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A Professional Learning Community Design: Using Close Reading Techniques to Improve the U.S. History Comprehension

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A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY DESIGN: USING CLOSE READING TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE U.S. HISTORY COMPREHENSION

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation in practice presents a research-based model for staff development utilizing the elements of a professional learning community. The focus of this problem of practice was determined through an analysis of one high school's reading data indicating that 36% of the student body was reading below grade level according to the state assessment test for reading. Researchers have noted that reading demands for college and careers have increased (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Barton, 2000; Common Core State Standards, 2014). If students do not develop reading proficiency to graduate with a high school diploma, they are at risk of limited career choices without college and possible unemployment. Drawing upon a review of related literature in reading education, adolescent literacy, disciplinary literacy, and staff development, a professional learning community model was proposed to address improvement in teacher capacity by demonstrating the knowledge, dispositions, and skills of pedagogical knowledge of the Common Core State Standards (Florida Department of Education, Language Arts Florida Standards, 2014) and the use of close reading techniques to increase reading comprehension of U.S. History students.

This design utilizes the five elements of the DuFour (2010) model of a professional learning community including (a) focus of learning; (b) collaborative culture; (c) collaborative inquiry; (d) commitment to continuous improvement; and (e) results oriented mindset. A logic model further delineates the priorities, program plan, and intended outcomes for the implementation of this model.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Below Grade Level Reader--Students who score at a Level 1 or 2 on the FCAT 2.0. (Florida Department of Education, Understanding FCAT 2.0 Reports, Spring, 2013d).

Close reading--"Close reading is an intensive analysis of a text in order to come to terms with what it says, how it says it, and what it means" (Shanahan, 2012, para. 5).

Close reading technique--Method or strategies to "get to" a close reading.

Common Core State Standards Initiative--A state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including, teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014b).

Comprehension--Comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language with its core elements: (a) the reader, (b) the text, and (c) an activity situated within a socio-cultural context (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

Disciplinary literacy--"Knowledge of how information is created, shared, and evaluated, as well as an awareness of the nature of the conceptual "lenses" employed by the disciplinary experts and the implications of these epistemological tools-is essential to understanding and learning a discipline, and that teaching should foster such disciplinary sensitivity and practice" (Shanahan, Shanahan, & Misischia, 2011, p. 396).

End-of-course assessment (EOC)--"The Florida EOC assessments are part of Florida's Next Generation Strategic Plan for the purpose of increasing student achievement and improving college and career readiness. EOC assessments are computer-based, criterion-referenced assessments that measure the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for specific courses, as outlined in their course descriptions" (Florida Department of Education, Understanding Florida End-of-Course Assessment Reports, Spring, 2012).

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0--The FCAT 2.0 measures student achievement of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards in reading, mathematics, science, and writing (Florida Department of Education, Understanding FCAT 2.0 Reports, Spring, 2013).

FCAT 2.0 Achievement Levels1, 2, 3, 4, and 5--"The level of success a student has achieved with the content assessed. Level 1 is considered the lowest and level 5 the highest. To be considered on grade level, students must achieve Level 3 or higher. Level 3 indicates satisfactory performance" (Florida Department of Education, Understanding FCAT 2.0 Reports, Spring, 2013).

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Retakes--FCAT tests which are taken again or multiple times because a student did not pass the test.

Impact--The social, economic, civic and/or environmental consequences of the program. Impacts tend to be longer-term and so may be equated with goals. Impacts may be positive, negative, and/or neutral: intended or unintended (Taylor-Powell & Henert, 2008).

Inputs--Resources that go into a program including staff time, materials, money, equipment, facilities, volunteer time (Taylor-Powell & Henert, 2008).

Learning gain in reading--Improve one or more FCAT 2.0 achievement levels, maintain a proficient level without decreasing, or demonstrate more than a year's growth when remaining in level 1 or 2 (credited with learning gain if their vertical scale score improves by the following: for Grades 8 and 9, Level 1 (6) and Level 2 (5); for Grades 9-10, Level 1 (8) and Level 2 (7) (Florida Department of Education, Guide to Calculating School Grades, Technical Assistance Paper, 2013).

Literacy coach--A reading coach or a literacy coach focuses on providing professional development for teachers by providing them with the additional support needed to implement various instructional programs and practices (LD Online, 2013).

Logic model--Graphic representation of a program showing the intended relationships between investments and results (Taylor-Powell & Henert, 2008).

Lowest 25% in Reading--Meet all criteria for inclusion in school grade calculations for the current year, have a prior year score and a current year reading score, are ranked in the lowest 25% based on the previous year's scale score in reading, have a prior year score less than or equal to an FCAT achievement level or 1 or 2, and retained students who scored at levels 1 or 2 in the prior year are automatically included in the lowest 25% category (Florida Department of Education, Guide to Calculating School Grades, Technical Assistance Paper, 2013).

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS)--"The core content taught in Florida. The NGSSS specific the core content knowledge and skills that K-12 public

school students are expected to acquire in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, physical education, health, and foreign languages. The NGSSS benchmarks identify what a student should know and ne able to do at each grade level for each subject area" (Florida Department of Education, Understanding FCAT 2.0 Reports, Spring, 2013).

Outputs--The activities, products, and participation generated through the investment of resources. Goods and services delivered (Taylor-Powell & Henert, 2008).

Outcomes-- Results or changes from the program such as changes in knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, opinions, aspirations, motivation, behavior, practice, decision-making, policies, social action, condition, or status. Outcomes may be intended and/or unintended: positive and negative. Outcomes fall along a continuum from immediate (initial; short-term) to intermediate (medium-term) to final outcomes (long-term), often synonymous with impact (Taylor-Powell & Henert, 2008).

Professional learning community (PLC)--"An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators" (DuFour, 2014, para. 1).

Scaffolded instruction--Facilitative tools include the following: (a) Break the task into smaller more, manageable parts, (b) Use 'think alouds', or verbalizing thinking processes, when completing a task, (c) Use cooperative learning, which promotes teamwork and dialogue among peers, (d) Use concrete prompts, questioning, coaching,

cue cards, or modeling, (e) Other tools might include activating background knowledge and offering tips, strategies, cues, and procedures (Open Colleges, 2014).

Teacher capacity--Suggests the potential for teachers to continue to develop their knowledge, dispositions, and skills, occurring across time and settings. (Williamson McDiarmid, & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Introduction

Results of the 2012-2013 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 2.0 Reading and FCAT Reading retake tests indicated 600 of 1,675 (36%) students in Grades 9-12 at East Coast High School [ECHS] (a pseudonym used to protect confidentiality) exhibited reading deficits that hinder graduation. Approximately 400 of the 1,675 students (24%) were required to take U.S. History during their 10th grade year, the same year the test is administered. Approximately 75% of these students are enrolled in U.S. History courses taught by three teachers. This dissertation in practice proposes the use of a professional learning community to improve the identified U.S. History teachers' capacity (knowledge, disposition, and skills) to improve students' reading achievement.

This dissertation in practice presents the problem of practice and its proposed solution in four chapters. Chapter 1 describes the problem of practice, its organizational context, factors that impact the problem, and an implementation plan for the proposed solution. Chapter 2 provides the rationale, key elements, and significance of the proposed solution. Chapter 3 explains an analysis and evaluation plan. Chapter 4 contains implications and recommendations for the proposed solution to this problem of practice. As presented by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate,

A dissertation in practice is scholarship on a problem of practice that

1. is understood through a lens of social justice;
2. is defined via a process of systematic and intentional inquiry;

3. is informed by a critical review of school, academic, and community data and perspectives, and;
4. conforms to the criteria for scholarship in Lee Shulman's (2004) triarchic definition and promulgated in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED).

According to Shulman, scholarship is (a) significant learning that is made public; (b) shared in a way that invites critical review; and (c) allows others in the field to build on what has been learned" (Duquesne University, n.d.).

This dissertation in practice meets the criteria for CPED's description by addressing the four elements as described in the above quotation. Social justice is addressed by a community of school based leaders convening a community of teachers who come together to address a problem for a community of disenfranchised students. Systematic and intentional inquiry is addressed through the integrated literature review about professional learning communities, comprehension, close reading, and disciplinary literacy. A critical review of the school, academic, and community are included within Chapter 1 by providing the context in which the problem of practice takes place. Data were analyzed to create this design by looking at the school demographics and students' test scores for reading. Finally, this dissertation in practice meets the criteria for Shulman's definition of scholarship in that it is made public through an announcement of the presentation of this problem of practice and is published by the University of Central Florida. Before the public presentation, it is critically reviewed by the dissertation committee and post defense it is critically reviewed again through committee discussion

and written follow-up critiques. The information provided here provides the administration and teachers at this school additional knowledge to enhance their learning.

The purpose of this professional learning community design is to propose one solution to this problem of practice. The format of this dissertation in practice contains four chapters. The first chapter describes the problem of practice, the organizational context in which it is placed, factors that impact the problem, and the plan for implementation of the model designed. Chapter 2 provides the details and rationale for the model of the problem of practice, the key elements of the model, the significance of the model, and the rationale for the model. In Chapter 3, a model analysis and evaluation plan are described. Finally, chapter 4 contains the implications and recommendations for this suggested model as a solution to this problem of practice at one high school in Florida.

Significance of the Problem of Practice

Reading demands in college, the workplace, and citizenship have increased (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Barton, 2000; Common Core State Standards, 2014b). If students do not demonstrate reading proficiency as required for high school graduation, they may not graduate with a standard high school diploma. The majority of college and career reading demands comprehension of expository text (informational). Students lacking sustained exposure to expository text during their K-12 education may risk unemployment (Afferbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Unemployment may cause societal burdens.

Florida Statute 1008.22 (2010) states that to receive a high school diploma, a student must be proficient in reading. Florida Statute 1011.62 (2013) delineates reading proficiency by incorporating research based instruction, state assessments, diagnosis and intervention, and remediation for struggling readers. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is used annually to assess the reading proficiency of students in Grades 3-10. Achievement Level 3 is the designated passing FCAT 2.0 Reading score for Grades 3 through 10 (F.S. 1008.22, 2010). Reading proficiency could also support end-of-course (EOC) assessment performance for Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology, U.S. History, and Civics (F.S. 1008.22, 2010). These assessments not only require high order comprehension skills in disciplinary literacy, but also may count for at least 30% of a student's course grade. Therefore, it is imperative that a plan to build teacher capacity to improve students' reading proficiency be designed and implemented to support teaching and learning at ECHS.

Situational Context

The problem of practice can be better understood by understanding and explaining education as situated at the national, state, school district, and school levels. The national level reading has two main influences. First, there is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 and its requirements for reading. Secondly, there are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2014a) as related to secondary English language arts and literacy and its close reading requirements. At the state level, the Department of Education, Just Read, Florida! Office oversees all state reading initiatives for the state of Florida. The Florida Center for Reading Research collects, manages, and reports on

reading assessment information including screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome measures. At the school district level, two district reading facilitators are charged with carrying out the nuances of the state plan. Within the school context, the ECHS leadership framework, organizational structure, and factors that impact the problem are included. Describing reading as situated within these four contexts is intended to develop an understanding of the problem of practice and its significance. This understanding is intended to support rationale for the proposed solution, a professional learning community designed to improve reading comprehension using close reading techniques in U.S. History courses.

National context. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, a reauthorization and expansion of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, has had a tremendous impact on K-12 reading instruction. The Reading First grant was a NCLB initiative to improve reading instruction. The competitive grant was designed to provide states and school districts funding to initiate scientifically-based reading programs for K-3, increase professional development, and use screening and diagnostic tools to monitor students' reading progress. The 2002-2003 school year, reached an all-time high of $47,156,800, with funds diminishing annually until 2009-2010. At that time, funding was withdrawn. NCLB (2001) also required states to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in reading.

In 2009, the National Governors Association (NGS) Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) together recognized "the value of consistent, real-world learning goals and launched this effort to ensure all students

graduate high school prepared for college, career, and life" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014b, para. 1). These CCSS define the knowledge and skills students should learn during Grades K-12 to promote high school graduates poised for college or career readiness.

The CCSS first anchor standard for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects states "Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text" (National Governor's Association, 2010, p. 10). "The intent of close reading is to foster critical thinking skills to deepen comprehension" (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 14). In *Rigorous Reading, 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts*, Frey and Fisher reported that close reading relies on repeated readings of short passages of complex text and that the purpose of close reading is to scaffold students' to examination of text details. To support the close reading process, teachers teach students how to analyze, make judgments, synthesize across multiple sources of information, and formulate opinions.

Another tenet of the CCSS is disciplinary literacy or reading and writing in Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects focus on the specialized ways that reading, writing, and language are used to comprehend social studies. Reading comprehension is at the heart of these content specific goals. Comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language with its core elements: (a) the reader, (b) the text, and (c) an activity situated

within a sociocultural context (Rudell & Unrau, 2004). The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) reported explicitness of teaching comprehension strategies makes a difference in learner outcomes, especially low achieving students, that teachers who provided comprehension strategy instruction deeply connected within the context of history fostered comprehension development.

State context. Florida Statute 1008.22, (2010) requires students demonstrate proficiency in reading as part of high school graduation requirements. Florida Statute 1011.62, (2013) requires reading instruction to support reading proficiency by incorporating research based instruction, state assessments, diagnosis and intervention, and remediation for struggling readers. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0 (FCAT) has annually assessed the reading proficiency in Grades 3-10. Achievement Level 3 is the designated passing score for Grades 3 through 10 on the FCAT 2.0 Reading (F.S. 1008.22, 2010). Each Florida school district is required to implement a K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan including: (a) highly qualified reading coaches, (b) professional development for teachers, (c) summer reading camps, (d) research-based supplemental materials, and (e) intensive interventions for middle and high school students reading below grade level (F.S. 1011.62, 2010).

In 2001, following NCLB implementation, Florida devised a formula for reading to ensure Florida students would not be left behind in reading if the formula was followed. The formula, 5 + 3 + ii + iii = NCLB, accounted for (a) five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) as identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/National Institute of

Health National Reading Panel (2000); (b) three types of assessment (screening, progress monitoring, and outcome measure); (c) initial instruction (ii) referencing the scientifically-based core curriculum, during a 90-minute reading block in the elementary grades; and (d) if this initial instruction did not prove successful, then students had to participate in an additional 30 minutes immediate, intensive, and intervention (iii). The formula revised to include oral language and diagnostic testing (i.e., 6 + 4 + ii + iii) now drives elementary and secondary reading instruction.

Executive Order 01-260 (Bush, 2001) created Just Read Florida!, a reading initiative, aimed to help all students become more proficient readers. The Just Read, Florida! office remains responsible for reviewing and approving each school district's annual K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan.

The literacy coach model, as outlined by statute, is overseen by the Florida Department of Education, Just Read, Florida! Office (2006), which reviews, evaluates, and provides assistance to the development and implementation of each school district's yearly Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan (F.S. 1011.62, 2011). Within the district and school plans, professional development, assessment, curriculum, and instruction in the improvement of student learning must be detailed (Florida State Board, Rule 6A-6.053, 2011). Section 6(a) requires district leadership to allocate resources to hire reading/literacy coaches for schools determined to have the greatest need. Section 6(c) requires all reading/literacy coaches to report their time to the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) on a biweekly basis. Section 6(e) put forth the requirement that all schools implementing the coach model must provide for the

reading/literacy coach to serve as a stable resource for professional development throughout the school to improve literacy instruction and student achievement. More specifically, coaches are tasked with supporting and providing initial and ongoing professional development in each of the major reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as needed based on analysis of student performance data. In addition, coaches must model effective instructional strategies and facilitate study groups for all teachers (including content area) to increase instructional capacity while meeting the needs of all students to improve student achievement. The categories, shown in Table 1, reflect the required time spent carrying out the literacy coach duties (FCRR, n.d.). Therefore, upon consideration of the requirements set forth by the state of Florida, it was within the realm of the literacy coach to implement a professional learning community for content area teachers in disciplinary literacy techniques to improve students' reading achievement.

The district plans must specify how reading/literacy coaches will support reading education, (Table 1) including 19% of working hours dedicated to staff development. Literacy coach efforts are reported bi-weekly in the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN).

Table 1

Literacy Coach Duties: Categories and Percentages of Time

Category	Percentage
Whole faculty professional development	5%
Small group professional development	14%
Planning	8%
Modeling lessons	14%
Coaching	9%
Coach-teacher conferences	14%
Student assessment	8%
Data Reporting	3%
Data Analysis	9%
Meetings	4%
Knowledge building	4%
Managing reading materials	5%
Other	3%

The Florida Center for Reading Research [FCRR] (F.S. 1004.645, 2002) collects, manages and reports on assessment information from screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments through the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). The PMRN is a statewide network designed to yield assessment data from the Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) an assessment to screen, monitor, and diagnose reading strengths and weaknesses. FAIR is administered three times per year.

Florida Statute 1011.62 further defined a research-based reading instruction allocation to provide comprehensive reading instruction to students in Grades K-12. The statute also detailed the provision of a highly qualified reading coach to support teachers in making instructional decisions based on student data and to improve teacher delivery of effective reading instruction including reading in the content areas based on student

need. In addition, it required professional development of teachers in strategies to teach reading in the content areas with an emphasis on informational text.

Coastal School District context. Coastal School District (pseudonym) is approximately 80 miles long, serves approximately 74,000 students, and is the single largest employer with more than 9,000 employees (Coastal School District, 2014). Coastal School District includes 15 high schools, 15 middle schools, 55 elementary schools, 17 special centers, and 11 charter schools (Coastal School District, 2013c).

To meet the state legislated requirements of the K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan, there are two district facilitators who write the plan for the district superintendent to approve as well as oversee compliance of the plan for all schools. They are tasked with holding monthly meetings with the district literacy coaches. At these meetings, they provide staff development for the coaches and updates on changing or new legislation impacting the K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan. In addition, their jobs require checking for fidelity of the implementation of the district reading plan.

East Coast High School context. East Coast High School (ECHS) opened in January 1964. Generations have attended East Coast High School, each proud of the schools' national reputation as a leader in band, football, baseball, and Air Force Junior Reserves Officers Training Corp (AFJROTC) programs. Approximately 1,675 students are enrolled. The ECHS student population is diverse with 40% free/reduced lunch, 31% minority, 15% exceptional education, and 3% English Language Learners (ELL) (Florida Department of Education, 2013c).

Set within a traditional, bureaucratic school system characterized by hierarchical control, vertical communication, set rules and procedures, plans and schedules, and administrative positions, ECHS has maintained a contemporary non-bureaucratic approach to leadership (Owens & Valesky, 2011). This approach guides ECHS as a learning organization (Senge, 2006). As a learning organization, ECHS has evolved and adapted to societies changes to meet its students' and employees' needs. As an entity of the school district's hierarchical structure, the principal is the designated "boss" with formal authority within the ECHS learning organization. As the principal, he has the authority to implement the professional learning community model. As principal, he also employs a variety of vertical and lateral coordination methods to link instructional, school site, and district initiatives (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The principal leads the ECHS administrative leadership team; a team including one principal, one 12-month assistant principal of curriculum, one 12-month assistant principal of facilities, and two 10-month assistant principals whose primary responsibilities are related to student discipline. Content area department chairs coordinate efforts between the leadership team and teachers, including participation in a school-cite professional learning communities.

The 2012 ECHS School Improvement Plan recognizes the school's mission to serve every student with excellence. The vision statement tasks ECHS "to serve every student in an environment of college and career readiness through a professional and collaborative community supported by all its stakeholders" (East Coast High School, 2012, p. 1). Although the vision and mission statements guide instructional practices at ECHS, FCAT 2.0 Reading outcomes indicated 36% of ECHS students did not

demonstrate reading proficiency, a high school graduation requirement. Aligned with the school's mission statement, the professional learning community proposed in this dissertation in practice was designed to build teacher capacity to improve students' reading achievement.

This proposed PLC design calls for volunteer U.S. History participants for professional development after they have reviewed FCAT 2.0 Reading outcomes and the significant number of the students reading below grade level. Because the ECHS School Improvement Plan requires teachers to participate in a professional and collaborative community aimed at improving reading achievement of the lowest performing 25% on FCAT 2.0 Reading, it was determined that a PLC model could be developed to improve U.S. History teacher capacity in support of students' reading achievement. Implementation of this professional learning community also supports the ECHS mission statement focused on students served through a professional and "collaborative community" (East Coast High School, 2012, p. 1).

A collaborative community of stakeholders, led by the literacy coach, and designed to include volunteer U.S. History teachers will be designed to examine the CCSS, disciplinary literacy, close reading, and comprehension through "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour, 2014, para.1).

Learning centered leadership framework. In a large high school such as East Coast High School, administrators' have influenced student learning through teachers

with direct daily, contact with students (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). Because administrators have indirect contact with students, administrators have influenced teachers to improve student achievement. An examination of East Coast High School leadership assisted in determining support for the proposed professional learning community. The Learning Centered Leadership Framework (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007) outlined critical elements that portray the ECHS leadership style in its efforts to improve student reading achievement; "an operationalized model of educational leadership where behaviors are shaped by experience, personal characteristics, values and beliefs, and knowledge" (Murphy et al., 2007, p. 180). Leadership behaviors often mediated by school operations and classroom activities resulted in valued achievement, graduation, college attendance, and post-graduation success outcomes (Murphy et al., 2007). This leadership framework could support implementation of a plan designed to increase teachers' pedagogical knowledge and subsequently improve student reading abilities.

The Learning Centered Leadership Framework is characterized by eight behavior dimensions (Murphy et al., 2007). For the purposes of this dissertation in practice, only six of those dimensions were addressed. The six include: (a) vision for learning, (b) instructional program, (c) curricular program, (d) communities of learning, (e) organizational culture, and (f) social advocacy. These behavior dimensions were evident throughout ECHS and revealed connections to the implementation a plan of designed to action to improve students' reading achievement.

Vision for learning. Vision for learning refers to a cognitive image of a desired future state (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leaders in high performing schools develop, articulate, implement, and steward a vision of learning is shared with the community (Murphy et al., 2007). "Leadership in high-performing schools devotes considerable energy to the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community" (Murphy et al., 2007, p. 181). Building a shared vision fosters long term commitment through collaboration (Senge, 2006). In an educational setting, the organizational mission is shared by organizational members (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Lambert (2002) referred to learning and leading in which teachers and students are "firmly linked in community" (para. 2). Lambert's (2002) framework for shared instructional leadership involves participation, vision, inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and student achievement that engaged all stakeholders in the school improvement process including administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members. Vision for learning is focused on school-wide actions taken to promote school improvement, and is shared among the principal, teachers, administrators, and others (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). The ECHS vision for learning is founded in two organizational visions to enhance student achievement. The first vision, "Coastal School District will serve our community and enhance students' lives by delivering the highest quality education in a culture of dedication, collaboration, and learning" (Coastal School District, 2013b, p. 7) recognizes the role of collaboration in its organizational culture. The second, "East Coast High School (ECHS) will serve every student in an environment of college and career readiness through a professional

and collaborative community supported by all its stakeholders" (East Coast High School, 2012, p. 1), identifies the role of a collaborative community. Because both the school district and school site visions included collaboration thus supporting collaboration among leadership is recognized as an important component within the district and its school components.

Instructional program. The second dimension of the framework, instructional program, refers to the leader's knowledge of pedagogy, how staff is hired and allocated, support of staff, and value of preserving instruction while maintaining a high standard of performance for the student body. The principal, (i.e., instructional leader) has spent considerable time reviewing instructional programs to improve student outcomes. Additionally, the principal ensured that the school was staffed with excellent staff and provided time and materials necessary for support. Finally, the principal systematically recognized and rewarded staff and students. Pepper (2010) contended that a combination of transformational and transactional leadership styles is needed to meet the expectations for accountability. The instructional program dimension of leadership behavior is supported by an approach that combined elements of both transformational and transactional leadership theories. The ECHS principal acts as a transformational leader when he sets examples as a role model (highly involved in the instructional program) and builds potential capabilities while fostering learning (provides time and materials). Transactional leadership is evident when the principal provides, recognizes, and rewards school community members. Sergiovanni (1990) stated that positive reinforcement (recognition and rewards) is exchanged for good work. At ECHS, the principal exhibits

transformational and transactional leadership styles. Examples of his strong managerial skills (transactional) have included strict schedules, a safe and orderly environment, and set routines and procedures. Punctuality is expected of all his employees. The faculty is also keenly aware that the first Wednesday of each month is a faculty meeting, and every other Wednesday morning is a scheduled department meeting. Early release days are designated as PLC meeting days.

As a transformational leader, the principal has encouraged a collaborative culture. He established various leadership teams to best utilize teachers and staff expertise as related to student achievement (Pepper, 2010). In turn, his use of PLCs as a mechanism for staff development is designed to support improving student reading ability and college/career readiness.

Curricular program. The third dimension calls for a strong leader for the curricular program. The leader must be knowledgeable about curriculum, make sure that it is of high quality and meets students' academic needs. The leader guarantees vertical and horizontal alignment in order that all involved with curriculum communicate and collaborate to ensure academic success for students. A basic premise of collaborative leadership is the understanding that no one person has all the answers and that all members are required to act for the good of the group (Murphy et al., 2007). Collaborative leadership then supports the curricular program. Within a high school, principals must rely on others to assist them with decisions concerning curriculum. There are too many varied subjects, requiring expertise for one person to know it all. This approach shifts the focus from the individual to the community (Murphy et al., 2007). At

ECHS, the literacy coach and department heads function as a leadership team for the curricular program along with the principal and assistant principal of curriculum. This team works collaboratively to assure that curriculum meets the needs of the students and that it is aligned vertically and horizontally. Curriculum maps are designed and implemented by each department using the district created curriculum guides, Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (if appropriate), and the Common Core State Standards. Time is allocated to collaborate on this specific curricular work on a monthly calendar.

Communities of learning. In the fifth dimension, communities of learning, it is imperative for leaders to make sure that employees are provided with professional development. They ensure that there is a system in place to provide all staff with the learning experiences necessary to grow (Murphy et al., 2007). They understand that establishing a community of professional practice is the most appropriate method for learning and developing new instructional skills (Murphy et al., 2007). Collaborative leadership between the principal, teachers, administrators, literacy coach, and others build school capacity to support teaching and learning. Coastal School District supports and implements the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model developed by Richard and Rebecca DuFour (2010). As a part of Coastal School District, ECHS has a number of PLCs meeting regularly. Teachers at ECHS meet in a PLC of their choice throughout the school year which provides the foundation to support the literacy coach in implementation of a PLC for reading based on student data.

Organizational culture. The Leadership for Learning Framework nurtures personalization through involvement of students, staff, faculty, and the community (Murphy et al., 2007). Collaborative leadership, e.g., "Disciplines of the Learning Organization" (Senge, 2006, p. 5) distinguishes learning organizations from traditional authoritarian organizations and supports a learning organizational culture. The five disciplines as described by Senge (2006) must develop as an ensemble. Personal mastery fosters personal motivation to continually learn how one's actions affect the world; mental models focus on openness; building shared vision fosters long term commitment; and team learning develops thinking beyond individual perspectives. As a transformational leader, the principal of ECHS has high expectations for everyone including himself. In the three years he has been principal, he has confronted 20 years of stagnation and has made positive changes for the learning environment.

Test scores and graduation rates continue to improve in a short period of time. He has worked to build community by cooking for his staff and by providing team building experiences off campus. In addition, the principal meets with student leaders and asks for advice about how to improve student connectedness to their own school. The culture of this high school provides a scaffold on which to improve student achievement by eliminating less important issues which can deflect the focus from student learning.

Social advocacy. Finally, the sixth dimension, social advocacy, posits that leaders in high performing schools identify and make use of the cultural, ethnic, racial, and economic diversity of the community to meet the needs of all the stakeholders (Wallace Foundation, 2004, as cited in Murphy et al., 2007). Leadership at ECHS

focuses improvement on individual student achievement which considers the cultural, ethnic, racial and economic diversity of its population. The school operates a "prom" closet where students can borrow attire to attend any of the semi-formal events held during the school year. This past year, a holiday shop was opened for four hours so students and/or their families could shop for gifts and pick up food. All the gifts and food were donated by the faculty and staff. Eighty needy families were notified of the event. Turnout was tremendous as faculty and staff helped students and their families shop and then wrapped gifts to take home. These examples portray the work Maslow (1970) advocated regarding basic needs of students, (i.e., biological and physiological, safety, social, and esteem) that should be met before cognitive needs could be reached.

These six behavior dimensions describe how learning centered leadership incorporates collaborative, transformational, and transactional leadership theory at ECHS. The Learning Centered Leadership Framework (Murphy et al., 2007) includes transformation as its major focus. Collaboration, an element of transformational leadership is the foundation on which the PLC is designed. The explanation of ECHS' comprehensive leadership model, included multiple examples of how leadership has indirectly influenced student learning, and as a result, supports professional learning communities to improve students' reading achievement.

Organizational structure of the East Coast High School. Examining ECHS through the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames provides a comprehensive view of the organizational structure of ECHS through multiple lenses (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Viewing problems as impacted by different perspectives works

to solve problems and make needed changes for overall school health. The Four Frame Model of Bolman and Deal (2008) assists with understanding the health of the organization. Analyzing the organization through the four frames: (a) structural; (b) human resource; (c) political; and (d) symbolic provides a comprehensive picture of organizational events changes needed for successful implementation of a professional learning community.

The East Coast High School organizational chart demonstrates the school's hierarchical structure with the principal as the leader and all other employees listed beneath him. Job roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. This structural frame provides the overarching blueprint for ECHS. The administrative leadership team at the school consists of one principal, one 12-month assistant principal of curriculum, one 12-month assistant principal of facilities, and two 10-month assistant principals whose primary responsibility is student discipline. There are 110 faculty members including one literacy coach, 30 support staff including clerks, custodians, and teacher assistants. There is one full-time nurse and one full-time school resource officer. The school day is fairly traditional with students beginning their days at 8:30 a.m. They attend seven class periods for 48 minutes each, have a 30-minute lunch break, and end their days at 3:30 p.m. Historically, teachers have only felt responsible for their own curriculum e.g., social studies teachers: social studies; mathematics teachers: mathematics; science teachers: science; English teachers: grammar and literature; reading teachers: reading; and therein lies the problem; content area teachers have shown no sense of responsibility toward students' reading abilities because they are not "reading teachers."

In addition to the structural frame, the human resource frame highlights the relationship among ECHS and its administration, faculty, and staff (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The principal, as the school leader, has shown strong human resource strategies as described by Bolman & Deal (2008). He hires the right people, makes sure teachers are not only certified in the correct subject(s) but also have personalities and philosophies aligned to the culture of the school. He is selective and knows what he wants. During his three-year tenure at ECHS, there has been a significant faculty turnover, including teachers arriving to ECHS from the principal's former school. The current literacy coach has been at ECHS for four years. Previous to her arrival, ECHS had five different coaches in the five previous years. The principal has retained his employees by rewarding them with verbal praise, fun activities (like air boat rides and picnics), and mentoring future leaders including the literacy coach. He has empowered his faculty and staff to self-manage teams and provided autonomy and participation.

Within the political frame, power is defined as the potential to influence behavior, change the course of events, or get people to do things they would not otherwise do (Pfeffer, 1992). The political frame identifies the principal as one who gets thing done. His reputation for innovative improvements has developed through influencing the right people to take action or asking his leadership team for assistance and ideas. He allows teachers to design and participate in their own PLCs, thus facilitating buy-in to changes implemented to improve student achievement. He has maintained an "open door policy" for all stakeholders involved in the successful operation of the school. Because the

principal has accomplished these things, he has demonstrated his ability to influence change.

The symbolic frame is firmly linked with the human resource frame, and considers the symbols representing the people involved through organizational symbols, stories, and rituals. Organizational symbolism is ingrained in the culture of ECHS. Two major league baseball players attended East Coast High School and played baseball while there, giving hope to all the school's baseball players that they too might be major league baseball players one day. Their accomplishments symbolize dreams of major league play. ECHS is a strong community, and includes generations of alumnae. Some current teachers at are ECHS alumnae. Some alumnae have married and now teach together at ECHS. Other alumnae who work at the school bring their children to ECHS with them. It is common for teachers to begin and end their careers at ECHS. Another example of the school culture is demonstrated by teacher who after 35 years at ECHS retired and now substitutes at the school. In the past 40 years, there have been three principals. The principal is in his fourth year of leadership.

In summary, each frame assists with understanding the structure, human resource, political, and symbolic aspects of ECHS's organizational context. When used skillfully and in combination, as shown in the previous examples from ECHS, diagnosis of what is occurring in an organization can assist in developing strategies, (e.g., requiring teachers to participate in a professional learning community, to provide leadership action) to improve the health of the organization (Zolner, 2014).

Factors that impact the problem at East Coast High School. As mentioned earlier, the ECHS School Improvement Plan (2013) states the school's vision to serve every student in an environment of college and career readiness by delivering the highest quality education in a culture of professionalism, collaboration, and learning. The data from 2008-2013, shown in Table 2, indicate that the scores for the intensive reading student population have remained relatively stagnant.

Table 2

Five-Year Reading Trends: East Coast High School

	Percentage of Students		
School Year	Level 3 or Above	Making Learning Gains	Lowest 25% Making Learning Gains
2012-2013	58%	68%	64%
2011-2012	64%	71%	73%
2010-2011	57%	56%	53%
2009-2010	60%	56%	53%
2008-2009	56%	58%	42%

These scores indicate the intensive reading students may not graduate with a high school diploma and implies high probability that the intensive reading class alone cannot provide enough assistance to this population of below grade level readers. As explicitly stated in the ECHS Improvement Plan (2013), "The decrease in students scoring at level 3 or above in all tested areas demonstrated a need for overall improvement in reading, learning, and thinking in the content areas" (p. 2).

School based objectives indicate action steps to improve instructional effectiveness. The first action step appoints the reading coach to "establish a

collaborative team that focuses on Common Core standards to serve in an advisory and professional development capacity" (ECHS Improvement Plan, 2013, p. 5). Action step three requires the school to "infuse the Common Core reading standards across the curriculum via the collaborative efforts of departmental PLC's" (ECHS Improvement Plan, 2013, p. 5). The ECHS School Improvement Plan aligns with this PLC model proposed in this dissertation in practice to build teacher capacity to improve students reading achievement.

The procedure for students performing below grade level has been to enroll them in an intensive reading class. The class is required for all students who score below grade level on FCAT 2.0 reading in Grades 8-12 (Florida Department of Education, K-12 Comprehensive Research Based Reading Plan, 2013). In order to achieve the school's mission of serving every student with excellence as a standard, it is critical that disciplinary literacy be a priority extending literacy instruction across the curriculum for these low achieving students.

Project Design--Addressing the Problem

This professional learning community model is rooted in the problem of practice where results of the 2012-2013 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 2.0 for reading and FCAT retake reading tests taken at East Coast High School (ECHS) indicated that 600 of 1,675 (36%) students in Grades 9-12 exhibited reading deficits that hinder graduation requirements and college or career readiness. Approximately 400 of the 1,675 students were required to take U.S. History during their 10th grade year, the same year they were tested for reading proficiency in order to meet graduation

requirements. Three teachers account for about 75% of those students. Therefore, the goal of this problem of practice is to improve teacher capacity (knowledge, disposition, and skills) through participation in a professional learning community in order to improve students' reading achievement.

Involvement of stakeholders. Involving stakeholders from the onset assures transparency and buy-in for the project. Greene (1988) acknowledged three groups of stakeholders: (a) people involved in developing and using the information (administrators, program developers); (b) direct and indirect beneficiaries of the gathered information (students, teachers); and (c) people suffering a disadvantage related to the program (students, teachers). The school principal and the assistant principal for curriculum have been recognized as having decision authority over the program and comprise the first group of stakeholders. Another key stakeholder is the literacy coach who is the developer and person responsible for the implementation of the project. The second group of stakeholders, the intended beneficiaries, includes the U.S. History teachers and the students. The third group of stakeholders are those people disadvantaged by the project such as faculty members in other subject areas who have not been involved and the below-level readers participating in other teachers' U.S. History classrooms. All three groups of referenced stakeholders are an integral part of the success of this project.

Teacher evaluation system. Coastal School District's Instructional Personnel Performance Appraisal System (IPPAS) outlines several purposes for the development of its system, providing a springboard on which to launch the PLC. The purposes of the

system include the following: (a) influence and enhance student achievement through improved instruction; (b) promote professional growth through a developmental, collaborative process; and (c) promote collegiality in collaborative discussions regarding professional development. As a part of the appraisal system, teachers are required to complete a professional growth plan [PGP] (Coastal School District, 2013a). To complete the PGP, a teacher must set objectives linked to the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (Florida Department of Education, Florida Educator Accomplished Practices [FEAPs], 2011). Specific and measurable objectives are created by the teacher based on qualitative and quantitative data regarding the performance of their students. The student objectives are required to be linked to state, district or school approved student standards such as the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, school improvement plan objectives, or strategic plan objectives. The student performance objectives are measured by the teacher and reported to the principal on the PGP. The PGP is subsequently reviewed by a team of teachers, administrators, and the principal. Coastal School District utilizes the state-adopted teacher-level growth measure from the Race to the Top grant as the primary factor of the teacher evaluation system where 50% of the performance appraisal includes professional practices of the teacher and 50% of the performance appraisal is based on individual accountability for student growth based on identified assessments (Florida Statute 1012.98). This PLC model focuses on the professional practices based on Florida's Educator Accomplished Practices.

The overarching goal for the literacy coach's PGP is "to improve FCAT 2.0 reading scores for a purposive sample of below grade level students (students scoring

below level 3 on the test) selected from three U.S. History teachers' classes by developing and implementing a professional learning community (PLC) with United States History teachers" (Tinsley, 2013, p. 1). In light of the need for these results, the area of need addressed in the PGP suggested that ECHS' struggling readers need further instruction in reading comprehension. Because of the large percentages of below grade level readers in these three U.S. History classes, and the CCSS for disciplinary literacy, it is efficient to focus on these elements in one concerted effort of staff development in the form of a PLC. The literacy coach is charged with monitoring and reporting teacher engagement and interaction of participation in this model through student surveys, teacher surveys, in-service records, classroom observations, and formative data results from the FAIR test.

Plan for Implementation and Intended Product

A logic model has been created based on the school context of ECHS, school improvement plan, established communities of learning, organizational structure, student achievement data, school culture, and teachers' professional growth plan. A logic model is a visual representation of the assumptions and theory of action that underlie the structure of an education program, in this case a professional learning community model for a group of teachers (Kekahio, Cicchinelli, Lawton, & Brandon, 2014). The implementation plan, depicted in the logic model in Tables 3 and 4, has been designed to facilitate a professional learning community for U.S. History teachers as they collaborate to examine close reading, disciplinary literacy, and reading comprehension to improve student achievement. Using a logic model in program evaluation provides information to

the stakeholders who make decisions about program resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Table 3 contains the priorities, i.e., short- and long-term goals, and the program results, i.e., outputs and outcomes/impact of the plan. Table 4 presents the resources and major chain of program activities associated with the implementation of the project.

Table 3

Logic Model: Professional Learning Community (PLC) Program Priorities and Results

Program Priorities	Program Results	
	Outputs	Outcomes/Impact
Short-term goals: Build teacher capacity by demonstrating the knowledge, dispositions, and skills of pedagogical knowledge for Common Core State Standards, disciplinary literacy, close reading techniques, and comprehension for their U. S. History students.	Teachers attend and contribute to PLC sessions according to plan.	Teachers believe that they can influence how well students learn, including the difficult and/or unmotivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).
Long-term goals: Improve teachers' instructional efficacy; and improve students' reading achievement.	Teachers utilize knowledge, dispositions, and skills during individual and collaborative planning and teaching.	Teachers continue to improve their pedagogical knowledge for Common Core State Standards, disciplinary literacy, close reading, and comprehension through collaboration with peers and the literacy coach.

Table 4

Logic Model: Professional Learning Community (PLC) Program Resources and Timeline of Activities

Activities/Timeline	Resources for Entire Timeline
Quarter 1 1. Obtain principal support for design and implementation of project. 2. Recruit U. S. History teacher participants. 3. Procure PLC materials, meeting dates, and meeting room. 4. Analyze student data. 5. Develop common professional development plans. 6. Survey students and teachers on disciplinary literacy. 7. Observations by two reading experts. *Topics:* Complex Text-Common Core State Standards, English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects, Modeling, Close Reading. *Strategies:* Marking the text, writing in the margins, jigsaw, purposes for rereading, summarizing informational text.	Next Generation Sunshine - State Standards for U.S. History Close reading research Common Core State Standards 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technology subjects. Student reading data DuFour (2010) PLC elements Administrators Literacy Coach U.S. History Teachers
Quarter 2 1. Analyze student data. *Topics*: Scaffolded instruction, Assessing.	Facilities Technology Materials Time
Quarter 3 1. District Inservice Day *Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Text* (Fisher & Fry, 2013) Develop a close reading lesson. Follow-up: Implement close reading lesson. Reflect on implementation of close reading lesson. Administer post survey of students/teachers. Observations by two reading experts.	
Ongoing Reflections from teachers about knowledge, dispositions, and skills.	

This logic model was used to design the proposed Professional Learning Community model to assist during the planning process by assessing the potential

effectiveness of the approach, clarifying program strategies, and setting priorities for resources. During implementation, it reduces unintended effects such as getting off topic, and allows for incorporation of research based practices. The evaluation phase documentation identifies the accomplishments as well as problems with the outcomes (University of Kansas, 2013).

This chapter presented the problem of practice for East Coast High School. Also discussed were the organizational context in which the problem resided and the factors that impact the problem.

CHAPTER TWO: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY MODEL

Introduction

Now that I have explained the problem of practice and the context in which it resides, I will further delineate the problem of practice and the rationale for the proposed design to address the problem. More specifically, drawing on design-based research, as defined by Wang and Hannafin (2002) "a systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually sensitive design principles and theories" (p. 6) is explained in detail.

Problem of Practice

As stated earlier, the results of the 2012-2013 FCAT 2.0 Reading and FCAT Reading Retake tests taken at East Coast High School, indicated that 600 of 1,675 (36%) students in Grades 9-12 exhibited reading deficits that hinder graduation requirements and college or career readiness. Approximately 400 of those 1,675 students were required to take U.S. History during their 10^{th} grade year, the same year they were tested for reading proficiency in order to meet graduation requirements. Three U.S. History teachers account for approximately 75% of those students. Consequently, the goal of this professional learning community model is to address history teacher capacity through participation in a professional learning community in order to improve students' reading achievement.

At the national level, reading demands in college, the workplace, and citizenship have increased (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Barton, 2000; Common Core State Standards (2014a). If students do not develop the necessary reading proficiency to graduate with a high school diploma, they are at risk of unemployment creating a potential burden on society; and they are not ready to seek higher education which could result in limiting job opportunities and career choices. Students have not been getting enough sustained exposure to develop reading strategies in expository text which makes up the majority of reading in college and in the workplace (Afferbach et al., 2008; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

In the state of Florida, reading proficiency is also required for end-of-course assessments (EOC) for Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology, U.S. History, and Civics as stated in Florida Statute 1008.22 (2010). These state assessments not only require high order comprehension skills in disciplinary literacy but they are also required to count as much as 30% of a student's final grade in the course (F.S. 1008.22, 2010).

The ECHS School Improvement Plan states that the school's mission statement is to serve every student with excellence, and the vision statement declares that ECHS will serve every student in an environment of college and career readiness through a professional and collaborative community supported by all its stakeholders.

Context for design. Florida Statute 1011.62, 2013 called for and defined a research-based reading instruction allocation to provide reading instruction to students in Grades K-12. Within this statute lay the provision for a reading coach to support teachers in making instructional decisions based on student data and to improve teacher delivery

of effective reading instruction in the content areas. State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.053 (2011) further delineated that the literacy coach must model and provide effective instructional strategies and facilitate study groups for teachers to increase instructional capacity while meeting the needs of all students to improve student achievement. Coastal School District has required all teachers to participate in a professional learning community at the school site level as a part of the Coastal School District Instructional Personnel Performance Appraisal System to address the literacy needs of the students situated within the lowest 25% of the school's reading scores. As stated in the East Coast High School Improvement Plan, the literacy coach has been directed to establish a collaborative team to focus on the Common Core State Standards to serve in an advisory and professional development capacity.

These parameters frame the problem of practice for the literacy coach to devise a plan for implementation of a PLC to educate U.S. History teachers on effective close reading techniques to increase teacher capacity with a focus to improve student reading achievement. A smaller group of teachers within the larger context of the school supports better communication flow and greater face-to-face interaction (Bryk, Camburn, & Louid, 1999).

Goals/expected outcomes of design. As indicated in the Logic Model presented in Table 3, the goals and expected outcomes of this dissertation in practice are to (a) build teacher capacity by demonstrating the knowledge, dispositions, and skills of pedagogical knowledge for CCSS, disciplinary literacy, close reading techniques, and comprehension for their U. S. history students; (b) improve teachers' instructional efficacy; and (c)

improve students' reading achievement by designing a professional learning community model.

Key Elements of Design

Senge (1990) brought forth the idea of a learning organization in his book entitled *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. The focus of his work is about organizations as systems and includes five disciplines. He identified personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking as five disciplines operating as the foundation of a learning community.

Senge's (1990) concepts have been further explored within schools and consequently labeled professional learning communities by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many (2010). A professional learning community, according to DuFour (2014) is:

> an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. . . . Underlying assumption-improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning or educators. (para. 1)

By sharing similar values and vision, there is a focus on students' learning (Hord, 2004). In addition, traditional professional development has not been viewed as effective because individual autonomy is seen as possibly reducing teacher efficacy when teachers cannot count on peers to reinforce objectives (Louis et al., 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). There is a collective responsibility which helps to sustain commitment, puts peer pressure and accountability on those who do not do their fair share, and eases isolation (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Reflective professional inquiry includes conversations

about knowledge, examination of practice, and application of new ideas and information to address students' needs (Stoll et al., 2006). Interdependence is central to collaboration. A goal of better teaching practices is not achievable without connecting collaborative activity and achievement of shared purpose (Stoll et al., 2006). Group as well as individual learning is promoted as the school learning community interacts, engages in dialogue and deliberates about information and data while interpreting it communally (Stoll et al., 2006).

The identified problem of practice is intended to improve teachers' capacity to demonstrate disposition, knowledge, and skills of reading comprehension by the implementation of a PLC which will incorporate key elements of the DuFour Model for Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, 2010). The PLC reflects five characteristics which appear to work together (Hord, 2004; Louis, Kruse, & Associates, 1995) to build teachers' individual and collective capacity for promoting students' learning (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). The model, including the elements and characteristics, is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

DuFour's Elements and Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities

Element	Characteristics
Focus of Learning	Do teachers work together to improve results for students, teachers, and the school?
Collaborative Culture	Do teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice with a focus on improving student achievement? Does the administration support the plan and implementation?
Collaborative Inquiry	Do teachers inquire about best practices in teaching and learning, to develop new skills and capabilities leading to new experiences and awareness?
Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Do teachers gather evidence of current levels of student learning, develop strategies and ideas to build on strengths and weaknesses in learning, implement those strategies, analyze the impact of changes, and apply new knowledge in the next cycle? Do teachers volunteer to participate?
Results Oriented Mindset	Do teachers develop and pursue measurable improvement goals that are aligned to goals for learning? Do teachers use reflection as a learning process? Are efforts based on results and not intentions?

Significance of Design in Similar Contexts

A report from the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (Lee & Smith, 1994), utilizing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, shared findings about 11,794 students enrolled in 820 secondary schools across the

United States. Schools identified as restructured as a communal structure or providing professional learning communities showed more academic gains in mathematics, science, history, and reading than students in traditional schools (Lee & Smith, 1994). Lee, Smith, & Croninger (1995) reported that teachers experienced higher morale when participating in a learning community and that students dropped out less frequently and cut fewer classes. O'Day, Goertz, & Floden (1995) found that teachers' attitudes and abilities were shaped and reinforced in professional development contexts where communities of teachers brought in new ideas for examination and discussion. Furthermore, according to O'Day et al., this structure resulted in smaller achievement gaps between groups of students, and overall the students learned more.

In another report based on the National Education Longitudinal Study, Kaufman (1988) analyzed data for most of the same students in their last two years of high school. This sample included 9,570 students enrolled in 787 secondary schools in the U.S. Findings indicated that restructured schools in which teachers have more authority over instruction and curriculum, positively affected students' learning in the last two years as well as the first two years of high school (Lee et al., 1995). Darling-Hammond (1993) reported that teachers liked opportunities to share what they knew. Consulting with peers and observing peers teaching within a professional learning community deepened teachers' professional understanding. Darling-Hammond (1995) further noted that schools that initiated school improvement efforts by looking into teaching and learning, and discussing how their practices were effective for students, showed academic results more quickly than schools that did not.

Sykes (1996) shared that "an invaluable resource for teachers is a professional community that can serve as a source of insight and wisdom about problems of practice" (p. 466). Additionally, a longitudinal study of 16 high schools in California and Michigan stated that teachers' groups and professional communities are an effective form of intervention and reform which supports risk-taking and struggle involved in transforming practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Rationale for Design

How the needs for design were determined. The needs for this specific design were determined by the following constraints:

1. The school improvement plan mission statement delineates that students will be served through a professional "collaborative community" (East Coast High School, 2012, p. 1).
2. Florida Statute 1011.62 (2013) details the provision of a highly qualified reading coach to support teachers in making instructional decision based on student data and to improve teacher delivery of effective reading instruction in the content areas based on student need.
3. Professional learning community participation is required at ECHS.

Using DuFour's design to meet the problem of practice goals. DuFour's (2010) professional learning communities provide the elements of the design along with the characteristics of each. This particular framework, as outlined by DuFour, is the model promoted in Coastal School District; thus, it is practical to utilize this design at

East Coast High School. Each of the five elements, its characteristics, and how it implemented for this dissertation in practice is described in the following sections.

Focus on learning. With a focus on learning, teachers work together to improve results for students, teachers, and the school. There is a commitment to learning for all students and teachers. Monitoring students' learning through the use of formative assessment such as daily assignments, discussions, and projects allows teachers to make changes based on students' needs. "PLCs are dedicated to the idea that their organization exists to ensure that all students learn essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions" (DuFour, 2014, para. 6).

Focus on learning is realized for this problem of practice by focusing on the long term and short term goals listed in the logic model. The short term goal is to build teacher capacity by demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of pedagogical knowledge for CCSS disciplinary literacy, close reading techniques, and comprehension for the U.S. History teachers' students. It is achievement centered. The long term goals to improve U.S. History teachers' instructional efficacy and improve students' achievement also places a focus on learning for both the teacher and students.

Examples of this element begin with a vision of the school which explicitly states that students will be served in a college and career readiness culture through a professional and collaborative community supported by all its stakeholders (East Coast High School, 2012). Further examples include the literacy coach and the U.S. History teachers analyzing FCAT 2.0 reading data to determine the make-up of the literacy

abilities in their classes and reviewing and discussing FAIR scores in reading comprehension to monitor progress throughout the school year.

Close reading. Close reading has been selected for this model because it is an instructional practice to teach students to read strategically and analytically. According to Frey and Fisher (2012), "The purpose of close reading is to build the habits of readers as they engage with complex texts of the discipline and to build their stamina and skills for being able to do so independently" (p. 7).

For the purpose of this model, close reading utilizes the following definition: "Close reading is an intensive analysis of a text in order to come to terms with what it says, how it says it, and what it means" (Shanahan, 2012, para. 5). It is closely tied to the implementation of CCSS, anchor standard 1.

> Close, analytic reading stresses engaging with a text of sufficient complexity directly and examining meaning thoroughly and methodically, encouraging students to read and reread deliberately. Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole. (PARCC, 2014, para. 10)

The close reading technique used in this model to attain a deeper reading comprehension of U.S. History text is outlined in Table 6.

Table 6

Close Reading Model: Definition, Teacher Activities, and Expected Outcomes

Close Reading Defined	Teacher Activities	Expected Outcomes
Attentiveness to words, ideas, structure, flow, and purpose Ability to answer more complex questions Analyzes the author's meaning Focuses on the relationship between the author and the reader	Do teachers use scaffolded instruction? Do teachers use primary or secondary source historical documents that are complex? Do teachers explain how and why historians read various texts? Do teachers focus on specific pre-reading activities? Do teachers set a purpose for reading? Do teachers scaffold instruction for shared or paired reading of text? Do teachers scaffold instruction for marking the text while reading? Do teachers allow for discussion while students respond to text-dependent questions? Do teachers scaffold the rereading process to clarify meaning? Do teachers scaffold student instruction to teach how to compare and contrast different sources about a similar topic?	Is student ability enhanced to read historical literacy? Is student engagement and comprehension enhanced? Do students make historical claims supported by documented evidence? Do students learn there are multiple perspectives surrounding one topic?

Collaborative culture. The second element of DuFour's design is collaborative culture. Collaboration represents a process in which teachers "work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 559). The collaborative culture is expressed in all elements of the systematic process of the proposed logic model.

Examples of this collaborative culture include obtaining permission and support from the school administration to develop such a plan of action based on teacher/student need. Providing time to meet during the regularly scheduled work day, and providing the materials necessary to implement the project is also required. Scaffolded support is necessary to address the problem of practice and for the team working together to develop, implement, and reflect on a group designed lesson plan (Appendix A) that focuses on close reading of disciplinary literacy to improve student comprehension.

Collaborative inquiry. Teachers inquire about best practices in teaching and learning, resulting in development of new skills and capabilities leading to new experiences and awareness in this element of the PLC. Inquiry is evident during the phase of the logic model which incorporates the activities. It is through the activities that inquiry can be integrated.

Collaborative inquiry is demonstrated through this model when teachers voluntarily sign up for this particular PLC. They agree to participate in order to learn about best practices for close reading techniques so they may improve disciplinary literacy comprehension for their own teaching as well as student learning.

Examples of collaborative inquiry include U.S. History teachers working together during the PLC meetings to discuss the research and application of what they are learning and how to incorporate their learning into their classroom practice. Specific inquiry questions such as the following were recommended by DuFour et al. (2010) as probes to elicit inquiry:

> What led you to that conclusion? Can you help me understand your thinking here? What aspects of what you have proposed do you feel are most significant or essential? I'm hearing your primary goal is. . . . I'm asking about your assumption because I feel. . . . (p. 3,182)

Commitment to continuous improvement. This element of the PLC model is evident as teachers gather evidence of current levels of student learning, develop strategies and ideas to build on strengths and weaknesses in learning, implement those strategies, analyze the impact of changes, and apply new knowledge in the next cycle. This appears in the logic model under outputs. Commitment to continuous improvement is achieved through teachers' voluntary participation and attendance at all PLC meetings and commitment to implementation of methods learned and discussed during the meetings. Team members focus on improvement goals according to their professional growth plans (PGP) which are, in turn, aligned with the school and district goals for reading achievement. An example goal for this might include: To improve FCAT 2.0 reading scores by participating in a professional learning community (PLC) with United States History teachers and the literacy coach with a focus on common core, disciplinary literacy, and reading comprehension strategies and techniques. Examples of commitment

to continuous improvement include teachers gathering evidence of student performance (FCAT 2.0 data, FAIR progress monitoring data, student work samples); learning strategies to improve student achievement (close reading techniques with disciplinary literacy); implementing those strategies (lesson plan on close reading [See Appendix A]); analyzing the impact of the strategies (assessing student work); and applying new knowledge in the next cycle.

Results orientation mindset. When teachers develop and pursue measurable improvement goals that are aligned with goals for learning, a results oriented mindset is in place. The focus is on the outcomes of the logic model, and teachers develop and pursue measurable goals that are aligned with those learning goals.

A results orientation mindset is demonstrated as teachers review student data, constantly striving to improve student achievement by looking at the results. The clearest example of this results oriented mindset occurs when the teachers develop the lesson plan together, implement the plan, and evaluate the outcomes including student products to determine if results were satisfactory. As a result they see benefits and continue to seek to improve their pedagogical knowledge for CCSS, disciplinary literacy, close reading, and comprehension through continued collaboration with the literacy coach and their peers.

Decision Making/Documentation of Process

This problem of practice will be documented in a myriad of ways to assist with determining the effectiveness of the professional learning community. Student data from FCAT 2.0 and FAIR scores for three assessment periods, student name, classroom

teacher, and student grade level will be compiled on a spreadsheet to progress monitor student reading comprehension as measured by the state of Florida (See Appendix B). These two quantitative measures will provide independent measures of progress in reading comprehension throughout the implementation of the professional learning community. "The views of teachers surveyed can help direct professional development toward the ultimate goal of improved performance by their students" (Theobald & Luckowski, 2013, p. 309). Teachers will complete a survey on their disciplinary literacy techniques employed while teaching U.S. History to assist with the direction to take before and after the implementation of the PLC (See Appendix C). The surveys provide a comprehensive quantitative data analysis of changes in the ways in which the teachers teach content in their history classrooms. Students will complete a survey on their perceptions regarding teachers' disciplinary literacy techniques (See Appendix D). This student survey will also provide an analysis of changes in student perceptions of the teachers' disciplinary techniques in the classroom. Three observations prior to the implementation of the PLC will be conducted by the literacy coach and literacy expert in the U.S. History classroom of the participating teachers (See Appendix E). These observations will show qualitative data regarding disciplinary literacy techniques used in the history classrooms. Agendas for each meeting will outline the focus of the meeting (See Appendix F). Teachers will sign in on district in-service records to receive points toward recertification making them accountable for attendance at the meetings. At the completion of each PLC meeting teachers will complete an evaluation sheet containing the following sections: (a) Things I Learned, (b) My Next Steps Are, (c)

Comments/Concerns Still to be Addressed, and (d) Suggestions for Next Time (See Appendix G). PLC evaluations provide information to the literacy coach about the individual needs of the teachers. The teachers will create, implement, and complete a written reflection on a lesson utilizing the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Language Arts Florida Standards, 2014) utilizing close reading techniques to improve comprehension for their U. S. History classes (See Appendix H).

FCAT 2.0 and FAIR spreadsheet. The decision to compile and track student data from FCAT 2.0 and FAIR to document progress by using a data spreadsheet (See Appendix B) was made based on DuFour's four out of five elements of the professional learning community. The focus of learning and collaborative culture requires teachers to work together to improve results. In this design it is recommended that teachers work together to compile data for decision making purposes in order to improve reading achievement scores. A commitment to continuous improvement delineates the cycle of teachers learning, implementing, and analyzing changes they make along the way to improve student achievement. It is suggested to meet the criteria for continuous improvement that teachers collect and analyze FCAT 2.0 and FAIR data.

Teacher and student surveys. Teacher and student surveys have been designed based on professional learning community questions developed by Zygouris-Coe (2012) (See Appendices C & D). The suggested disciplinary literacy guiding questions for teacher discussions have been turned into statements and included on the surveys utilizing a Likert-scale rating; 1 represents never and 5 represents always. Participating

teachers and students rate the teachers' disciplinary literacy instructional methods pre and post professional learning community implementation. It was decided to include these surveys as an optional evaluation method to provide quantitative data which when analyzed can determine if there is a statistical significance between pre and post perceptions of teachers' implementation of disciplinary literacy instructional methods.

Observation tool. Classroom observations conducted by literacy experts pre and post PLC implementation can assist with determining classroom practices. To help focus the observations an observation tool will be utilized (Baldridge, 2014). This tools helps determine the type of text (e.g., textbook, document based questions, primary source documents, political cartoons, computer research, charts and graphs) used in the classroom and who is doing the reading (e.g., teacher, small group, round-robin, paired, independent). When implemented, the observers will be trained to address inter-rater reliability.

Additional documentation. Sign in sheets to track teacher attendance at the PLCs assists with providing documentation of participation in staff development. Agendas provide specific elements addressed at all the meeting to maintain a focus on improving student achievement. End of meeting reflective evaluations contribute to the results oriented mindset proposed by DuFour (2014) by providing the literacy coach with unanswered questions, comments, and how teachers are going to implement what they learned. Creation of an actual close reading lesson, implementation of the lesson, and group and individual reflections about the process will further scaffold teachers in to application of the instructional practice. This dissertation in practice was undertaken

only after the Institutional Review Board of the University of Central Florida approved the study (See Appendix I).

In summary, this chapter of the dissertation in practice explained the key elements, the significance, and the rationale for the design of the PLC. Additionally, the five elements and corresponding characteristics of the DuFour Model (2010) have been explained in detail; and examples of how they might operate within this model have been provided. In Chapter 3, methods suggested to use in the analysis and evaluation for the professional learning community model are detailed.

CHAPTER THREE: MODEL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation in practice reviews the goals and expected outcomes for this model. It further identifies the anticipated professional learning indicators, outcomes, implementation, and evaluation procedures.

Goals/Expected Outcomes

The goals of this dissertation in practice are to (a) build teacher capacity by demonstrating the knowledge, dispositions, and, skills of pedagogical knowledge for Common Core State Standards, disciplinary literacy, close reading techniques, and comprehension; (b) improve teachers' instructional efficacy; and (c) improve students' reading achievement by designing a professional learning community model. The expected outcomes as stated in the logic model presented in Table 3 are to (a) enhance teachers' beliefs that they can influence how well students learn, including the difficult and/or motivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994); and (b) instill a desire to improve their pedagogical knowledge for Common Core State Standards, disciplinary literacy, close reading, and comprehension through collaboration with peers and the literacy coach.

Knowledge Acquisition

The specific focus of the PLC model is to improve students' reading achievement through collaborative study and implementation of disciplinary literacy and close reading techniques to improve comprehension. DuFour's (2010) elements and characteristics of a professional learning community provide the framework for the design of the study. The DuFour framework is utilized because it is currently promoted by the Space Coast School

District. The elements, characteristics and indicators of growth are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

DuFour's Elements and Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities and Indicators of Growth

Element	Characteristics	Indicator(s)
Focus of learning	Do teachers work together to improve results for students, teachers, and the school?	Do teachers use student data for decision making purposes? Do teachers attend and participate in PLC meetings?
Collaborative culture	Do teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice with a focus on improving student achievement?	Do teachers use student data for decision making purposes? Do teachers attend and participate in PLC meetings?
Collaborative inquiry	Do teachers inquire about best practices in teaching and learning, to develop new skills and capabilities leading to new experiences and awareness?	Do teachers volunteer to participate in PLC to improve students' reading achievement by improving their pedagogical knowledge?
Commitment to continuous improvement	Do teachers gather evidence of current levels of student learning, develop strategies and ideas to build on strengths and weaknesses in learning, implement those strategies, analyze the impact of changes, and apply new knowledge in the next cycle?	Do teachers collect and analyze FCAT and FAIR data? Do teachers learn, employ, and analyze Close Reading techniques? Do teachers continue to change by participating in the PLC for the following school year?
Results oriented mindset	Do teachers develop and pursue measurable improvement goals that are aligned to goals for learning. Efforts must be based on results and not intentions.	Do teachers align their PGP goals with the school's vision and mission and the school improvement plan? Do results from qualitative measures show improvement? Do results from quantitative measures show improvement?

Based on the DuFour framework, a logic model previously displayed in Tables 3 and 4, was created to specifically address how the program is expected to operate. This logic model shows the connections between the (a) priorities, i.e., short- and long-term goals, program results; and (b) outputs and outcomes/impact of the plan, i.e., resources, and activities. Logic models are helpful in monitoring and evaluating a program by specifying what to measure (Lawton, Brandon, Cicchinelli, & Kekahio, 2014).

Common categories of evaluation questions take into account: (a) needs, (b) process, (c) outcomes, and (d) impact (Taylor-Powell, & Henert, 2008). Possible evaluation questions for this model are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Evaluation Questions for the Professional Learning Community Design

Evaluation Questions			
Needs	Process	Outcomes	Impact
Is there sufficient political support for the PLC?	What teaching/learning strategies are taught during the PLC?	What learning, action, and/or conditions changed/improved as a result of the PLC?	What difference did the PLC make for teachers' pedagogical knowledge and students' reading achievement?
What does the research say about improving student disciplinary reading achievement through the use of a PLC?	How is the PLC operating? What internal programmatic or organizational factors affect the PLC performance?	Were the intended goals for the PLC accomplished?	What promises were accomplished? What was not accomplished?
What currently exists to address implementing a PLC for improving student disciplinary reading achievement?	To what extent is the PLC being implemented as planned? Why or why not?	What was learned from participation in the PLC?	What learning, action, and/or conditions have changed/improved as a result of the PLC?

Documentation of Process

As represented in Tables 9 and 10, there are multiple indicators throughout this design to document the process of growth for students and teachers. Table 9 displays the indicators which will be used to document student growth. Students' (a) pre- and post-survey (See Appendix D) results, (b) pre- and post-FCAT reading scores, and FAIR reading comprehension scores (See Appendix B) will be analyzed for changes in perceptions of teachers' disciplinary literacy techniques. FCAT and FAIR are two

different measures for reading achievement (one standardized and one diagnostic in nature) which will also be analyzed.

Table 9

Documentation of Student Growth Throughout the Process

Professional Learning Community		Indicator(s)
Pre	Post	of Student Growth
Disciplinary Literacy Survey	Disciplinary Literacy Survey	Did students' perceptions of U.S. History teachers' use of disciplinary literacy applications change? Is there a statistical difference of .05 or less after running an independent t test on the pre and post surveys?
FCAT Reading Score	FCAT Reading Score	Is there a change in the state reading test score for students?
FAIR Reading Comprehension Score	FAIR Reading Comprehension Score	Is there a change in the reading comprehension score between assessment periods 1 and 2 or 2 and 3?

Table 10 details the document of teacher growth throughout the process. Teachers' progress will analyzed through: (a) a self-survey about disciplinary literacy techniques (See Appendix C), (b) three classroom observations by reading experts (See Appendix E), (c) attendance sheet and evaluations for attendance at each PLC meeting (See Appendix G), and (d) the creation, implementation, and self-reflection of a close reading lesson plan. Modifications to the calendar may be necessary as unexpected requirements from the administration, district or state may interfere with the proposed plan.

Table 10

Documentation of Teacher Growth Throughout the Process

Professional Learning Community (PLC)			Indicator(s)
Pre	Throughout	Post	of Teacher Growth
Disciplinary Literacy Survey		Disciplinary Literacy Survey	Did the teachers' own perceptions of disciplinary literacy classroom application change between pre and post PLC implementation? Is there a statistical difference of .05 or less after running an independent t test on the results of the surveys?
	Attendance at PLC Meetings		Did the teachers sign in on the attendance sheet at each PLC meeting?
Three reading observations by reading expert		Three reading observations by reading expert	Did a reading expert observe each of the teachers implementing close reading techniques before and/or after implementation of the PLC?
	Evaluation for each PLC meeting		Did the teachers complete written evaluations for each PLC meeting?
	Creation of close reading lesson plan		Did the teachers write a detailed written reflection about the lesson plan implementation?
	Implementation of close reading lesson plan		
Development of professional growth plan		Professional growth plan evaluation	Did the teachers incorporate goals about student reading achievement, comprehension, close reading, and/or disciplinary literacy in to their Professional Growth Plan?

Summary

This chapter of the dissertation in practice explained the anticipated goals and outcomes, implementation and evaluation procedures, and plan for modification. The next chapter will discuss implications and recommendations for the proposed solution to this problem of practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications

The majority of teachers participate in workshop-style professional development sessions during a school year (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, & Richardson, 2009). However, the workshop-style professional development has little to no effect on student achievement or teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward (formerly known as the National Staff Development Council) reports that professional development for teachers should be ongoing, meet regularly, and collectively share responsibility for all students (Stansbury, 2012). Learning Forward (2014) identified seven characteristics of "Standards for Professional Learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results" (para. 1). Those seven characteristics, a description of each, and what they look like in this model are described in Table 11.

Table 11

Standards for Professional Learning Addressed in Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model

Standard	Description of Standard	Addressed in U.S. History PLC Plan
Learning communities	Focus on learning Continuous improvement Goal alignment	Reading comprehension Meetings throughout the school year Aligned to school improvement plan and teachers' evaluation system
Resources	Prioritizing Monitoring Coordinating resources	Meeting calendar set Attendance sheets for and evaluations for each meeting Resources shared between the literacy coach and the U.S. History teachers
Leadership	Develop capacity Creating support systems for professional learning	Leadership empowered literacy coach
Data	Using a variety of sources and types of student and educator data	FCAT 2.0 Reading scores FAIR scores Student survey
Learning designs	Integrating theories Research	Disciplinary literacy Close reading Comprehension Common Core State Standards
Implementation	Research on change Support for long term change	Extended over a period of a school year Continuing interdepartmental relationship into the next school year through use of new reading curriculum
Outcomes	Aligns outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards	Instructional Personnel Performance Appraisal System Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

As a result, if the PLC model is aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning it will include the elements of effective professional development. Teachers who are fully committed to this process are likely to increase their pedagogical knowledge and improve students' reading abilities for disciplinary literacy. Further implications regarding this design assume that the leadership, support, time, and resources are in place to support a sustained effort. Assumptions regarding the model are that aspects of a U. S. History professional learning community will tie into the teacher evaluation system and make explicit connections between professional learning and classroom practice needs, and that funding for materials will be provided. Regarding external factors, it should be noted that school calendar constraints may interfere with intended agendas. Because of this, attendance may result in inclusive or representative participation. Additionally, state, district, learning community, and school culture may impact group success, e.g., calendar, funding, instructional assignment.

Limitations

A well-designed research study adds to the knowledge in a field. In contrast, this dissertation in practice is designed to contribute to the growth of knowledge development for a specific population (Mark, Henry, & Jules, 2000). In addition, this plan is developed to address the needs of the stakeholders to improve the validity of results and to enhance use (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). It is also intended to have immediate impact. Finally, an external evaluator separate from the designer and facilitator could provide an independent analysis after implementation of the model.

Recommendations

As a result of this dissertation in practice, the following recommendations are suggested in order to develop a more complete picture of the strengths and weaknesses of this model for professional development focused on improving students' reading achievement.

1. Propose and share this model with the leadership team at ECHS.
2. Develop collegial relationship between the literacy coach and U.S. History teachers by collaborating on World History and U.S. History utilizing the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Language Arts Florida Standards, 2014) as recommended by the school district in the intensive reading classes to improve students' reading achievement.
3. Complete a study utilizing this model to determine if the intended outcomes are achieved.
4. Share this model with other content area subjects within the school to continue on the continuum of implementation of PLCs as directed the school district.
5. Share this model with other Coastal School District literacy coaches to encourage PLC implementation at other district schools as required by the school district.

Program Preparation for Dissertation in Practice

A dissertation in practice is scholarship on a problem of practice that

1. is understood through a lens of social justice;
2. is defined via a process of systematic and intentional inquiry;
3. is informed by a critical review of school, academic, and community data and perspectives, and:
4. conforms to the criteria for scholarship in Lee Shulman's (2004) triarchic definition and promulgated in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate.

According to Shulman, scholarship is (a) significant learning that is made public; (b) Shared in a way that invites critical review; and (c) allows others in the field to build on what has been learned (Duquesne University, n.d.).

Exploring this explanation of the dissertation in practice was the beginning of my preparation to complete this dissertation in practice.

Coursework. Scholarly coursework provided by experts in the fields of reading education, leadership, and curriculum and instruction was the foundation on which this dissertation in practice was based. It was through the coursework that I gained confidence in my expertise as a scholar and in my ability to connect research to practice. Through the knowledge and self-reliance gained, I began to change my approaches in collaborating with other professionals as a practitioner in the field of education. I recall in the second year of the program, my employer stated that he was consulting me because I was a leader.

Cohort. A community of practice is described as a group "of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wegner, n.d., p. 1). My cohort acted as a community of practice through each of the characteristics which are crucial to being considered a community of practice. The domain of interest my cohort shared was in obtaining our doctoral degrees and in our collective competence in meeting the expectations that were required. As such, my community joined in activities and discussions whether assigned to work on a group project or just for the sheer support of getting together to talk about our common experiences and offer support to each other. Our practice contained a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, professors, curriculum, and assignments. Through these experiences we developed our shared practice.

Connections to practice. The habit of mind, teaching to help students understand content; the habit of hand, providing the opportunity for practicing what is learned; and habit of the heart, instilling a sense of value to commitment and service were instilled throughout the program as a way to deal with problems and uncertainties that are continually faced by professionals in education (Shulman, 2006). Applying my knowledge of the content was extended to my practice either on a daily basis or during my two labs of practice. My first lab of practice provided me the opportunity to teach a graduate level secondary reading methods course under the mentorship of a tenured professor of reading. The second lab of practice gave me the opportunity to implement a summer reading practicum for graduate reading students and for third grade students who had not passed the state assessment test for reading. Both experiences provided me

opportunities to work with teachers, graduate students, and administrators, allowing me to connect research and theory to practice and instilled in me a sense of value and commitment. As a result, I volunteered to speak at the University of Central Florida Reading Education gathering to share my experiences with other graduate students. I also presented my knowledge gleaned from the program at a district level in-service on two different occasions. Finally, I was able to present and share my work at the International Reading Association Conference in New Orleans in May, 2014.

Summary

I became a more scholarly student as I learned to read and write at such a demanding level, always searching for more information, never feeling as if my research was complete. I was not only working full-time, but I was often working on this dissertation in practice for up to 30 hours per week, requiring me to make compromises in my personal life. This commitment has challenged my mental capacity, endurance, and caused me to question my judgment. However, my thirst to learn about reading education, to improve myself as an educator, and to do something significant by achieving such a goal was worth all the hours put into completing this dissertation in practice as a culminating experience of my doctoral studies.

APPENDIX A: CLOSE READING LESSON DESIGN

What Caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?

EXTRA! MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED WEDNESDAY NIGHT IN THE DISTRICT WHERE THE RIOTING HAD BEEN THE WORST, AND SINCE THEN THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE TROUBLE EXTRA!

Stay Off the Streets, Let the Law Settle It

THE Chicago Defender

WORLD'S GREATEST WEEKLY

Foolish Talk Is No Good Now. Stop It.

VOL. XIV NO. 31. SATURDAY CHICAGO, AUGUST 2, 1919 SATURDAY PRICE FIVE CENTS

RIOT SWEEPS CHICAGO

GHASTLY DEEDS OF RACE RIOTERS TOLD

Defender Reporter Faces Death in Attempt to Get Facts of Mob Violence; Hospitals Are Filled With Maimed Men and Women

LIST OF SLAIN IN FOUR DAYS' RIOTING

The complete list of the dead as a result of the three days of rioting includes twenty-six victims.

Baker, Henry, Colored, 2604 South State street, shot by stray bullet, died in Provident hospital. Body at Hill's undertaking rooms, 3634 South State street.

Brigandelle, Harold J., 22, white, 1221 Fourth avenue, Rock Island, Ill., shot during riot at State and Eleventh streets. Body at Grone's undertaking rooms, 124 East Twenty-second street.

Chanel, P. L. (supposed), white, body at Hill's undertaking rooms.

Crawford, James, 21, Colored, 1919 Federal street, shot at Twenty-ninth street and Cottage Grove avenue. Died in Michael Reese hospital.

Dozier, Oscar, 27, Colored, 3238 Indiana

Sullivan's undertaking rooms, 39 East Sixty-first street.

Miles, John, Colored, shot during riot at State and Thirty-seventh streets. Body at undertaking rooms, 104 South State street.

Otterson, William, white, 230 West Forty-second street, shot, and stabbed. Died at Mercy hospital.

Perel, Morris, 25, white, 2201 Indiana avenue, shot during riot at State and Fifty-first streets. Died at Washington Park hospital.

Powers, Joseph, 40, white, 632 West Forty-second place, street car conductor, shot at Root street and Halsted avenue. Body at undertaking rooms, 3509 West Thirty-eighth street.

Simpson, John Yu., 31, Colored policeman, 3910 Calumet avenue, shot by Negro rioter at Thirty-first street and Wa-

Gun Battles and Fighting in Streets Keep the City in an Uproar

French Give Opinion of Riot

Foreigners Say Lack of Color

4,000 Troops in Armory Ready to Patrol City; Scores Are Killed

The refusal of Policeman Daniel Callahan (white) of the Cottage Grove avenue station to arrest George Stan-

word was passed around in almost the district of the whites, for revenge. As the fever of race antagonism gained

The Documents

- Document A: Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans, John Hope Franklin
- Document B: "The Causes of the Chicago Race Riot", Walter White
- Document C: *The Chicago Race Riots*, Carl Sandburg

Directions

- Complete the "What Caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?" graphic organizer as you close read Documents A, B, and C.
- Be sure to note each document's title, publication date, and type of document, as well as the document's author and audience(s).
- For each document, answer the Essential Question, What Caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?
- Provide three (3) text-based evidence reasons from each document to support your identified cause of the Chicago Race Riots of 1919.

Document A

The most serious racial outbreak occurred in immediate origin in an altercation at Lake Michigan beach. A young African American swimming offshore had drifted into water that was customarily used by whites. White swimmers commanded him to return to his part of the beach, and some threw stones at him. When the young man went down and drowned, blacks declared that he had been murdered… Distorted rumors circulated among blacks and whites concerning the incident and the subsequent events at the beach. Mobs sprang up in various parts of the city, and during the night there was sporadic fighting. In the next afternoon, white bystanders meddled with blacks as they went home from work. Some were pulled off streetcars and whipped… On the South Side a group of young blacks stabbed an old Italian peddler to death, and a white laundry operator was also stabbed to death… When authorities counted the casualties, the tally sheet gave the results of a miniature war. Thirty-eight people had been killed, including 15 whites and 23 blacks; of the 537 people injured, 178 were white and 342 were black. There is no record of the racial identity of the remaining 17. More than 1,000 families, mostly black, were homeless as a result of the burnings and general destruction of property.

Source: A work of history by John Hope Franklin called *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. This excerpt is from the Eighth Edition, published in 1987, but the book was first published in 1947. Franklin is a United States historian and past president of the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association.

Close Read: Modeled

1. Code the text based on our shared reading model.

   ? = I have a question about …

   ! = Surprising…

   + = I'd like to know more…

   ***** = This fits with what I know…

2. Contribute to and benefit from our class discussion about the text.
3. Reread the text to answer questions.
   a. What type of document is this? When was it published? Who is the intended audience?
   b. What are ellipses used for? Why did the author choose to use ellipses for punctuation in these particular places in the text?
4. According to this document, what was the cause of the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?

Document B

In a number of cases during the period from January, 1918, to August, 1919, there were bombings of colored homes and houses occupied by Negroes outside of the "Black Belt." During this period no less than twenty bombings took place, yet only two persons have been arrested and neither of the two has been convicted, both cases being continued.

Since 1915 the colored population of Chicago has more than doubled, increasing in four years from a little over 50,000 to what is now estimated to be between 125,000 and 150,000. Most of them lived in the area bounded by the railroad on the west, 30th Street on the north, 40th Street on the south and Ellis Avenue on east. Already overcrowded, this so-called "Black Belt" could not possibly hold the doubled colored population. One cannot put ten gallons of water in a five-gallon pail. Although many Negroes had been living in "white" neighborhoods, the increased exodus from the old areas created an hysterical group of persons who formed "Property Owners 'Associations" for the purpose of keeping intact white neighborhoods…

Source: From "The Causes of the Chicago Race Riot," by Walter White, October 1919. This article was published in *The Crisis*, an African-American newspaper. The author was a leader of the NAACP, an organization devoted to protecting African-American rights.

Close Read: Guided

1. Independently read the text.
2. With a partner, discuss what has been noted (text coding, graphic organizer responses).
3. Contribute to and benefit from our class discussion about the text.
4. Reread the text to answer questions.
    a. What type of document is this? When was it published? Who is the intended audience?
    b. Explain what the "Black Belt" mean? Identify what led you to this understanding.
    c. Explain the phrase, "ten gallons of water in a five-gallon pail." Why did the author use this phrase in this text?
    d. According to this document, what was the cause of the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?

Document C

THE CHICAGO RACE RIOTS

THE so-called race riots in Chicago during the last week of July, 1919, started on a Sunday at a bathing beach. A colored boy swam across an imaginary segregation line. White boys threw rocks at him and knocked him off a raft. He was drowned. Colored people rushed to a policeman and asked for the arrest of the boys throwing stones. The policeman refused. As the dead body of the drowned boy was being handled, more rocks were thrown, on both sides. The policeman held on to his refusal to make arrests. Fighting then began that spread to all the borders of the Black Belt. The score at the end of three days was recorded as twenty negroes dead, fourteen white men dead, and a number of negro houses burned.

The riots furnished an excuse for every element of Gangland to go to it and test their prowess by the most ancient ordeals of the jungle. There was one section of the city that supplied more white hoodlums than any other section. It was the district around the stockyards and packing houses.

I asked Maclay Hoyne, states attorney of Cook County, "Does it seem to you that you get more tough birds from out around the stockyards than anywhere else in Chicago?" And he answered that more bank robbers, payroll bandits, automobile bandits, highwaymen and strong-arm crooks come from this particular district than

1

Source: *The Chicago Race Riots* by Carl Sandburg 1919. Reprint from *The Chicago Daily News* which assigned the writer to investigate three weeks before the riots began.

Close Read: Independent

1. Independently or collaboratively read the text.
2. With a partner, discuss what has been noted (text coding, graphic organizer responses).
3. According to this document, what was the cause of the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?
4. Reread Documents A, B, and C to thoughtfully and thoroughly complete your *What Caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?* graphic organizer. Be prepared to discuss and defend your responses in a class discussion.

Essential Question: What Caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?

Document Title, Publication Date, & Type of Document	**Author & Audience**	**According to this document, what caused the Chicago Race Riots of 1919?**	**Provide three, text-based evidence reasons from the document to support your identified cause of the Chicago Race Riots of 1919.**
Document A			
Document B			
Document C			

APPENDIX B: STUDENT READING DATA SPREADSHEET

	Student Reading Data					Reading Percentile Rank for Reading Comprehension		
2	Student Name	Grade	Class Period	U.S. History Teacher	FCAT 2.0 Reading Level	FAIR 1	FAIR 2	FAIR 3
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								
21								
22								
23								
24								
25								

APPENDIX C: TEACHER SURVEY

U.S. History PLC Teacher Survey

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
	Question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	I teach my students how history is organized.					
2	I teach my students how history is learned.					
3	I teach my students how history is communicated by historians.					
4	I teach my students to read like historians.					
5	I teach my students to think like a historian.					
6	I teach my students to write like a historian.					
7	I am the sole deliverer of knowledge in my classroom.					
8	Content knowledge is my primary focus.					
9	My instruction supports content and literacy simultaneously.					
10	I teach my students the literacy skills and tools they need to meet the demands of historical reading and learning.					
11	I include a variety of complex (and other) texts (and resources) for students to read, examine, and discuss.					
12	I model and think aloud how to think like historians do when engaging with text.					

13	I teach my students how to talk and write about history.					
14	I teach my students how to compare and critically evaluate multiple sources, provide evidence for their assertions (orally and in written form), and provide feedback to their peers.					
15	I teach my students how to communicate, write, evaluate, and reflect on history concepts, texts, and ideas.					
16	I model history-specific strategies to help mu students understand history in a deep way (e.g., close reading, source and document analysis, corroboration, and contextualization).					
17	I provide scaffolded feedback, support, and mentor students through the learning process.					
18	I use formative and summative assessment to guide my instruction.					
19	I hold high expectations for all students.					
20	I view my students as apprentices in the learning process of U.S. History.					
21	I allow my students to read complex texts, problem solve, inquire, collaborate, experiment, and reflect on their learning.					
22	I expect my students to be actively engaged in the learning process.					
23	I hold my students accountable for their own learning and for contributing to others learning in class.					
24	I expect students to monitor their learning and progress.					
25	I invite my literacy coach to spend time in my classroom and provide me with feedback on my instruction and student learning.					
26	I have frequent productive conversations with my fellow history teachers about ways to promote student disciplinary literacy and learning.					
27	I am a lifelong learner in pursuit of knowledge from the experts in my field for content and literacy skills alike.					

Questions for survey originated in Zygouris-Coe, V. (2012). Eyes on disciplinary literacy. *Reading Today Online*. Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/readingtoday/post/rty/2012/07/24 eyes_on_disciplinary_literacy.aspx#.U2OvfPldWSo

APPENDIX D: STUDENT SURVEY

U.S. History PLC Student Survey

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
	Question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	My history teacher teaches me how history is organized.					
2	My history teacher teaches me how to learn history.					
3	My history teacher teaches me how history is communicated by historians.					
4	My teacher teaches me to read like a historian.					
5	My teacher teaches me to think like a historian.					
6	My history teacher teaches me to write like a historian.					
7	My history teacher uses many resources to teach me history (e.g., articles, primary and secondary sources documents, DBA's, Socratic seminar).					
8	My history teacher gives me notes; there is no need to read anything else.					
9	My history teacher models specific strategies to help me understand history in a deep way (e.g., close reading, source and document analysis, corroboration, and contextualization).					
10	My history teacher expects me to read complex texts, problem solve, inquire, collaborate, experiment, and reflect on my learning.					
11	My history teacher expects me to be actively engaged in the learning process.					
12	My history teacher holds me accountable for my own learning and for contributing to others' learning in class.					
13	My history teacher expects me to monitor my learning and progress.					

Questions for survey originated based on in the following article:
Zygouris-Coe, V. (2012). Eyes on disciplinary literacy. *Reading Today Online*. Retrieved from: http://www.reading.org/readingtoday/post/rty/2012/07/24 eyes_on_disciplinary_literacy.aspx#.U2OvfPldWSo

APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observation Tool for Social Studies Classrooms Reading Tasks						
Name of Reading Coach:		**School:**			**Date:**	
Classroom Code:		**Honors/Regular:**			**Time entered**	**Time left**
Use of text		**How text is displayed**			**Time**	**Who Reads**
Types of Text	**Check all that apply**	**Document camera**	**Shared access**	**One per student**	**Amount of time**	**Check Below**
Textbook						Teacher
Online ancillaries						
Document-Based Questions						Popcorn/RR
Excerpts (primary source)						
Charts and Graphs						Small group
Political Cartoons						
Power point presentation						Paired
Computer Research						
Other						Independent

Baldridge, Jocelyn (2013). Observation tool for social studies classroom reading tasks.

APPENDIX F: MEETING AGENDAS

Agenda

Session 1

A Professional Learning Community:

Implementation of Close Reading Techniques to Improve Student Comprehension

Facilitator: Literacy Coach

Set schedule

Goals and Objectives

Professional Growth Plan connections

Complex Text: 3 Elements

Next Meeting

Agenda

Session 2

A Professional Learning Community:

Implementation of Close Reading Techniques to Improve Student Comprehension

Facilitator: Literacy Coach

Professional Growth Plan Development and Connections

Modeling: Habits, Think Aloud, Examples, Annotating Text

Next Meeting

Agenda

Session 3

A Professional Learning Community:

Implementation of Close Reading Techniques to Improve Student Comprehension

Facilitator: Literacy Coach

Online Survey

Close Reading: Short/worthy Passages, Rereading, Limited Frontloading, Text Dependent Questions, Annotation, After Reading

Strategies: MESH, AVID, CIS, LDC

Next Meeting

Agenda

Session 4

A Professional Learning Community:

Implementation of Close Reading Techniques to Improve Student Comprehension

Facilitator: Literacy Coach

Observations

Scaffolded Instruction: Student is the reader, Small groups/differentiate, Strengths and supports, Grouping patterns, I do, We do, You do

Student Survey

Next Meeting

Agenda

Session 5

A Professional Learning Community:

Implementation of Close Reading Techniques to Improve Student Comprehension

Facilitator: Literacy Coach

Modeling a Close Reading Lesson

Assessing, Text Dependent Tasks, Providing Feedback, Using Error Analysis

Text Dependent: Writing to Prompts, Socratic, Perspective Writing, Debates

Next Meeting

Professional Learning Community: Common Core State Standards and Close Reading for U.S. History Teachers
Agenda Session 6

Please bring:	History Textbook or Teachers' Guide US History Curriculum Guide Text: *Rigorous Reading, 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Text* by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher
8:30-8:45	Sign-in Coffee/Tea Agenda
8:45-9:15	Student Data
9:15-9:45	Chapter 1-Complex Texts AVID Strategy-Marking the Text Reading Complex Texts: Anchor Standard 10 Reading Closely: Anchor Standard 1
9:45-10:30	Chapter 2-Purpose and Modeling AVID Strategy-Writing in the Margins Video of Teacher Modeling Five Principles of Modeling/Purpose Statement AVID Strategy-Jigsaw
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:30	Chapter 3: Close and Scaffolded Reading What's our purpose for close and scaffolded reading? AVID Strategy- Pause to Connect 6 Practices of Close Reading AVID- Purposes for Rereading 4 Principles of Scaffolded Reading
11:30-12:30	Lunch Provided
12:30-1:30	Prepare a Close Reading Lesson Template provided (Figure 2.1)
1:30-2:00	Share Lesson
2:00-3:00	Chapter 4: Collaborative Conversations AVID Strategy-Summarizing Informational Texts Structures for Collaborative Learning Key Elements of Collaborative Learning
3:00-3:30	Wrap-up Evaluation Next Steps

APPENDIX G: TEACHER EVALUATION SHEET

Name: _____

ID Number: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Evaluation for Sessions

Things I learned:

My next steps are:

Comments/Concerns/Still to be addressed:

Suggestions for next time:

APPENDIX H: LESSON PLAN REFLECTION

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson: _____

Lesson Plan Reflection

- What went well? Why?

- What didn't work? What do you see as a possible cause?

- What did students “get” from the lesson?

- What elements of the lesson did the students find difficult?

- Would you do anything differently and if so what would that be?

APPENDIX I: UCF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Maureen T. Tinsley**

Date: **May 07, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 5/7/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

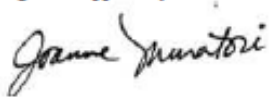
Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY: IMPLEMENTATION OF CLOSE READING TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE STUDENT COMPREHENSION
Investigator:	Maureen T Tinsley
IRB Number:	SBE-14-10290
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	NA

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/07/2014 11:31:57 AM EDT



IRB Coordinator

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