pacing schedule reflects the content for district's benchmark testing which occurs every six weeks.

The mandated curriculum, as stated by a fourth-grade teacher, is "used for the benchmark that is distributed by the district." Although an outside agency creates the test, the district expects teachers to follow the pacing schedule because that is what will be tested on the benchmarks given every six weeks, "to inform instruction as to what needs more attention and what concepts students grasped." "Students are scored similar to the state assessment; *Below Basic*, *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*," stated by the same fourth-grade teacher who has been in the district for five years, but teaching for over ten years.

The mandated curriculum "does not always have what we need" and "needs more open ended writing in the curriculum," one fourth-grade participants explained. The curriculum has "no flow with it," the same fourth-grade teacher added. A third-grade teacher stated, "It is missing great strategies; inferring, questioning and visualization." The participant went on to elaborate, "you as a teacher, a professional, know what's best for you students, your class and what works." The same third-grade teacher continued, "Teachers know what students need in their heart." Despite one of the fourth-grade teacher's criticisms of the core curriculum, she

expressed the idea, "you don't want to have them leave your room and not feel you've done the best possible job you could just because the curriculum says do this. You need to give them what they need to be lifelong learners." Another fourth-grade teacher in her explanation of the core curriculum stated,

> On paper, [the core curriculum is] awesome, higher ups have said it's one of the best curriculums they have seen. If you ask the teachers who are actually implementing it covers everything, you know. It covers everything that they are going to test you on; they're going to test the children on. However, I don't know how many teachers were involved with creating this curriculum. And if there were, I don't know where they taught.

Although the study focused on literacy, participants, when asked about the curriculum, discussed both reading and math equally. Reading and math were conceptualized together because the state assessment for both third- and fourth-grade was only in those two content areas. Those two content areas were also observed as having the most time allocated for instruction, as a result leaving little room for science and social studies. A participant explains deficiencies within the mandated curriculum for math:

> Every Day Math, which I have yet to hear that anyone, at least in the school, say anything positive about. I mean, this is a program that requires the children come to you already knowing, have mastered certain skills. There's no room for skills, basic skills in Every Day Math. When the children don't come to you with that, you are still expected to follow the curriculum and the pacing chart, which every day is a new topic. At the beginning of every year in fourth-grade we start with geometry, with lines and rays and measuring angles. And then two days later, we are doing place value. I mean, there is

just, technically every year they [the students] are supposed be getting these things, and

so every year is supposed to be a review. A review, a review!

Curricula meant to address skills emphasized by state and district standards leave teachers

struggling to provide learning experiences meeting the needs of their students. One participant

described, "they [students] need the structure, and they welcome it, and Every Day Math is not

structured. It appears to be; it is structured, if you know the skills already. But I'm very unhappy

with it. That is what the district wants you to use, and I'm going to leave it at that." As the

teacher continued to talk about deficiencies within the mandated curriculum, she elaborated on

literacy:

As far as the literacy, as far as the literacy curriculum, we use an anthology, Trophies,

which is actually just used for our shared reading piece, and our grammar, and word

study pieces. They just offer lessons on that, and writing. We follow the writing, the

lessons for that in the Trophies book. But then we are expected to have guided reading

every day.

Teachers' beliefs about mandated curricula led one teacher to posit an inequality between

materials provided to support the curriculum of the lower elementary grades and materials

provided for the upper grades. The researcher, based on informal discussions and observations,

concluded the lack of equity is a consequence of funding for the Reading First curriculum. The

Reading First grant supports K–3 with additional funds for books and literacy resources. A

participant said:

If you are in K-3 that would be great, because they give you all kinds of books and all

types of everything if you are K-3. And if you are in fourth-grade and you're pretty much

"good luck" getting your books. So, actually the principal, we had my first year here, got

fourth-grade books and they are the books we've had since. So if you need a level

anywhere below what you have, you need to go find books on your own. Whereas in K-3

they get new books every year, so we kind of pick up their old books, which is fine.

Whatever, books are books.

Not only was the mandated curriculum seen as unsupported by materials, but also

perceived as over utilized when it came to district assessment. The participants extrapolated as to

how outside companies analyze the mandated curriculum and create tests assumed to accurately

assess learning. One teacher described:

Every six weeks there is what they call a benchmark test, and the test is written this year

by a company called Kaplan. What I gather is they look at the curriculum and they see

what is supposed to be taught. What is supposed to be learned in the six weeks, they

create a test using those skills.

This teacher continued to explain how the results are then used to evaluate teachers' instructional

ability rather than any other deficiencies (i.e., background knowledge of students, test bias and

validity, etc.) as stated:

However, and when we get the test back, we are supposed to look at what the children are

weak at and work on that, which is great. I think that is an awesome thing; however, it is

not used properly throughout the district. Because when it [the results] comes back that

children are weak in main idea. It is automatically assumed that the teacher did not do a

good job in teaching the main idea. I believe the benchmarks in this district are used for

teacher accountability. Throughout the years it has been, not so much said, but implied

that's what they are using these for. It always comes back on us, it never comes back on,

well why didn't little Joey learn this? And what is it about little Joey that he can't get this?

It's, what did you do as a teacher that he didn't get this? Which, I agree, and in some cases teachers need that, because there are some teachers that don't do anything.

Participants discussed the mandated curriculum as including, "everything you need," but "it does not leave room for every child in the district or creativity." A fourth-grade teacher explained when describing the math curriculum:

It doesn't allow students to master anything and that's what our kids need, mastery. Like, just this week, I had to start immediately on constructing angles. It is supposed to be a review. They have never constructed an angle. This math program they want you to spend a few minutes reviewing angles.

The data show how teachers experienced dissonance between the Planning and Scheduling Timeline, which help guide the learning of students for teachers, and meaningful learning experiences as formulated via teachers' beliefs.

Participants shared not only the challenges of the curriculum, but identified various positive statements about the curriculum. In explaining the curriculum, a third-grade teacher explained:

 If someone [a student] leaves the room and goes to a different school, they will go and are doing the same thing that I am doing. A lot of children do move often around here. Everyone is using the same materials, Everyday Math; we are using Story Town this year. It is helpful to know what a new child is supposed to know. You are not working with nothing. It is helpful to know what they should have done already.

In planning and coordinating learning goals, a fourth-grade teacher shared that:

I love the fact that the standards are delineated. That is helpful to me. The stories are

okay that they chose for the basal that we use. They are okay; the stories are pretty good.

I use them as a base. I like the literacy curriculum; it tells me what skills I need to teach.

As demonstrated here, even the participants who liked the literacy curriculum did not fully

embrace all parts of it.

Further analysis of the actual document highlights both positive and negative statements describing the pacing schedule. The materials that teachers are required to use align directly to the planning and pacing timetable. The document is also aligned to the state standards and assessment anchors driving the state test. While the document informs teachers as to what concepts and skills they are teaching, it also gives them a specific timeframe for instruction to occur. Teachers are expected to utilize the Planning and Pacing Timeline, so that learning objectives are connected to skills needed on the state test. Teachers liked parts of the Planning and Scheduling Timeline, using it daily to drive instruction. Dissonance occurs when participants' constructed beliefs about teaching, learning, and instructional practices conflicted with parts of Planning and Scheduling Timeline.

Testing in the Curriculum

Each teacher described the impact that testing has on the pacing schedule. A fourth-grade teacher shared how the mandated curriculum "covers everything that they are going to test the children on." Because of the correlation between the curriculum and benchmarking participants described pressure to teach "a lot of test prep with the kids." Another teacher described learning strategies designed to help students with testing, "I do a lot of open ended writing practice with them, reading text and going back in and taking information out by being detectives. Sadly enough, that is what they need to do at the end of the year for the test." The researcher observed

students practicing to speak using full sentences after their speech was corrected through the modeling from the participant. The participant discussed using this practice so, "they [the students] sound intelligent" but "also for test taking skills." "They [the students] have to be able to write in full sentences," she responded. The statements explaining that on the test "they [the students] have to take a question and turn it [the question] around" and "A lot of children write the way they talk," emphasize how the teacher believed students' language and culture are deficiencies because they are perceived hindrances toward students' ability on standardized testing. These statements continue to demonstrate teachers' perceptions about state and district tests as being accurate assessments of students' learning, but not necessarily *students' needs*, in terms of their academic needs.

In several observations the participants engaged in "test prep" with their student. Through interviews, it was explained by the participants, "it [test prep] does teach the kids a lot of the skills, the strategies you want them to have to become successful readers and writers." Test prep was not seen as "an add-on even though it sounds like it is." Observational data recorded by the researcher established most instances of test prep included teacher made materials rather than premade materials. Many of the teachers created worksheets targeting the skills tested on either the benchmark or the state test. One fourth-grade teacher would regularly give the "sample assessment item" or "point question constructed response," from the Planning and Scheduling Timeline. The teacher modeled, for the students, how to complete this form of response using a strategy called the TAG. Students were expected to first T-turn the question into a statement, A-answer the question, and G-give details. This participant also referred to an old and worn process chart hanging on the wall to describe this strategy. The teacher explained:

> I think the whole TAG [T-turn the question in to a statement, A-answer the question, G-give details] thing in the open ended questioning is important. It helps them become better readers, because they are in and looking back for information in the story to make sure they understand the text. It forces them to go back and check, is this really happening or not? So, I like it for that.

On the test " they have to take a question and turn it around."

Based on several observations of particpants engaged in test prep with their students, the pressure to perform well on the tests for both students and teachers was obvious. During interviews, participants justified the use of test preparation to teach skills, "because it [test prep] does teach the kids a lot of the skills, the strategies you want them to have to become successful readers and writers." Participants struggled with the decision to utilize "test prep" as an instructional practice because of dissonance between having students ready for tests based on mandated curriculum and personal beliefs about teaching and learning and *students' needs*, both academic and social. The need for test prep demonstrates teachers constructs of teaching and learning being influenced and driven by standards/objectives and high stakes testing.

Curriculum Adaptation Beyond the Mandated Curriculum

Because the mandated curriculum often was "an introduction of new skills" rather than the intended review of skills, teachers found ways to adapt the curriculum. The participants described how they "do more clarification" or find ways to "slow things down" for students instead of focusing on "coverage." Another teacher mentions, after realizing the students need more time to understand a skill, the necessity of "going deeper" into teaching and reteaching a skill despite the Planning and Scheduling Timeline outlining a shorter period of time being spent on the skill. A participant said:

If I realize that students don't get it, I am re-teaching it in, even if it's the sixth week. I'm never touching it again according to the curriculum, not according to me. What I do, according to me, is I would further the skill. I would further predicting for three weeks because I know it's a very important strategy that they need to have. They need to go deeper into it. Not just tell me a basic prediction. They have been doing that since kindergarten, so I feel that even if it [the curriculum] says we are done predicting and never talking about it again, they can always be touched on. These are important strategies, just like all the other comprehension strategies. They are all very important.

Curricular adaptations are one perceived way these particpants attain depth in learning. They also demonstrate participants' beliefs about the need "to focus on a skill and reteach" as more important than following the Planning and Scheduling Timeline. Particpants did not apply standards to create the best learning experiences for students. Adapting instruction to teach standards is one way participants believe *students' needs,* as an academic entity are met. As a result, standardization neglects students social needs that differ between students such as health care, housing, and nutrition.

At times there "may be a need for mini-lessons," one teacher explains when asked about a phonics lesson in the middle of the literacy lesson. She stated, "if the students need a phonics review, I am not going to neglect that need and keep going. I am going to teach the phonics lesson that is needed because that is going to impact learning later on." The following vignette explains how one teacher uses the curriculum to meet the needs of the students.

What I do is pull it [the core curriculum] apart and look at the skills the school district wants our children to know by the end of the six weeks. I adapt it to my classroom. I create my own lessons, and I'll use the Trophies book, or some of their suggestions, if I

believe they are worthy enough to be in my classroom. I pull apart the skills and the

strategies and that's what I'll work on, and by the end of the six weeks, I will have tried to

get to all of those skills. No, it doesn't always happen. In a perfect world it would. We are

also given, the benchmark for that six weeks; really they are for five weeks of lessons.

The sixth week is for review. It's after you get the tests back, and go over all the things

the kids didn't get for some reason. So, that is good to have that week of catch up. I mean,

I have been in this school doing this for nine years now. It's tough to get everything in, in

those six weeks, because you can't just do one thing a day. Sometimes we have to spend a

week on just one topic, so it depends on the needs of each individual class and of the

students.

All the participants had similar sentiments about finding ways to adapt the curriculum and pacing

schedule to meet the learning needs of the students. This response also demonstrates how most of

the participants conceptualized "meeting the needs of students" as taking time and making an

effort to make sure students learn skills from mandated curriculum.

In several observations, the researcher collected data on how teachers were teaching

skills taught weeks prior or that were not identified as the target skill. The researcher was able to

see how many of the participants reapplied previous concepts by imbedding them into lessons.

During one observation, a particpant in the middle of an activity that was not going well,

changed and modified the activity in the middle of the lesson. This demonstrated how the

teacher beliefs about "what works in the classroom" influences instructional delivery and how

the mandated curriculum at times emphasizes learning she is "uncomfortable with or

uncomfortable doing."

The participants identified their perception of "knowing what will work" if a student does "not get it during reading time, maybe in social studies we will talk about the characters and setting." These participants described creating "many opportunties for the child to get it the second or third time." Various instructional opportunities such as "small groups or independent instruction" were perceived as allowing for reconceptualizing and reteaching. One participant discussed the need for adaptation when the curriculum does not fit or meet the needs of the students.

> Well, I feel that when I look at my weekly lesson plans, I look at what the curriculum says. I look at what the core curriculum says; I look at it, and then I adapt to my children. So for example, if it says making predictions, I'll take that, and start out the first day making easy predictions. What do you think is going to happen next? And then the next day add-on, why do you think that? I want them to go deeper by the end of the week. Then the following week, since it's a two week cycle, the following week make sure that they get it, and they can do it throughout the whole book, not just once. So, I just adapt for my kids. I try to realize what they need and focus in on that.

This participant described the pacing schedule's influence on teaching and learning. She stated:

> It's a two week cycle, so that means, if it is predicting, they do it for two weeks. They learn about predicting for two weeks and then it's done, you move on to something else. I feel this is a strategy they need to do on a daily basis. Every book they read, they should predict once. So this is a skill I extend further than two weeks. When I reflect, I feel like I look at the end of the week or the end of the day and say, did they leave here with what I wanted them to do? Did they leave, accomplishing my goals? And then from there, I start the next day. So if it is yes or no, if it's no, I know I have to re-teach something, or do it

in a different way, so that the kids who didn't get it get it. And if they did get it, I want to

make sure critical thinking is involved in all these different skills.

The pacing schedules had a strong influence on teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching and

impacted planning and instruction as evidenced by observations and interviews. The pacing

guide/curriculum and materials may not "always fit every student or every classroom," one

participant stated.

Although "standards are delineated" and inform teachers what content to teach, creating

some ease, test prep consumed planning and instructional time. All participants believed that

"coverage" was less important than in depth learning as evidenced in this statement, "it is okay

to teach facts, but the kids get it when you take your time and you talk to theme bout how they

got their answer and you questions how they got their answer." Participants adapted curriculum

by "tweak [ing] it to fit the children and learners in the class." A participant stated, "I take what I

know will work, I take what they [students] need. I model it into a lesson I know that my

children will get something from."

Curriculum Integration

Unlike curriculum adaptation, in which currulum is modified using the same materials

and resources identified by the district, curriculum integration combines supplemental resources

with existing curriculum to "fill the gaps" or "meet student needs" where the "core curriculum"

is perceived to fail to do so. During several observations, teachers used supplemental resources

or approaches to deliver the planned curriculum. Two of the participating teachers utilized

modified versions of the Readers and Writers Workhop and Message Time Plus. Other forms of

curricular integration were noticed during observations as well as discussed in interviews.

Technology played an integral role in delivering instruction; however, its use was not defined in

the curriculum nor were the materials adapted for use with the type of technology present in one of the teacher's classroom. Language was also used for curriculum integration.

In describing the concept of curriculum integration, one teacher said that it "help[s] build the prerequisite skills so that they [students] can get the target skills that are identified by the pacing schedule." The researcher observed one participant using an English text book in her classroom to supplement skill learning with her students. On a follow up interview she stated, "I am outsourcing. It is the content that I am working on. I try to use as many sources as I can to implement the core curriculum." Another participant discussed the number of students with limited experiences, which makes it hard for them to connect with the texts in the basal reader and other parts of the curriculum. Less dissonance occurs when adapting and integrating curriculum and resources rather than challenging the curriculum. Challenging the curriculum seems to create greater dissonance, which participants did not do.

Another form of curriculum integration was the use of author studies. Author studies, which are part of the Readers/Writers Workshop "fit in the curriculum with writing." The teacher read "different Marc Brown books;" the goal is to "pick up the characteristics of writers and to model an author's style."

Native Language vs. Language of Instruction

Language plays a vital role in the identity of this community of learners. A fourth-grade teacher attempted, based on his beliefs about teaching and learning, to integrate students' language into instruction as a means to "clarify" or "make connections" with what students knew. The participant used Spanish terms in the classroom to address the needs "for the ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] students." In describing his use of language in instruction, the teacher stated he wanted "to see what Latin-based terms might be in the

language in English to help them refer to their first language." The participant goes on to explain his goal in using language is to "make them [ESOL students] more comfortable," "[provide] some clarification," or to "link together." The participant identified the comfort of the students was important because when the teachers "make[s] it a little more comfortable for them, [when] it is easier for them to start off that is helpful." Participants made comments such as these which could not be validated by this research.

One participant, in discussing the advantages of using Spanish and knowing the language, stated, "I can anticipate what problems kids are going to have." When the researcher observed the participant teaching about adjectives, the teacher solicited words in English to describe a dog. After the teacher elaborated how English is different than Spanish, a student was then asked to describe a dog in Spanish. The example provided was "el perro azul." The teacher informed the students that the adjective comes after the noun in Spanish, but it English the sentence would be "the blue dog." When asked why the participant connects understanding of grammar with Spanish, he explained, "Many students speak Spanish, so they feel good that they can do something better than the teacher. It helps to build confidence in the students." The following was a reflection from a participant during an interview about how the students' native language fits into the curriculum:

> I love being in the classroom with the kids and the language thing is very interesting and it helps a lot of times with the vocabulary because a lot of them do speak Spanish. So, when we're learning the words, I can rely on the Spanish, knowing what the word is in Spanish. So that, I think, is also a very natural thing for them to try to rely on kids' natural instinct and actual abilities. And if I can do that, then that serves them really well and it makes it easier for me to get across the kinds of concepts we are working on.

During observations, the researcher did not notice any reaction from students. They either disregarded his use of Spanish or waited until he translated what he said to English to respond. If students did respond it was because Spanish commands were used and they were reacting to the command replying in English or following the direction.

Technology

Technology played an integral role in learning in all the classrooms. The relationship between the school and an institution of higher education within the state has assisted in providing computers for student learning. The school had two MAC computer labs for student and parent use. In addition, eighty-three Macintosh computers were placed in homes of families in the community. University students provided parents and students with free technology classes in both Spanish and English on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Technology was being supplied with the intention to enhance student (parent) centered learning and connect learning strategies from school to homes.

The core curriculum, which informs instructional practice, is not designed to incorporate this type of technology. In one participant's classroom, a Smart Board has been provided by the district to assist in instructional delivery. The participant elaborated: "I find the Smart Board and the Internet an amazing tool." This participant discussed how the Smart Board is used to "create things for [students]." In numerous observations the researcher watched one participant rely on the Smart Board in the classroom for instruction. The researcher questioned the teacher about the Smart Board as a means to connect lessons with the curriculum. The participant described:

> The other day, one boy was reading about volcanoes. So I did a big lesson [using the
> Smart Board] on volcanoes because he was excited about volcanoes that day. That mixes
> with everything, it mixes with math, and you know measurement. It mixes with

geography, the geography of volcanoes. It mixes with literacy, because they are learning

terms. It mixes with science; just because it's not a science lesson of the week doesn't

mean that it's not good to talk about it. It's not the way they learn, I can't do that to my

kids. I think it helps a lot of them to be able to learn more naturally like that.

The teacher described how he used technology to make learning more meaningful and student-centered, which addressed *students' academic needs*. It seemed that this participant used the technology in a culturally relevant fashion allowing quick access to any subject/interest of students.

The same teacher also elaborated on the role that the Smart Board can play in differentiating instruction. He stated:

While teaching is going on, you constantly have to scan the room to differentiate what

kind of delivery you are giving them, to differentiate the kind of activities you are going

to give them. There have been times I've had an activity ready, and I'm like I'm not going

to give them this today because they are no way ready for it; or, it's too boring for them

because they've already got it. So you modify right there, and that's where the Smart

Board is a really great tool, because you can come up with another activity (snaps

fingers) on the spot.

In describing differentiation, the participant explains how technology allows for on the spot reteaching in ways that enhance the learning experience. Alternative teaching approaches are seen, as discussed by this participant, as a resource to create learning experiences.

Supplemental Learning and Teaching Resources

All of the particpants used supplemental resources, not included in materials for the "core curriculum," for teaching and learning. Two particpants used the "core curriculum" timeline

when incorporating supplemental learning and teaching resources during literacy instruction time. These participants integrated the Readers and Writers Workshop as a pedagogical approach to literacy instruction.

The third-grade teacher also incorporated a modified version of Message Time Plus, a curriculum developed by Children's Learning Imitative (CLI), to build comprehension and fluency through mini-lessons designed for grades K-2, during her literacy period. Her classroom, according to the CLI website, is identified as a model classroom. In observing the use of Message Time Plus, the researcher noticed the integration of a word wall, vocabulary building, grammar skills, a specially designed white board, as well as opportunities for one-on-one instruction. The participant was asked to reflect on the use and role of Message Time Plus in her classroom; she responded:

Message Time Plus, it's a whole big thing with CLI, the children's learning initiative. They showed me how to do it. So basically I write a message that somehow relates to whatever we're learning. Today I did non-fiction, talking about different kinds of nonfiction types of books and writing in that kind of stuff. I try to put in some word wall words or vocabulary words were using so they tie in that way. From the mini lessons, after I write it and they read it off [the white board], and a student picks one [word from the white board]. From there, let's say the focus skills would be the setting and short vowels and long vowels. They'll try to make a selection based on one of those words. I know the kids need to know what nouns are, though it may not have been in the curriculum that day, or that week. So I'll pull that out and I'll say what part of speech is this. We'll get a noun-eventually and from there I teach that on the board at the students instructional level, and I try to keep it in the zone of proximal development. I want to get

to that zone with a little bit of challenge. I want the child to be challenged so he walks

away learning something from that. I'm not going to do something that he already knows.

So I'm trying to get that little bit of challenge, and the rest of the kids are working with us

too, and that's so that they are not doing nothing.

This teacher described Message Time Plus as an instructional strategy and learning designed to

address *student academic needs*, challenge, and scaffold learning. It appears that Message Time

Plus is being used as another resource and strategy to teach a standard or objective.

The researcher observed Message Time Plus as students gathered on the carpet in the

back of the room where a portable white board stood. The students then read as the teacher wrote

the morning message. As she wrote the first word she said, "I am moving it over, what is that

called?" and some students called out "indenting." The teacher confirmed it as indenting. After

one sentence was written, she used a pointer to point to the words in the sentence as the whole

class read the sentence aloud. This same routine was repeated for every sentence. When the

paragraph was read, the teacher, using the pointer, directed the students through a read aloud of

the entire paragraph from the beginning. She then asked questions such as: "What genre did I

write today?" She then picked a student, whose name was on a tongue depressor in a coffee can,

to go to the White board and choose a word. The student chose the word "Aardvarks."

Message Time Plus continued as the participant asked the student what part of speech is

the word "Aardvarks." She encouraged him to look at the word wall, which was organized by

parts of speech rather than by letters in the alphabet. While the student was thinking, the rest of

the students used their personal-sized white boards to write which part of speech they thought the

word was. The student at the board identified the part of speech as a "noun." The participant then

used her personal-sized white board to make columns for "person," "place," "thing," and

"animal." First, students were encouraged to write examples on their White boards. Students were called on to provide examples of each before she transitioned into the literacy skill for the day.

The observer noticed instructional delivery by this teacher was much different than expectations presented in the professional development at the beginning of the academic year in regards to literacy instruction as well as what was outlined in the curriculum. A new literacy program was bought by using the district's Reading First grant. The new core reading program was not solely used because the participant received additional training in Message Time Plus as part of another grant. Curricular integration for this teacher meant eclectically utilizing instructional materials and delivery that produced positive learning experiences for her students.

Curriculum integration focused on instruction and "help[ed] build the prerequisite skills so that they [students] can get the target skills that are identified by the pacing schedule," stated one fourth-grade teacher. Some supplemental resources taught specific skills and other resources were implemented to create more meaningful learning. Dissonance was resolved through the use of supplemental resources. A conclusion drawn from the data was that behind closed doors teachers felt empowered to make curriculum decisions based on their beliefs of what was best for their students. One participant discussed how students' limited number of experiences resulted in difficulty for them to connect with the stories in the basal reader and other parts of the curriculum. The participant integrated the newspaper into classroom instruction. The use of newspapers in the classroom was perceived to help students make connections with local and global issues relevant to their lives.

The Readers and Writers Workshop

The Readers and Writers Workshop was another modified instructional strategy teachers integrated with the curriculum. The third-grade teacher began the year infusing the Readers and Writers Workshop into the classroom. About two weeks into the study, after observing the third-grade teacher, one of the fourth-grade teachers integrated The Readers and Writers Workshop into her classroom. The major components of the Readers and Writers Workshop were: shopping for books, mini-lessons, independent reading, conferencing, and sharing after reading. Conferencing, which was elaborated on in-depth by two participants as a means of connecting with students, will be explained in its own section.

A part of the Readers and Writers Workshop is picking books or "shopping for books" on a weekly basis. Every week, students are expected to choose three books from the classroom library to read during independent reading time and log the title, author, and number of pages in reading notebooks or reading folders depending on the class. At the end of the week, the students return the books. The students and teacher use these three books for independent reading, conferencing, and sharing or recommending to other students. The process of picking books is based on "Goldilocks," where students are to choose "just right books." The teacher assesses books for the students as "too hard," "too easy," or "just right." As a result, every student has books that can be read independently.

The fourth-grade teacher was observed reviewing with students the process of shopping for books. Each student was given a Zip-Loc bag with a color written on it. She explained that the color represented their level of reading; their goal was to move to bronze by the end of the year. Students were informed to only read books with the color indicated on their bag. A chart at the back of the room contained the current student colors and explained that they would be able to see their growth over the year. Shopping for books allowed for students to read at their own

level and strive reading on a higher level by reading books that they are interested in. Leveling again is promoted from a standards-based perspective that judges knowledge from a one-size-fits-all mentality.

The mini-lesson was important to the teachers while using the pacing schedule. One participant created a matrix indicating all the literacy skills and strategies to be taught in the six weeks as indicated by the pacing guide. She planned to use the matrix to construct mini-lessons. The Planning and Scheduling Timeline for fourth-grade identified the "teaching objectives: what will I teach" for six weeks in literacy. Listed are all of the reading, writing, and grammar objectives. The measurable outcomes are identified in the following from the Planning and Scheduling Timeline:

…by the end of this cycle, students are able to construct meaning and respond critically using the information from narrative elements. Students can summarize important information as they respond critically to text through group, team work, and performance tasks, assignments, and projects. They are able to decode unfamiliar words by applying various work learning strategies and forms as they continue to build a robust vocabulary.

Students are writing a well organized, descriptive narrative using figurative language. The mini-lessons were seen as necessary instructional strategies to help teach and reteach skills covered on the district's benchmark tests. Mini-lessons supported the ability to teach content and skills outlined in the Planning and Scheduling Timeline.

One participant was observed giving a mini-lesson on summarizing prior to releasing the students to read independently. The participant began the lesson saying, "When you are done reading a book you can write what happened in the story" as a way to define a summary. When the students were done reading, they were encouraged orally to summarize what they read in

their reading notebooks. Sentence starters were provided for the class. The participant wrote on the whiteboard, "The book was about…" or "I was surprised by..." During an informal conversation, the participant explained how students have to write once a week and turn in their readers' notebooks at the end of the week. The participant explained that the "writing is to challenge students to go deeper." The teacher believed writing helped "students see the link between reading and writing strategies." Mini-lessons, although aligned to objectives, were a means to either extend learning or fill in gaps where students were perceived to be lacking skills that inhibit students from progressing in the curriculum. A participants indicated that she may "start [teaching a skill or strategy] before its introduced in the core curriculum, or "may reinforce the strategies throughout the whole year."

Sharing after independent reading is articulated as a vital part of teaching and learning for all the teachers. Participants using The Readers and Writers Workshop have their students' share, as witnessed during many lessons, after the independent reading or writing time. After independent reading and one-on-one conferencing with the teacher, students shared what they learned in regards to the concept or skill taught. Students in the third-grade classroom were observed explaining the connections they made. Two students shared connections made as well as describing the book used. Three students, in a fourth-grade classroom, shared the main idea of the texts read that day. Many students articulated what they learned; however, if they struggled the teacher helped them using scaffolding through questions that allowed them to talk about their book. On a few occasions, the teacher read from students' reading notebook instead of the student sharing.

These aspects of The Readers and Writers Workshop describe how participants sought ways to either integrate non-core curriculum strategies or resources into the mandated

curriculum or found ways to adapt the curriculum. These strategies for instruction were described as ways to meet *students 'academic needs* based on individualized assessment of student learning as compared to the district- and state-established objectives and standards. Teachers still used the established state standards/objectives as well as the Planning and Scheduling Timeline to drive what should be learned.

Making Connections through Conferencing

Conferencing, as an aspect of The Readers and Writers Workshop, was actuated as a way to develop personal connections with students. In conferences, the teacher was "trying to talk with the students, to get to know them" and "what they can do," the third-grade teacher elaborated. Conferencing was used "basically to find out what they like to read, how they feel about reading, and how they are doing with the reading." Conferencing allowed participants to "literally pin-point that child's strengths and that child's weaknesses." The third-grade teacher explained:

> I really know if the child gets it or not. Number one, there is no distraction; it is me listening to them read. I can figure out if they have the decoding skills they need to read. What are they lacking? What can I do to help them the next time around? And I just think because I know that every child can learn; a lot of them learn faster one-on-one. That one-on-one attention again really pushes them further. That's why I do conferencing even if it is five or 10 minutes.

Teachers also got to "spend time with that child, and even for a short moment that child is the center of attention." Continuing with that notion the fourth-grade teacher said that is what "all the kids want at some point."

Conferencing, as mentioned by participants, was a way for teachers to know students in a personal way. It fostered a "relationship with the kids." The third-grade teacher discussed conferencing as an opportunity to "hear what's going on in their [students] lives" and "to listen to their [students] stories." If there is not enough time "to listen to the whole story" then students "can write about their story," the participant explained. This teacher "wants them to write about their lives, because that is what they know." In addition, participants would "bring in personal experiences, because it makes them understand that what they are learning isn't just in a book;" "It is in someone's life." According to the participants conferencing "sends a better message" about learning and nurtures students to "like and trust" the participants.

During conferences with students, participants were observed reinforcing concepts and skills by discussing terms and comprehension strategies. Observations of how teachers "used terminology" in the classroom validated one participant's stated intention for students to "see themselves as readers and writers." The participants explained how "using this [conferencing] frequently" helps students "believe that they can read and write." One fourth-grade teacher was observed working with a student during Readers Workshop. While sitting with the student, the participant noticed the student did not look at the illustrations while reading. The participant told the student to use the pictures because "it will help you remember what you read." Later while conferencing, the participant reiterated to the student about using pictures as often as possible because as "you move up to more advanced books there are less and less pictures." The teacher asked the student to read another page and noticed her looking at the pictures as discussed.

Examples of how participants described navigating around the core curriculum included planning and instruction that fit their teaching styles along with beliefs about what was best for the diverse learners in their classrooms. Curriculum integration and adaptation meant utilizing

more than the mandated curriculum while still teaching content and skills required for the benchmark testing. A teacher lamented how the goal, in her classroom, was to "try to help students acquire strategies that good readers use." This participant wanted "students to grasp every part of the story, moving beyond the planned curriculum." Another teacher reflected on The Readers and Writers Workshop while talking about the use of individual books rather than the basal, "it gives them [students] purpose, something to remember, something to look forward to reading, something to find out." No data, via interviews or observations, offered information about students being used to inform planning or instruction..

In conclusion, participants justified their decisions not to follow the curriculum verbatim. They indicated that "they follow it [the curriculum] as much as they can." The use of professional judgment was explicated as "you know what the kids need to know to survive," "to be able to go to the store with money," or to "measure something." Continuing participant said, "you have your own curriculum in your mind that you want your kids to know in order to survive outside." These statements signify the beliefs that learning experiences created for students are more than preparation for a test. Despite these statements several observations and interviews exposed a significant amount of test prep and objectives/standards-based instruction. Recognition of being "mindful of the everyday curriculum and not just want the state says your kids need to know" does not always transfer to instruction meeting the needs of LCD students.

Summary of Findings

Interviews and observations explored how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence curriculum decision making for LCD students. The data highlighted the intersection between teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and learning and curriculum prescribed for

them. Data was collected and three major themes emerged: influence of personal experiences, perceived needs of students, and influence of mandated curriculum.

Participants in this study developed beliefs based on their own personal experiences as learners and teachers. The data illuminated how mandated curriculum was an influential factor as to what and how teachers deliver instruction. *Students' academic needs* are based on content assessed in district benchmarks and state tests. Student needs were only recognized in relation to academics, content areas, or testing. Student social needs were not acknowledged by some participants or were not recognized as an influential contributor to student academic needs. Conflict or dissonance, on the other hand, occurs as participants attempt to address their students' needs, their beliefs about teaching and learning to be successful students and life-long learners, and curriculum mandates. The binding curriculum dictates what should be taught, when, and for how long. (See Table 4.1.)

Table 4.1

District Timeline First Six Week Cycle- Fourth-grade Example

Dates	Concept Skills	Basal Story Used
Sept. 4- 12	None listed	None- Daily read alouds
Sept. 15-19	Literary elements Context clues Making inferences Drawing conclusions	The Gardner
Sept. 22-26	Literary elements Figurative language and mood Phonics,syllabication,word analysis	Donavan's Word Jar
Sept. 29-Oct. 10	Literary elements Making predictions Phonics to decode	My Name is Maria Isabel
Oct. 14-17	Summarize Literary elements	Lou Gehrig
Oct. 20-24	None listed	None- Theme review

District-mandated curriculum guided instruction in the school investigated for this study. Participants reflected expressed that the mandated curriculum "does not always have what we need," "needs more open ended writing," and has "no flow with it." Deficiencies described included, "missing great strategies; inferring, questioning and visualization." Ultimately, "you as a teacher, a professional, know what's best for you students, your class and what works." Despite the positives and challenges of the core curriculum, one participant's encompassed the idea of this theme by saying, "you don't want to have them leave your room and not feel you've done the best possible job you could just because the curriculum says do this. You need to give them what they need to be lifelong learners."

Classroom instruction was influenced by participants' beliefs about teaching and learning, addressing *student academic needs*, and district and state tests used to evaluate instruction and learning at the school. Students were benchmarked every six weeks as means to monitor accountability rather than inform instruction as demonstrated by the lack of flexibility for revisiting past objectives and standards in the Planning and Scheduling Timeline. As a result, instruction of curriculum often occurred as test-prep throughout the day. Mandated curriculum created a baseline from which teachers' perceived students as being deficient or not based on ability to perform certain skills. Communities, cultures, and languages of students were not identified in regard to strengths or prior knowledge.

The participants discussed their perceived role in addressing their students' educational . Student needs were seen as a condition of living in poverty or misfortune where they lacked support and resources to be successful at school, highlighting the mismatch between social and academic needs of students. Participants' comments on the social needs of their students focused on hindrances of learning because of: lack of parental support, families' native language, low

socio-economic status, and the lack of experiences students had connected to the mandated curriculum. These perceived deficiencies were exacerbated by expectations imbedded into curriculum which was based on state standards and objectives. Deficiencies were identified as skills students were unable to masters mandated by the curriculum. For example participants described how many of the students stopped learning their native language to learn the language of instruction, English. Participants also discussed how students are unable to connect to the curriculum content because of experiences or lack of experiences in students' community. Participants, as a result, used curriculum adaptation and integration as a means to address and remedy these deficiencies. Their philosophies about teaching and learning are no longer grounded in educational experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning, but are impacted by mandated curriculum as well.

Upon analysis of the data a conceptual framework arose. Concepts that emerged from the data included: teacher dissonance in planning for instruction, individualized pedagogy, and redefined expectations for teaching and learning. Stated and observed teacher beliefs in conjunction with the district-mandated pacing schedule according to the data created dissonance. Teacher dissonance emerged as participants discussed their beliefs about teaching and learning, addressing students' needs, and the role of the pacing schedule as mandated curriculum. Teachers' dissonance impact how they make curricular changes through individualized pedagogical approaches. The two cognitions of beliefs and mandated curriculum juxtaposed against each other create a sense of pressure for teachers that they respond to through curricular changes and pedagogical adaptations.

These pedagogical approaches were an attempt to resolve dissonance through curriculum adaptation and/or curriculum integration. Teachers engaged in pedagogical decision making

through either planned or spontaneous instructional practices. Resolution of the dissonance occurs when teachers evaluate their beliefs, the mandated curriculum, and what students will learn to make informed decisions regarding their students. After teachers reflected on what they felt was a disconnect with the mandated curriculum and what they did in the classroom, two things transprired: (a) curriculum adaptation and (b) curriculum integration. The data and the factors that impact dissonance forced teachers to redefine their expectations of teaching and learning based on their experiences and constructions of what teaching and learning, aligning with the expectations and assumptions of district-mandated pacing schedule.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Chapter five revisits the purpose of this study, which was: (1) to explore the relationship

between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in linguistically and culturally diverse

(LCD) classrooms, (2) to explore how teachers' beliefs influence curriculum decision making,

(3) to ascertain ways teachers articulate the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students

and (4) to discover how teachers adapt curriculum to meet the needs of their LCD students

within the current system of standards based reform. This case study explored how three

elementary school teachers' beliefs influenced curriculum planning and instruction for LCD

students. Data were gathered to answer the research question: "How do teachers' beliefs about

teaching and learning influence curriculum decision making for linguistically and culturally

diverse students?"

During the study many themes and sub-themes emerged that exemplified current trends

in culturally relevant pedagogy and standards based education. The three major themes are: (1)

influence of personal experiences, (2) percieved needs of students, and (3) influence of

mandated curriculum. Seven sub-themes also emerged in making sense of the data. The

following sub-themes were of importance: (1) stated beliefs about teaching and learning, (2)

beliefs and the classroom environment, (3) needs related to the community, (4) needs related to

instruction, (5) testing in the curriculum, (6) curriculum adaptation, and (7) curriculum

integration.

The findings from the data were interpreted within the context of themes. The themes

lead to implications about teaching and learning for LCD students in relation to current theories,

practices, and philosophies. Within this chapter understandings of how the themes interact with

one another is explored. Embedded within and between the themes are relationships that emerged out of the data to support the themes. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning along with curricula influence curriculum decision making in the LCD learning environment, as encapsulated in the following concepts: (1) dissonance in beliefs about student needs and mandated curriculum occurs in planning for instruction, (2) the development of individualized pedagogy, and (3) re-defined expectations for teaching and learning, when analyzing the connections among themes.
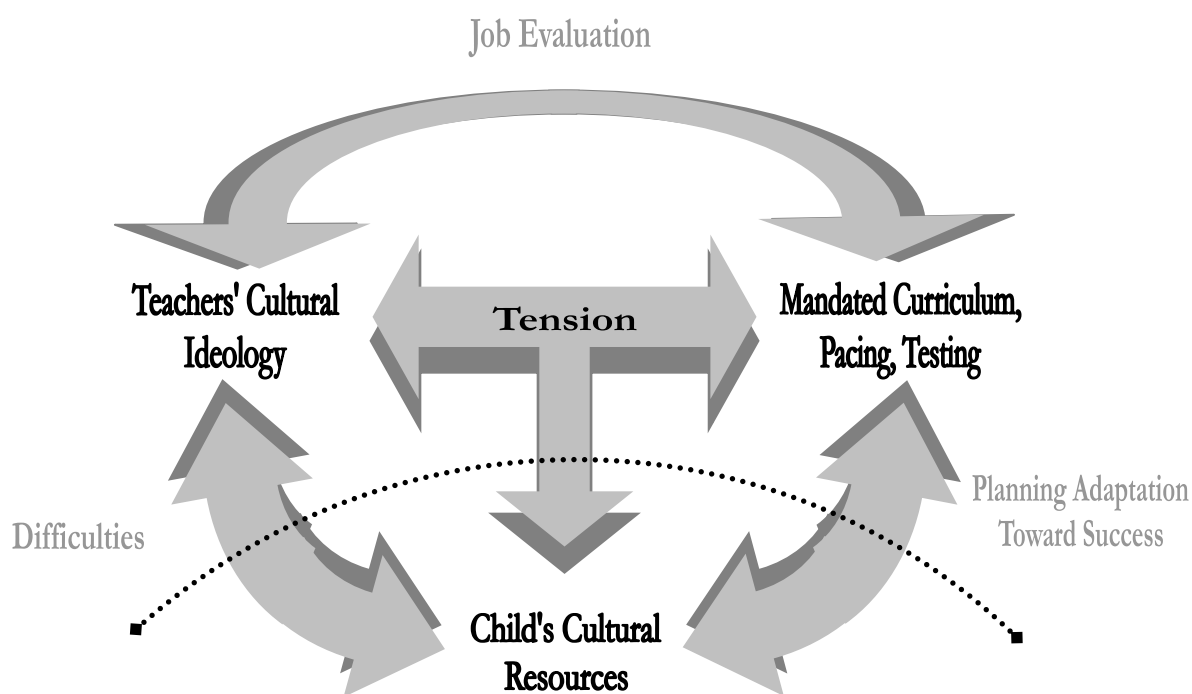
Figure 5.1 Teachers Dissonance With Curriculum Planning for LCD Students

Dissonance

The idea of participant dissonance emerged from discussions about beliefs and the role of the pacing schedule and the mandated curriculum. Dissonance, in this study, is defined as the incongruity or discord between teachers' beliefs about: teaching and learning, the expectations to utilize the mandated curriculum, and perceptions about student deficiencies. The discord expressed by the data reinforces the claims of Henkin and Holliman (2009) of how the power of the mandated curriculum decreases teachers' ability to make professional and autonomous decisions in their classrooms. Teacher dissonance occurs when cultural ideologies are at odds with the pacing guide and mandated curriculum, and students' cultural resources. Secondary to this is the value of the mandated curriculum, which is directly related to state and local assessments, on student achievement and as a means of job evaluation, yet there's a need to adapt to assure student success. In conjunction with teachers' cultural ideologies tend to leave student's cultural resources or funds of knowledge neglected. (Figure 5.1)

The district studied implemented a document called the Planning and Scheduling Timeline; the teachers refer to it as the pacing schedule, or pacing guide. The Planning and Scheduling Timeline as it relates to literacy is aligned to the core curriculum the whole district uses. State standards lead instruction in the content areas as well as materials to be used which are outlined in the pacing guide. The district's six week benchmark testing schedule is also directly linked to the pacing schedule in regards to concepts taught. This section will elaborate how dissonance is related to mandated curriculum, teacher-curriculum relationships, teachers stated beliefs about teaching and learning, testing, and de-professionalization of educators.

Mandated Curriculum

The findings from this case study support Charlesworth et al.'s (1993) research on teachers' beliefs not aligning with their practices. Even greater disparity between beliefs and practice occurs when the theories and practices espoused by the mandated curriculum contradict teachers' philosophies about teaching and learning. As a result, the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning interwoven with a mandated curriculum cause pedagogical dissonance.

The participants described the curriculum used in their classroom as a "mandated curriculum based on the state standards." While in some respects this research supported the many studies offering evidence that classroom instructional practices and curriculum design implemented by teachers are governed by their beliefs (Fang, 1996; Taylor et al., 2001, Waters-Adams, 2006), it also demonstrated the consequences when teachers are not part of the curriculum decision making process and their beliefs are not valued. Consequences are evident when participants state "student needs are not taken into account" or that "the pacing schedule does not always fit every student or every classroom."

The research also reinforces Deemer's (2004) notions of how the curriculum has significant implications on the ways teachers instruct and how learners and learning experiences are developed; in turn, learning environments are structured around the beliefs of the curriculum and curriculum designers, not teachers or students (Deemer, 2004). The curriculum assumes all students should be at the same level, similar to what Darder and Torres (2004) found. However, students were categorized by levels by participants, benchmarks, and state assessments. Although the curriculum assumes students are functioning at the same level, the differentiation of levels is exacerbated by assessments.

The power of mandated curriculum posed against individual belief systems creates dissonance in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The viewpoints participants expressed towards the curriculum were mixed because they saw the value and role of the curriculum. For instance, one participant indicated "that the pacing schedule is great because students move around the district" and because everyone is doing the same thing at the same time the participant knows what students should come into the class knowing. Expectations and assumptions of the mandated curriculum influenced participants' beliefs about teaching and learning. Yet, participants were also troubled and frustrated by the pacing guide because teachers felt that some students could not keep up. While all teachers stated that they follow the mandated curriculum, many described deficiencies in the curriculum addressed through specific beliefs about daily instruction. Less dissonance occured when particpants engaged in adapting and integrating curriculum rather than challenging the curriculum. Challenging the curriculum seemed to create greater dissonance, or fear.

Dissonance also occurs, as demonstrated in the contrast between what teachers described as the needs of their students and how and what they taught them. Part of the dissonance indicates a misconception of *students' academic needs* in the context of standards, objectives and testing. Integration and adaptation solely concentrated on skill-based approaches to teaching negates culture, experiences, and student perspectives.

Teacher-Curriculum Relationships

The teacher-curriculum relationship is reflected in the planning and enactment of the curriculum, which is shaped by teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and how they identify the academic needs of their students. The materials teachers are required to use align directly to the planning and pacing timetable. Utilizing mandated curriculum and inflexible

timelines in the classroom supports Darder and Torres'(2004) ideas of how it "fails to consider the wealth of research and literature on teaching and learning that informs its execution" (p. 84).

Participants explained that the curriculum did not leave room for creativity or for prerequisite concepts to be taught. While the document informs teachers as to what concepts and skills to teach, it also "fails to acknowledge the creative potential of educators to grapple effectively with the multiplicity of contexts they find in their classrooms and to shape environments according to the lived experiences and actual educational needs of their students" (Darder et al., 1997,p. 332). Teachers adapted the curriculum to address the standards, leaving tests to be the source of accountability.

The pacing timetable dictates when specific concepts and skills have to be taught while making assumptions as to how certain concepts will be taught in order to prepare for the district and state assessments. A participant explicated "the district means well by the curriculum, but I think it [the curriculum] would be great it allowed for more creativity."As a result, this case study aligns with how Henkin and Holliman (2009) discuss teachers' desire for innovation and diversity of thought being crushed because of the pressure to follow the Timeline, teach the content or skill for that week, or prepare for the test.

Stated Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Participant reflection on beliefs about teaching and learning for their student populations connected personal experiences as a salient influence on perceptions about what instructional delivery looks like in their classrooms. Data from this research confirms Fang (1996), who stated that "researchers have noted that the complexities of classroom life can constrain teachers' abilities to attend to their beliefs and provide instruction which aligns with their theoretical beliefs" (Fang, p. 53). The combination of the beliefs of participants and the role

mandated curriculum plays, including its value in classrooms, schools, and districts, creates a tension between what teachers believe they should be doing and how they actually instruct students. It also demonstrates Dewey's (1916/1938) belief that "all the matters of which we have not sure knowledge and yet which are sufficiently confident to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true, as knowledge, but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future."

Through personal experiences participants were able to articulate their beliefs and describe their instructional practices. Conclusions drawn, from this study confirms Fang's (1996) assertions of inconsistencies between teachers' self-reported beliefs and classroom practice. The lived experiences of the teachers were connected to teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the needs of students. For example, one participant reflected on the rigidity of her own educational experience and how that has transferred to her classroom protocol and procedures. The inference she makes is her students need rigidity to be successful. Past schools, students, and classes influenced and impacted teachers' current beliefs about teaching and learning as well as how they described and defined the needs of their students.

The findings from this case study support Charlesworth et al.'s (1993) research on the lack of alighnment between teachers' beliefs and their practices. Even greater disparity between beliefs and practice occurs when the theories and practices espoused by the mandated curriculum contradict teachers' philosophies about teaching and learning. As a result, the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning interwoven with mandated curriculum causes pedagogical dissonance. So dissonance is not caused from standards/mandated curriculum, but how well they fit into teachers' schemata about teaching and learning. Teachers who seem to recognize cultural relevance seem to have far great

dissonance between beliefs' about teaching and learning, mandated curriculum supporting objectives, and addressing their LCD students' needs.

Testing

Despite the good intentions of standards-based reform, it has generated inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices due to the pressure of high stakes testing and teachers' exclusion from curricular decision making. The contentious part of the planning and pacing Timeline is that teachers are expected to deliver instruction leading to high achievement on the state test. As one participant elaborated, "everything has to be linked to the test." Data such as this reinforces Silvermail's (1996) evidence that standardized testing promotes a narrowed curriculum.

The pacing schedule document coordinates with the state standards and assessments driving the state test. The pacing schedule set by the district "covers everything that they are going to test the children on." Participants validate research (e.g., Baker & Stites, 1990; Silvermail, 1996) as evidenced by instruction consisting of "a lot of test prep with the kids." Data support assertions made by Darder and Torres (2004) that teaching students in this manner removes students from learning as an intellectual activity.

Teaching as a Profession vs. Teaching as a Technical Skill

Teacher professionalism is stifled by the district's pacing guide, which disregards students and classrooms. All participants stated that enabling students to grasp concepts and skills was more important than moving through the pacing schedule. These beliefs about personal autonomy challenge external and political forces that could be described in line with what Darder and Torres (2004) called "de-professionalizing" or Shannon (2007) identified as "de-skilling" teachers.

One way teachers are de-professionalized and de-skilled is through exporting pedagogical practices without teachers having the autonomy to adapt and reinvent them (Friere, 2005). Few or no choices in materials and curricula are part of this deskilling and de-professionalization. Teachers in this study described individually modifying the the pacing schedule in line with personal theories and practices used to meet the needs of their LCD students.

Participants viewed themselves as professionals who assessed their students academically formally and informally. This belief coincides with Shevelson's (1983) claims that teachers must rely on their own knowledge and experience to determine the appropriate instructional strategy and curriculum. Yet, they are bound by a mandated curriculum, which ultimately influences their perceptions and pedagogical decisions for what is best for their students.

Summary

Teachers experience dissonance when they are required to use mandated curricula, aligned to pacing schedules, that are perceived to inadequately meet the academic needs of students. The pacing schedules were closely followed by all participants despite the realization that many students lacked the content skills taught. In line with Tomlinson's (2000) research, the Planning and Scheduling Timeline has led to teachers feeling pressure to cover standards/objectives and prepare students for local and state tests as instruction. The teachers described their unhappy marriage to the curriculum and materials, but implemented it just the same. Instead of the participants explicitly protesting the curriculum to school and district administration, they were observed adapting curricula and utilizing instructional practices that connected with the needs and background of their students.

Resolution through Individualized Pedagogy

In resolving dissonance between teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and the mandated or planned curriculum, the participants individualized and adapted instructional pedagogy. Curriculum integration and curriculum adaptation are conceptually individualized pedagogical approaches to address teachers' perceptions of inadequate curriculum choices. The implemented curriculum is how teachers interpret curriculum and "maximize the value of their lessons in light of the dynamics of their classroom" (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 185). Supporting Clandinin's (1986) work, participants sought ways to either integrate other strategies, viewed as "best practices," or resources into the mandated curriculum or adapted the curriculum. They used resources and programs that fit their beliefs about teaching and learning along with the intention of addressing the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms.

After teachers reflected on the mandated curriculum and pedagogical practice, two things happened: (a) curriculum adaptation and/or (b) curriculum integration. Curriculum integration and adaptation were strategies teachers employed to create equilibrium between teaching the content and skills of the mandated curriculum required for the six week assessment and the learning needs of the LCD students. This section synthesizes the data along with relevant literature as it pertains to the findings focusing specifically on curriculum adaptation and integration using supplemental resources and technology, native language versus language of instruction, and the Readers/Writers Workshop.

Curriculum Adaptation and Integration Beyond the Mandated Curriculum

The mandated curriculum organizes objectives and standards of grade level instruction. Incongruence occurs when the mandated curriculum perpetuates students having prerequisite skills necessary to introduce new skills. Not only is there incongruence about prerequisite skills

but also a delinquency within the mandated curriculum to revisit skills taught previously. The mandated curriculum perpetuates maximum coverage of material, breadth, over mastery, depth (Tomlinson, 2002). Teachers liked the parts of the Planning and Scheduling Timeline that fit into their constructed beliefs about teaching, learning, and instructional practices. Dissonance came when they disagreed with the mandated skills within the Planning and Scheduling Timeline.

Teachers found ways to adapt and supplement the curriculum to balance the perceived deficiencies of curriculum. Some strategies for modifying the curriculum included clarifications/connections of concepts or adjusting the pacing schedule, completely or in part, for students. The idea of "going deeper" was echoed by all participants, especially when students needed more time to learn the skills outlined to be learned during a specified period of time. Teachers used curriculum adaptation and integration to make curriculum decisions based on their beliefs about creativity and best practices learned throughout their experience as described by Nieto (2002).

Participants adapted curricula rather than abandoning what they believed was good teaching. As a result, teachers who seemed to recognize cultural relevance appeared to have far greater dissonance between beliefs about teaching and learning and mandated curriculum supporting objectives, and addressing their LCD students' needs. The participants believed they continued to use "good teaching and learning" by using supplemental programs or curricula to focus on skills and re-teaching. Many opportunities were created for students to learn skills taught through additional teaching. Small groups and independent instruction were two strategies discussed and observed to address students' needs.

Connected with Ladson-Billings' (2006) description of curricula having set ideologies that are not neutral, application of participants' constructs about teaching and learning how and

what should be adapted and integrated. Contrary to many researchers (e.t.Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Darder, 1991) ideas cutlurally relevenat pedagogy supporting students' lived experiences, participants viewed *students'academic needs* as judged against performing skills from objectives. If researchers are correct then seemingly there will always be a perception of deficiency for LCD students if judged against standards and objectives from the dominant culture.

Supplemental Resources and Technology

Unlike curriculum adaptation, curriculum integration combines supplemental resources with the existing curriculum to "fill the gaps" or "meet student needs" where the core curriculum was perceived to fail to do so. Curriculum integration, as observed and explained by participants, "help[s] build the prerequisite skills so that they [students] can get the target skills that are identified by the pacing schedule," as stated by a participant during an interview. All of the participants make use of supplemental resources, like a Smart Board, to assist in instructional delivery. The particpants drew on their past experiences, likes and dislikes to make not only teaching choices, but curriculum choices as well (Shavelson, 1983).

Native Language vs. Language of Instruction

For these students, language plays a significant role in cultural identity and many students' understanding of prior knowledge (Gay, 2000). Spanish is the language many students spoke at home and in the community; however, English is the language of instruction. Teachers believed integrating students' linguistic abilities to build on to the first language as confirmed by Sleeter (1997) manifested by "clarifications" or "connections" with prior knowledge made learning meaningful. The participants believed the use of students' home or family language sustained and supported academic achievement (Nieto, 2002).

One participant's infusion of Spanish vocabulary to clarify content connects with Krashen's (2000) idea of knowledge development of English and academic success within the first language to make the acquisition of the second language more comprehensible. The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth (2006) along with Cummins and Mairamontes (2005) suggested that a well-developed first language is a good predictor of future English language proficiency. Krashen's theory of language development focuses on the positive effects of background knowledge on learning and language acquisition. Based on this theory, students' home language should be used as a medium of instruction.

The findings from this study would suggest that while most of the teachers acknowledged students' background, culture, and language are important, little observed evidence validated their beliefs. Too many of the connections made through one or two words in Spanish are explained by Nieto (2002), who said that, "Knowledge of another culture does not mean to be able to repeat one or two words in a student's language, nor is it to celebrate in activity or sing a song related to their culture. Participants use of Spanish and background knowledge were trivialized rather than truly utilized and appreciated through planning and learning experiences. For example, Spanish was observed being used as a means to give simple directions or to make connections in a lesson to stress the differences between Spanish and English. "El perro azul" was used during a grammar lesson to demonstrate the placement of the adjective versus in English the adjective modifies the noun. Insertions of language like these, although connecting to the lesson, do not validate the language of students' homes and communities. Rather, they serve to trivialize the use of a native language when there is a deficiency.

The Readers and Writers Workshop

Literacy for two teachers resembling The Readers and Writers Workshop, using the core curriculum and the basal reader, is an example of how participants integrated the curriculum. This curriculum choice supports Santman's (2002) idea that helping kids learn to read should not be guided by a test. Readers Workshop builds from Krashen's (1993) work that sustained silent reading and self-selected reading yield better results on comprehension tests than whole and small group instruction. The major components of The Readers and Writers Workshop are shopping for books, mini-lessons, independently reading, conferencing, and sharing.

Readers/Writers Workshop goes beyond the teaching of reading skills. Connected with participants instructing reading through meaningful learning, Kohn (2000) writes how teaching reading skills have little to do with the qualities of good reading or proficient readers. Participants' beliefs about literacy instruction relate to Santman's (2002) explanation that a Readers/Writers Workshop provides an opportunity for students to be autonomous readers, to listen to personal readings, and to interact through discussion in order to make sense of readings. Readers/Writers Workshop also relies on research saying that when kids read a lot they become stronger readers and exhibit a more mature writing style (Krashen, 1997, 1993).

One of the main goals of The Readers and Writers Workshop is to get students reading regardless of reading level or decoding skills. Atwell (1987) identified four criteria that need to be considered for organizing an effective reading program. The criteria are: (1) students should be given choices in how they spend their time, (2) activities need to promote the importance of reading as the primary activity integrated with writing, listening, and speaking, (3) the teacher needs to mode the importance of reading by example, and (4) there should be opportunities to used and share reading strategies through writing, speaking, and assessment of progress. The participants implemented The Readers and Writers Workshop in the way Atwell described.

Shopping for Books

An aspect of The Readers and Writers Workshop is picking books or "shopping for books." Every week, students are expected to choose three books from the classroom library that they intend to read and log into reading notebooks or reading folders depending on the class. At the end of the week, the students return the books. As Atwell (1987) explained, shopping for books allows students, with training from the teacher, to self-select books at their reading level. Reading books that are good fits for students' interests, reading ability, and exposure to genres develops students to become life-long, independent readers. The participants fully integrated this aspect of Readers Workshop meaning; basals were not used as the texts students read with on a daily basis. The mandated curriculum was only used as a means to identify the literacy skills and concepts to be taught.

Mini-Lessons

Teachers incorporated mini-lessons to adjust for students' lack of prior knowledge with a skill or concept presented in the district's pacing schedule. The mini-lesson also provided an opportunity for the teacher to model thinking about the text, good reading, and the reading strategies being introduced. Prerequisite skills were taught in a short time using mini-lessons so that regular lessons could address the skill identified in the pacing schedule.

Mini-lessons, aligned to the objectives, combined with The Readers and Writers Workshop allowed for instruction as a means to either extend learning or fill in gaps beyond the set objectives. For instance, if the third-grade curriculum indicated that predictions were to be taught for a week, then making predictions is a mini-lesson taught and reinforced throughout the week. Atwell (1987) suggested mini-lessons address one of three aspects: (1) procedural aspects like how to give a book talk or share after reading, (2) literary elements such as genres and

character development, and (3) strategy and skill such as predicting, making connections. After the mini-lesson students read their books independently.

Reading Independently and Writing

During or after reading independently, students write about what they have read. Reading independently, believed to develop and sustain stamina for reading, is beneficial not only for literacy testing, but also represents what good readers do (Calkins, 2001). Writing, as Calkins (2001) explained, helps students see the link between reading and writing strategies. While students were reading independently or responding to what they had read, the teacher goes around the room to conference one-on-one with students.

Writing about what students read is an integral part of The Readers and Writers Workshop. The researcher noted that many students stopped to write during independent reading time. If there was not enough time during a teacher-student conference to listen to the student's whole story, participants urged students to write about the story. Depending on the focus skill, students were encouraged to stop and write either in their reading notebooks or on Post-It notes. Students wrote main ideas, predictions, connections, or whatever the target skill was in reading notebooks. These uses of reading notebooks mimic Garcia's (1994) emphasis on using reading notebooks as a form of authentic assessment or as a means to monitor student comprehension of text.

Conferencing

Participants' conferencing allowed for the development of personal connections. In conferences, teachers talked with students in order to find out what they liked to read, how they feel about reading, and how they are doing with chosen books. Conferencing allows the participants "to listen to their stories" and get a glimpse into what's going on in their life.

Through conferencing participants accurately assessed individual strengths and weaknesses for each student. Both Atwell (1987) and Garcia (1994) stated that conferencing puts students at the center of learning. Individual students met with teachers to discuss reading goals, were assessed in reading, and received reading instruction based on individual needs. Observations and interviews corroborated how two participants incorporated conferencing as described by Atwell (1987) and Garcia (1994).

Participants believed making personal connections was an important pedagogical practice to meet the needs of students. Conferencing established a dialogue for students to know participants in a personal way. In line with Brisk's and Harrington's (2007) suggestions, participants' and students' learning relationship were fostered by the sharing of personal experiences. The teachers described sharing experiences as a pedagogy that helped students understand that learning isn't just about a book but is a part of life.

Participants believed conferencing with individual students created a positive interaction with students and developed a trust between them. However, there was a mismatch between conferencing as a pedagogical practice related to literacy, as an isolated event, or as a culturally relevant practice. Although conferencing enabled the building of teacher-student relationships, it was not utilized as a culturally relevant practice to incorporate students' interests, homes, and lives into curriculum planning and instruction (Darder, 1991). There was no evidence of this being infused or embedded during instruction.

Sharing

Sharing after conferencing was believed important for learning and also addressed the academic needs of students. Through observations and interviews it was apparent that sharing after the independent reading or writing time was more about content/process learning than

about better understanding how to teach the LCD children in their classroom. Sharing was utilized as a means for students to understand what teachers wanted them to learn rather than Freire's (1970) idea about sharing knowledge, where teachers learn from students.

Summary

Particpants described a perceived responsibility to help all children. Individualized pedagogical approaches demonstrated how student learning was addressed differently by participants. Participants reflected on ways they attempted to resolve the pressure of educational mandates and meet *students'academic needs*. Students' perceived needs were addressed through curriculum integration and curriculum adaption. Particpants reflections on curriculum and the planning process mostly focused on displeasure with the narrow scope of the curriculum, high stakes testing, and lack of room for creativity.

<div align="center">*Redefined Expectations of Teaching and Learning*</div>

Observations and interviews of participants demonstrated dissonance between their beliefs about: teaching and learning, the needs of students, and the role of the mandated curriculum on curriculum planning. *Students' academic needs* were established on the premise that objectives and skills in the mandated curriculum are the correct goals for learning rather than knowledge and skills incorporated from local (neighborhood, city, etc.), school, and/or individual culture, experience, and values. Students' lives and cultures that involved an environment of poverty were perceived to result in a lack of prior knowledge or insufficient prerequisite skills. These perceived deficiencies were exacerbated by the pressure of keeping up with the pacing schedule, despite students needing more time to master the objectives.

Perceived deficiencies exposed by the data included: (1) language, (2) student issues in content areas, (3) lack of background knowledge due to non-legitimized experiences. Language

refers to native language versus the language of instruction. In this study the language of instruction was English; however, for many students their native language is Spanish. This is the language spoken at home and in the community. Participants stated that students "stopped learning their first language" and are struggling to learn a new language. Participants identified students as lacking proficiency in both languages, contributing to students struggling to learn in content areas like literacy. As a result, participants used curriculum adaptation and integration to address and remedy perceived deficiencies.

Philosophically, teachers who stated that "I believe every student can learn" appear to hold genuine beliefs as described by Yero (2002) and Van den Berg (2002), but also may hold a bias as Ladson-Billings (2006) discussed. This study illuminated how LCD students in particular were viewed, as Davis (2006) elaborated, in regard to deficiencies based on beliefs about poverty, academic coursework, test bias, and teacher expectations. If teachers truly valued students' experiences and communities they would understand how to "recognize, honor and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies" as described by Gay (2000) into the teaching and learning environment (p. 1). Based on participants' descriptions, students' experiences and cultures were perceived as deficiencies. Pedagogical approaches, chosen by participants because of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and mandated curriculum, were justified their use through what Gay (2000) called a "deficit orientation," where focus is placed on what LCD and other "at risk" students "don't have and can't do" (p. 12).

Issues with the Core Curriculum

Despite participants expressed frustration and sense of pressure to overemphasize behavior/skills based instruction, a certain amount of "buy in" of the mandated curriculum and testing was evident. This notion is most obvious in descriptions of *students' academic needs* as

what was lacking academically, often times as a result of the influence of *social needs* not being adequately being met. Participants described students as needing "basic concepts" and "intense remediation" or having "low comprehension levels" Teachers' statements and observed actions about modifying and supplementing curriculum while planning centered around improving students' deficiencies. Participants' articulation of a deficiency model occurred while describing students' reading abilities as "beginners, emergent, or pre-emergent." Some of the students were described as "lacking the writing and reading skills in both languages [English and Spanish]."

These sentiments describe teachers' beliefs about students' academic ability as impediments to success in classrooms and on tests. In further analysis, a more significant belief of the participants was that students' lack of success was their own fault rather than related to inappropriate or unmeaningful learning experiences based on standards and objectives that consistently leave marginalized students in Gay's (2000) "deficit orientation" (p. 12). Understanding the relationship of testing and mandated curriculum on teachers' beliefs needs further study, but this research shows the impact assumptions made using cultural ideologies of dominant discourses leave LCD and marginalized students labeled as underperforming or "at-risk." As a result, the academic needs of LCD students are not being met when juxtaposed to their social needs which have a significant influence.

The question then is this: is there a contradiction between "slowing the curriculum down" and maintaining high expectations for learners, where environments are created so that "every child can learn"? As Gay (2000) stated, "if teachers expect students to be high or low achievers, they will act in ways that cause this to happen" (p. 57). The intent behind benchmarking and state testing is having accountability for high expectations and effective teaching. But

participants described the results of accountability as pressure to stick with a "one-size-fits-all" approach or emphasizing whole group and small group, direct instruction.

Lack of Background Knowledge Due to Non-Legitimized Experiences

Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the district-mandated pacing schedule directly impacted perceptions of *students' academic needs*. The data illuminates how much teachers' articulation of students' needs involves describing deficiencies weighed against prerequisite skills and conceptual understanding. The pacing schedule was the primary source for judging prior knowledge and understanding. Embedded within teachers using pacing schedules to judge student learning is the belief that the pacing schedule represents what students should be learning.

Classrooms magnify and innately evaluate the differences between background experiences valued by LCD students and those valued by society (Au, 1993). Participants' beliefs about students' experiences confirmed findings from studies by Au (1993) that identified some non-legitimized experiences as: living in a single-parent home, not having access to adequate health care, having responsibility for sibling because of a parent or guardians employment restriction, or being a migrant farm worker. Teachers invalidate students' experiences when leaving them out of concepts learned in the classroom. The researcher concluded that not only are students' lived experiences invalidated by some interactions with teachers, but fundamentally the curriculum lacks meaning for students.

Non-legitimized experiences epitomize the discontinuity between the learner's culture and the culture reflected in the curriculum, instructional materials, and interactions within schools. Participants' perceived the community negatively when making statements such as, "there is a need for more parental involvement, more parental participation in the students' lives

not just their education. If there was more involvement in their lives it would make [the teachers'] jobs a lot easier," "students live in homes with aunts, uncles, and cousins," and "that there are multiple children in the house," as well as "illegal activity" going on either in the home or outside of the home. Although some of these statements may be accurate for certain children, they illuminate generalizations teachers make towards students' families, communities, and culture and regard them as limiting students' ability to learn in classrooms. Gay (2000) described culturally relevant pedagogy as challenging the pretense of blaming students and families with regards to multiple variables playing a role in students being perceived as deficient.

Au (1993) asserted that teachers, the participants in this case, should operate from the stance that each student has a wealth of knowledge that is different and valuable. This philosophy creates successful learning communities for all students. Most participants lacked Au's (1993) and Freire's (1970/ 2003) perspective, as students' behaviors and lack of prerequisite skills were seen as limitations to learning. According to researchers (i.e., Au, 1993; Freire, 1970/ 2003; Gay, 2000), teachers need to attain knowledge about the cultures, cultural values, learning styles, contributions, and achievements of the students represented in their classrooms.

What Does All This Mean When Working With LCD Students?

In this study, culturally relevant practices were not consciously implemented within lesson planning and instructional delivery. When culturally relevant practices were observed in instructional practices, later interviews informed that teachers did not intentionally utilize culturally relevant or culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Culturally relevant teaching is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Lasdon-Billings, 1994, p. 18). Two

factors of why participants were not using these instructional practices relate to Samway and McKeon's (2007) notions about teachers' (1) lack of training on how to meet the needs of LCD students or (2) frustration due to time spent in finding ways to change or adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their students.

For example, neither The Readers and Writers Workshop instructional pedagogy nor teaching students to shop for books was implemented as a way to connect to students' linguistic or cultural experiences as Darder (1991) suggested. Students appeared uninterested in the books available in the classroom, making one question the book's ability to connect with their lives. Participants wanted students to write personal stories about their lives and experiences, but lacked the training to know how to scaffold students' experiences with writing into daily planning and classroom instruction. Along with Au's (1993) evidence that LCD students depend on their relationships with teachers and peers, conferencing was a way to create, build, and sustain positive relationships in the learning environment. Yet, teachers never elaborated on or validated conferences, or what they learned from and about students as a means of changing their teaching strategies for greater cultural inclusiveness and engagement.

While teachers instruct the best as they know how, Gay (2000) emphasized the need for academic excellence. Adjusting learning goals and instructional delivery to address individual needs can potentially lead to a change in expectations. Even if teachers could effectively modify personal pedagogy to meet the needs of individual students while keeping high expectations, the culture of schools (i.e., curriculum, performance appraisal, teacher culture) does not support meeting the needs of all students. Instructional reforms grounded in positive beliefs about the cultural heritages and academic potential of these students are necessary according to Gay (2000). While these participants were reflective enough to know they were working with LCD

students, their practices suggested that cultural learning needed to have a greater impact in order to prevent setting up systems of "learned helplessness" or "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Quality instruction for LCD students, where instruction is continually adjusted to address the needs of the students is supported by Nieto and Bode's (2007) call for a standards-conscious curriculum. A standards-conscious curriculum is where standards are a tool for promoting a rigorous, demanding, and inspiring curriculum that can be creatively designed around the needs for diverse student populations. Teachers must present opportunities for students to construct knowledge and reinvent their world through a curriculum providing activities, texts, and a variety of learning experiences. Educators must be willing to transform curriculum and instructional pedagogy to engage students and connect learning to the real world. Freire and Macedo (1987) stated that: "What we do in the classroom is not an isolated moment separate from the 'real world.' It is entirely connected to the real world" (p. 25).

Connections to the real world provide authentic learning experiences that validate individual people, who they are, what they bring to the classroom, culturally and linguistically, which can be used to stimulate student engagement and academic success. Teachers are then able to draw on the linguistic abilities of students, their home experiences, and their roles at home and at school to create lessons aligning to the standards, holding students to high expectations, and engaging them in learning experiences that challenge students to question social constructs as well as find themselves represented in the curriculum.

Conclusions

Although the results of this case study may not be generalizable to all educational contexts, findings from this qualitative research expand the understanding of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in developing personal instructional pedagogy. In this era of NCLB and heightened accountability along with an increase in linguistic and cultural diversity in schools, many teachers must negotiate the pressures of using mandated curriculum, beliefs about teaching and learning, and addressing the needs of diverse learners. Curricular control at district levels morph teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning which are constructed through personal experiences, beliefs, and teacher preparation programs. Some teachers' instruction revolves around a district-developed curriculum that fails to acknowledge their professional ability (Darder, 1997). If teachers were allowed to create their curriculum many would not have the training to "grapple effectively with the multiplicity of contexts that they find in their classrooms and to shape environments according to the lived experiences and actual educational needs of their students" (Darder, 1997, p. 332).

Data from participants' statements and researcher observations illuminate the *dissonance* between teachers' beliefs about a district-mandated pacing schedule, deficiencies in students' prior knowledge, and pedagogical beliefs. According to the data, teachers unknowingly sought out ways to resolve dissonance through a process of *individualizing pedagogy.* The individualized pedagogical approaches demonstrated how teachers attempted to resolve their dissonance through *curriculum adaptation* and/or *curriculum integration*. Ultimately the consequence of the dissonance among personal beliefs, the mandated curriculum, and perceived deficiencies in students resulted in redefined expectations regarding teaching and learning. From this case study, the researcher realized teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning compared

and contrasted with beliefs about the pacing schedule created dissonance, which then led to a redefined philosophy of teaching and learning as demonstrated in Figure 5.2.
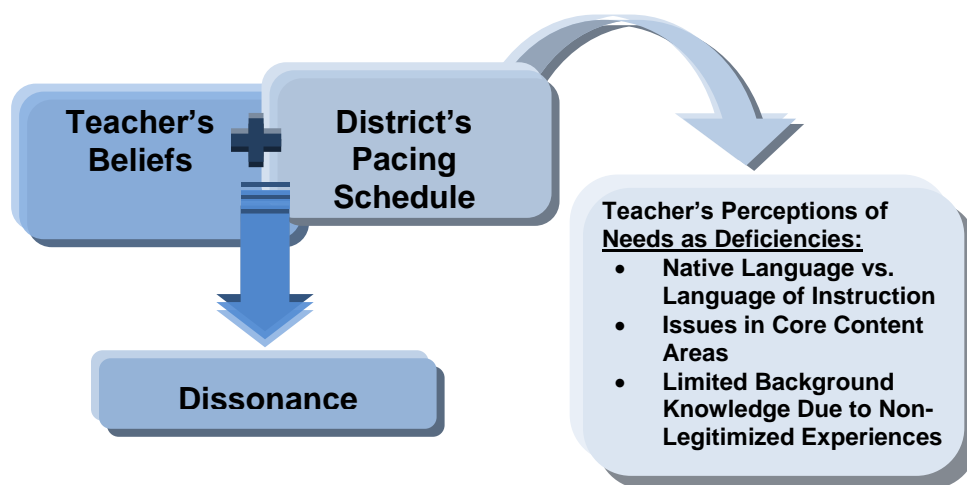

Figure 5.2: Influence of Mandated Curriculum on Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers readjust the scaffolding of learning and attempt to make connections to and with the curriculum based on personal experiences and the perception that a context for learning has to be created by the teacher. None of the participants were able to redefine the concept of curriculum as it affected instruction and none were proactive in finding out about students' interests or learning needs. While students' background knowledge relates to the successful navigation of life in their community and culture, district-created curriculum and learning experiences rarely allow for the appreciation, acknowledgment, or experiences of these students. Absent from assessments, texts, and class discussions are the cherishing of students' experiences.

Due to the factors creating dissonance, teachers who were attempting to meet the needs of students, redefined their expectations for teaching and learning based on personal experiences, constructs of what teaching and learning is, and the district-mandated pacing schedule. The notion of *redefined expectations for teaching and learning* are directly linked to

the influence the pacing schedule, external factors and their own beliefs about teaching and learning. These concepts fuse to create a resolution for the dissonance as illustrated in Figure 5.3.
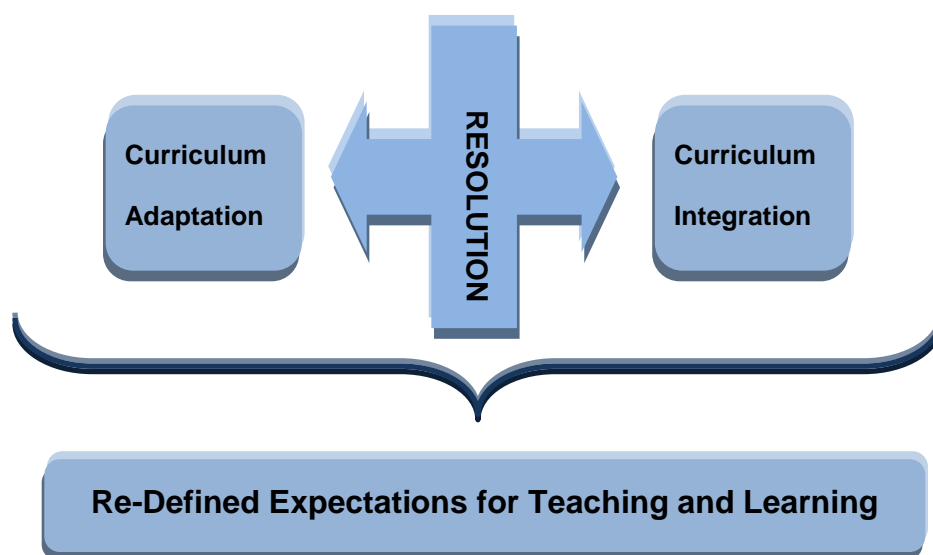

Figure 5.3. Individualized Pedagogy to Meet Needs of LCD Students

Teachers need the autonomy to reclaim their stake not only as educators of future generations but as curriculum developers. Ben-Peretz (1990) identified three primary decisions teachers need to make when acting as curriculum developers. Teachers need to be able to: (1) choose the depth with which to cover course content, (2) choose the means of adapting pre-packaged materials to a specific teaching situation, and (3) have sufficient curricular knowledge to develop classroom curricula. With those abilities teachers are able to be more responsive to the needs of students by connecting learning experiences to the exploration and understanding of their world (Darder, 2002). Textbooks, like the basal readers mentioned in chapter 4, are not helpful part of a curriculum in which student learning is narrowed to a subset of skills. Tests

should not drive the curriculum and therefore oppressing teacher's pedagogical repertoire. Teachers need to understand that standards are not the curriculum, but a blueprint for teaching skills integrated throughout content taught.

These study findings reveal the need for systematic and productive approaches to integrating and aligning learning to create pathways for meaningful instruction leading to positive outcomes. In this alignment, linguistically and culturally diverse population's life experiences must not be denied or overlooked. Teachers must be trained in how to intentionally implement teaching and learning that is open and welcoming to LCD students while focusing on student achievement.

Implications

This section contains implications for teacher preparation programs and professional development venues, and for enhancing reflective practice for veteran and pre-service teachers. The focus on these three items highlights the importance of instructional delivery as teacher preparation programs develop "highly qualified" teachers who are expected to have fundamental knowledge needed to interpret the curriculum, provide instruction, and meet students' needs. Professional development venues are also important in enhancing classroom instruction by providing teachers with strategies and research related to "best practices." Professional development can be school- or district-based, occur through continuing education, or during conferences and conventions held by professional associations. Finally, enhancing reflective practice for both veteran and pre-service teachers is imperative to developing effective instructional practice of teachers. Critical self-reflective practice allows teachers to understand their beliefs and improve their pedagogical approaches towards current learning environments and learners.

Teacher Preparation Programs

It is distressing that many new teachers finish certification programs with the expectation of hearing these words: "the curriculum people will tell you what to teach" (Kayes & Maranto, 2006, p. 41). For teaching to be recognized as a profession, teaching must be holistically developed with the ability to not only apply methods of teaching, but analyze the curriculum and methods being utilized by individual teachers, schools, and/or districts. Teacher preparation programs have the responsibility of helping young teachers understand teaching as a profession rather than a trade. Through teacher preparation programs, pre-service teachers are initiated into field experiences. They have the opportunity to work with mentor teachers, in most cases, and a combination of field placements in classroom settings. Part of that process should include the process of self-reflection—the ability to explore their own beliefs and attitude towards education and different cultures represented in the classroom. One tool for self-reflection is *The Teacher Self-Evaluation Toolkit.*

Also, teacher preparation programs can assist pre-service teachers in understanding their multiple roles in the classroom, such as: educator, mentor, curriculum developer, and advocate. Field experiences within classrooms grant preservice teachers opportunities to communicate with students, parents, and the community. Learning from conversations can be used to enrich classroom instruction during internships and into preservice teachers' career. A theoretical base is needed for understanding and knowledge about working with diverse populations. Overall, creating classroom educators who are "teaching to and through the strengths" of their LCD students and not to the test, starts in teacher preparation programs (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

Teacher Professional Development

Professional development activities not only impact student achievement, but also contribute to teachers' development over the course of their professional career. Professional development venues may be school- or district-based, offered through continuing education as a means to maintain certification or attain graduate degrees, or conferences/conventions of professional organizations. Effective professional development has the potential benefit of helping teachers become cognizant of the dynamics and modifications for changes, instructional delivery and demographics, in classrooms. However, opportunities such as understanding best practices for teaching in a diverse classroom or employing culturally responsive pedagogical strategies need to be a part of planning for professional development. During professional development culturally relevant practices should be offered as an option and include modeling. Strategies for teaching LCD students should not be viewed as an add-on lesson; rather, they need to be consistently infused throughout professional development.

High-quality professional development connects to student achievement. Some of the content in professional development should align to the specific needs of targeted student populations. Active involvement of the staff is essential to effective professional development. Professional development becomes ineffective if teachers do not practice what they learned. Echoing that notion was Deemer (2004) who said: "If teachers believe that they have opportunities to learn new things and will be recognized for doing so, they may also provide students with meaningful, challenging, and creative work that promotes learning" (p. 86). As a result professional development must be embedded throughout the academic year and teachers must receive support from district and school-based administrators.

Enhancing Reflective Practices for Veteran Teachers and Pre-Service Teachers

Both veteran and pre-service teachers need to reflect deeply on their own beliefs, assumptions, and values in order to understand who they are as individuals and what they bring to the classroom. When teachers are able to reflect, identify, and name their own socialization process and experiences, they will be better able to recognize and identify those qualities in their students (Ladson-Billings , 2006). Becoming a reflective practitioner takes time and commitment; it requires ongoing support and dialogue.

For classroom educators employing innovative and culturally responsive practices, reflection needs to be ongoing in relation to how the curriculum and instruction connect to home and school experiences. Also, it is imperative to set up a classroom culture that "makes academic success a non-negotiable mandate for all students and an accessible goal" (Gay, 2000, p. 34). This success cannot be measured via a single assessment, like a standardized test, but requires ongoing formative and summative assessment strategies, aggregated and authentic measures.

Official and informal dialogue guides school-based curriculum planning meetings in which teachers reflect on their beliefs and goals for their students. Dialogues should include school stakeholders identifying the needs of students represented in the school community as well as creating definitions for student needs as it applies to academic and social needs. Plans should be developed on intentional and innovative ways to meet students' needs and assist them in developing a love for learning. Dialogue in this sense is not simply having a conversation, but rather engaging in an on-going forum between and among colleagues, mentors, administrators, and others.

Through reflective practices veteran and pre-service teachers begin to see themselves as learners and understand that they are also engaging in the learning process. Opportunities must be sought to understand diverse cultures in classrooms so that appropriate instructional practices

might validate students' linguistic abilities and culture. Teachers' understanding of cultures represented in classrooms, how lived cultures and realities are valued and articulated in the curriculum, or how teaching practices may suppress or affirm diverse students' understanding of their world, requires them to employ varied instructional approaches that address the diversity represented in the classroom (Darder, 1991). Finally, teachers need to acknowledge that their own experiences bias their beliefs about teaching and learning. This acknowledgment and understanding of their personal bias will help them challenge the instructional pedagogies that stem from it.

Recommendations

This research study illuminates the dissonance between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and mandated curriculum. The dichotomy of beliefs constructed through personal experience, standards/ objectives based curriculum, and the needs of LCD students meant to guide teachers towards instructional pedagogy have led to conflict. To what degree can a teacher abide by standards/objectives as part of their planning and teaching and still address students' LCD needs? What is more important—the mandated standards/objectives or students' needs? The degree of dissonance teachers feel in having to meet accountability measures depends on their beliefs about what teaching and learning entail and their perceived responsibility to students and mandated curriculum/standards and objectives. The recommendations presented in this section are pertinent to instruction and curriculum.

Instructional Recommendations

The findings in this study can guide educators towards improving opportunities for LCD students to achieve literacy. In order to meet the needs of LCD students, teachers must have autonomy over curriculum development. Demographic changes are occurring at a dramatic

increase in parts of our country; preparing for diversity through curriculum planning provides better opportunities for students' academic success. LCD students enter our classrooms with a wealth of experiences and/or language skills that can be implemented to continue cognitive development and assist in the creation of knowledge. Students' lived world and language need to be part of content-related competencies rather than being detained at the gates of the school yard. LCD students invited to share and enrich classroom activity by the valuing of their heritage, experiences, knowledge, and linguistic abilities.

An important finding from this study is that teachers who work with LCD students in urban, rural, highly marginalized settings need to adjust their constructed views on teaching and learning. Their schemata of good teaching and learning must adjust to their students' needs rather than requiring students to adjust to their constructs of good teaching and learning. When teachers want students to adjust they tend to perceive students as having learning deficiencies. Teachers need to reflect deeply on their own beliefs, the resources they use, and curriculum and instructional practices in order to best develop personal pedagogies cognizant of all learners, prior knowledge and interests, and the impact lived experiences have in classrooms. In order for this to happen, teachers need to engage in self-reflection. Self-reflection for educators includes analyzing, modifying, and developing curriculum, advocating for appropriate curriculum, and resisting instructional practices led standardized tests. A key component for teachers to effectively teach LCD students is by nurturing relationships with students and families. As relationships are developed, students and families will be better understood and appreciated. This will lead to more culturally responsive practices and collaborations in creating learning experiences.

Curricular Recommendations

With the increase in federal mandates and standardized testing, the narrowing of the curriculum incapacitates teachers' abilities to aid LCD students in learning via use of culturally responsive teaching methods. Teachers feel they are doing an injustice by teaching to standards, but are compelled to do so because a perception that an even greater injustice would be to leave students unable to pass tests required for promotion and eventually render them unable to graduate. While teachers are left with the monumental task of educating all children in a mainstream environment, curriculum mandates can constrict teachers' abilities to build relationships, meet students' needs, and scaffold their learning. Mandated curricula include high educational expectations for all students, but are met with resistance if they do not allow room for change, creativity, and professional judgment. Curricula should be flexible enough to allow teachers to utilize LCD students' culture, background and knowledge in the classroom and lessons rather than overemphasizing the learning of skills.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study explored the impact of teachers' beliefs on curriculum decision making for LCD students. The study attempted to understand the beliefs of teachers and their role in curriculum planning and instructional delivery. More research on the nature of teachers' beliefs in environments in which standards and mandated curricula drive what teachers do in the classroom is needed. Future studies should explore innovative ways in which teachers identify and meet the needs of their students, specifically in LCD contexts. Also, studies of how teachers' beliefs have changed while working in environments in which the curriculum is either highly scripted or mandated as a means of raising test scores would be beneficial. Understanding teachers' reflective process for navigating the curriculum and creating classroom environments and lessons to meet the diverse needs of their students is imperative, including collaborations and

co-teaching to explore "best practice" pedagogy. Although this was a snapshot of one school, findings would be even more meaningful through the lens of a cross-comparative case study. Research that compares and contrasts schools across the nation serving LCD students could deepen understanding of how teachers' beliefs change due to curricula, experiences with LCD students, and professional development. Continuing with research that compares and contrasts schools, an understanding of how teachers who must use a constrictive curriculum manage to infuse innovative methods in classrooms to create positive learning environments for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms could guide strategies taught in teacher preparation programs and during professional development. As with any study, once findings are revealed, more questions arise. Possible research questions to be explored in a follow-up study regarding this research include: (1) validating or invalidating teachers' beliefs about meeting the needs of students by interviewing and observing LCD students, (2) exploring the relationship between first-year teachers working with LCD students and veteran teachers' beliefs about curriculum planning, (3) investigating how urban teachers exhibit characteristics of culturally responsive teaching, how do the characteristics align with curriculum mandates, and what are the inhibitors of success for LCD students, and (4) exploring how the notions of conflict and dissonance apply, compare, and contrast with organizational theory and conflict.

Summary

In summary, this study set out to explore how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning impact curriculum planning to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. The findings from this qualitative case study offer us a glimpse into the pedagogical approaches and instructional strategies that drive what teachers do in the classroom to meet the needs of LCD students. Teachers participating in this study developed beliefs based on their own

personal experiences in teaching and from their own education. However, as depicted in much of the data the core curriculum is an influential factor in how teachers define the needs of students and develop instructional pedagogy. Students' needs are based on how well teachers can execute the mandated curriculum and how well they do on the benchmarks. These factors led to dissonance among participants due to perceived beliefs about what students' need to be successful and life-long learners compared to being bound by a curriculum that dictates what should be taught and when.

This study unveiled the power of the mandated curriculum on curriculum planning and how beliefs are constructed about teaching and learning. The curriculum forces teachers to operate at a technical level in which content and skills are the predictors of the outcomes and goals of students as measured by benchmarks and the state assessment. As a result, teachers are struggling, as professionals, to implement practice meant to address the unique needs of their students through an understanding of their students, their language, their culture, and their lives. A major finding of this study is that a mandated curriculum influences the "what" and "how" decisions in teaching a curriculum.

Finally, a participant epitomized the disposition needed to successfully teach LCD students: "If you're not here for the kids you are not going to make it, especially in this school. I do see a lot of change, the kids to do change. It may not be the change that No Child Left Behind wants to see. It may not be the same levels of the suburban schools but there is a lot of change and a lot of progress." All in all, this sentiment was shared by all participants: "I love working with these kids and I love the neighborhood. I think they appreciate what we do."

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

<u>**Interview Questions:**</u>

1. How would you describe the demographic composition of your classroom?

2. How would you describe your beliefs about teaching and learning?

3. What do you think has influenced your beliefs about teaching and learning?

4. How do these beliefs change from student to student or from year to year?

5. How would you describe or define the needs of your classroom?

6. How would you describe the type of curriculum used in the district?

7. How do you make sure the curriculum addresses the needs of your classroom?

8. In what ways do you reflect on your beliefs and the needs of the students with in curriculum planning?

<u>**Follow-Up Interview Questions:**</u>

1. Can you describe the instructional activities that you chose?

2. How do the instructional activities address the needs of your students?

3. How do they fit in to the curriculum?

4. How do your beliefs about teaching and learning align with the instructional activities that you have planned?

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

August 2008

Dear Teacher,

Hello! My name is Tynisha Meidl. I am a graduate student in the College of Education, in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at Penn State University. Today I am seeking research volunteers to participate in a brief research project entitled: "Impact of Teachers' beliefs on Curriculum Planning for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students." This research is designed to understand how teachers' beliefs are used in curriculum planning that best meets the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. This research could serve to benefit teachers and student populations by contributing to the knowledge and understanding of curriculum decision making. As a research volunteer, you would be asked to engage in interviews, provide lesson plans and allow the researcher to observe your teaching.

In order to provide a brief overview of the data collection methods, a total of 12 interviews will be conducted. The interview process will begin with one initial interview 10 follow up interviews and one concluding interviews. The follow up interviews will be based on observations of teaching in order to gather more clarification. The interviews will not be any longer than an hour and the observations will take place during your literacy/ language arts instructional time and will not last any longer than an hour as well. It should not take longer than 8 weeks to finish the research. In addition, interviews will be audio recorded in order to allow for transcription and data analysis. If you choose to participate you will be provided with an informed consent form that outlines the parameters of the audio recording. Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. Please be assured you do not have to participate unless you wish to

do so. If you have any questions, please make sure to ask Tynisha Meidl. If you would prefer to ask me questions privately, feel free to reach me at 814.759.1710 or txw186@psu.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Tynisha Meidl

103 Love Joy Hall

University Park, PA 16802

Txw186@psu.edu

814.769.1710

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Impact of Teachers' Beliefs on Curriculum Planning for

Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students

Principal Investigator:	Tynisha Meidl, Graduate Student 178 Chambers Building University Park, PA 16802 (814) 865-2161; txw186@psu.edu
Advisor:	Dr. Ladislaus Semali 257 Chambers Building University Park, PA 16802 (814) 865-2246; lms11@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The central objective of this investigation is to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse (LCD) classrooms and its influence on curriculum decision making.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked participate in an initial interview, observation of your teaching and a follow up interviews. You will also be asked to provide a lesson plan of the lesson being observed. The focus of the research is NOT on your students, but on the instructional delivery.
3. **Duration:** The interviews will last about 45 minutes to an hour and the observations will be during the prescribed language arts or reading block. Follow-up interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. NO audio or visual aids (AVD)will occur in your classroom. In addition, there will be a total of 12 interviews, 1 initial interview, 10 follow up interviews and 1 concluding interview. Because observations will take place during the language arts/ literacy block it should last no more than 1 hour.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at *103 Love Joy Hall, University Park, Pa 16802* in a *password protected* file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The audio recording of the interview(s) will be destroyed after 3 years (mandatory time to keep them).
5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Tynisha Meidl at (814) 769-1710 with questions or concerns about this study.
6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

May I have permission to audio record interviews: (Please circle one)

    1. No

    2. Yes

May the researcher use your voice records for future research? <u>Circle two</u> options:

1. I *do not* give permission for my recordings to be **archived** for **future research**, reports, and publications. The records will be destroyed by 2011.

2. I *do not* give permission for my recordings to be **archived** for **educational** and **training** purposes. The records will be destroyed by 2011.

3. I give permission for my recordings to be **archived** for use in **future research** reports and publications.

4. I give permission for my recordings to be **archived** for **educational and training** purposes.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.
You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____

Participant Signature and Date

_____

Person Obtaining Consent and Date

Appendix D

Participant Organizational Matrix

Grade Level: 3 or 4	Teacher: A or B	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Initial Interview									
Planning Observation									
Instructional Observation 1									
Instructional Observation 2									
Follow- Up Interview									
Concluding Interview									

Curriculum Vitae of Tynisha Meidl

Education

2006-present	***The Pennsylvania State University***
	Doctorate of Philosophy Candidate, Expected August 2009
	Curriculum and Instruction: Language and Literacy Education
2004	***University of Texas, Pan-American***
	Master of Education/Teacher Certification
	Curriculum and Instruction: Elementary Education
2002	***The Pennsylvania State University***
	Bachelor of Science: Spanish

Professional Experience

2008- Present	**4th Grade Teacher, Edgecombe Elementary/Middle School, #062**
	Baltimore City Public School System, Baltimore, MD
2007-2008	**World Languages Teaching Assistant, College of Education**
	The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2007-2008	**Residence Life Community Ambassador, Office of Residence Life**
	The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2006	**Instructor, Office of Residence Life**
	The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2006	**Professional Apprenticeship**, Paul Robeson Cultural Center
	Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2005- 2007	**Residence Life Coordinator, Office of Residence Life**
	The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2004-2005	**Learning Team Leader, Teach For America**
	Rio Grande Valley, TX
2002-2005	**4th Grade Teacher, Emilano Zapata Elementary School**
	La Joya Independent School District, La Joya, TX

Presentations

Miedl, T., & Head- Dylla, C. (2009, February). Reading the word and the world: Employing Freirean pedagogy and evidence-based practices in textbook, standards, and/or assessment driven environments. Paper presented at the 54th Annual Conference of the International Reading Association, Phoenix, Arizona.

Meidl, T., & Head- Dylla, C. (2008, March). Employing Freirean pedagogy in textbook driven curricula. Paper presented at the 10th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania-National Association of Multicultural Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Meidl, T. & Head- Dylla, C. (2008, March). Creating multicultural learning experiences for limited English proficient students in Pennsylvania. Paper presented at the 10th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania-National Association of Multicultural Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Certifications

Texas Teaching Certificate, Elementary Education
Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate, Grades 1-6
Maryland Standard Professional Certificate

Professional Organizations

2008- present	International Reading Association (IRA)
2008- present	National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME)
2006- present	American College Personnel Association (ACPA)
2006- 2008	National Orientation Directors Association (NODA)