

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations,
and Student Research

Educational Administration, Department of


Winter 12-18-2015

THE IMPACT OF A COMMON APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION WITHIN A NEBRASKA RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bret Allan Schroder

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, schroderb@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Other Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

Schroder, Bret Allan, "THE IMPACT OF A COMMON APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION WITHIN A NEBRASKA RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT" (2015). *Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research*. 251.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/251>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

THE IMPACT OF A COMMON APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION
WITHIN A NEBRASKA RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Bret Allan Schroder

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Jody Isernhagen

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2014

THE IMPACT OF A COMMON LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION
WITHIN A NEBRASKA RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bret Allan Schroder, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Advisor: Jody Isernhagen

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction. This research study provided a greater understanding of the affects that such an implementation had on certified staff regardless of grade level, experience, subject, or gender.

This explanatory, sequential, mixed methods study was conducted during the summer, spring, and fall of 2014-2015. The study initially gathered data using an online survey, based on Marzano's 41 instructional elements, in a single class-B school district in Nebraska. All certified staff members within this school district were invited to participate in the survey. Interviews with a randomly selected sample of eight certified staff were conducted following the survey to gain a greater understanding of the quantitative results gained in this study.

Patterns in the answers of both quantitative data and qualitative responses indicated a growth in overall instructional understanding. A Paired Samples t-Test was used with Alpha set to .05. The results demonstrated a statistically significant mean

difference between the pre- and post survey scores ($t=4.89$, $df = 28$, $p=.001$). The interview responses added to this understanding by highlighting three main instructional areas that were most impacted within the study: Impact, Consistency, and Engagement.

The interview responses and survey data suggested that an overall change had taken affect, although it is one that is more subtly based on improvement and increasing the use of instructional strategies.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation represents an accomplishment that is only possible because of the support I have received along the way. To all who have provided that support I offer my sincerest thanks and appreciation, and to these individuals, in particular, I extend my heartfelt gratitude:

To Amy, Katelyn, and Keaton, thank you for always being my cheering squad and understanding when my time was divided too much.

To Dr. Jody Isernhagen, thank you for not allowing me to quit, give up, or make excuses.

To Dr. Larry Dlugosh for supporting me from the beginning of my masters and seeing me through the final stages of this process.

Table of Contents

Chapter One—Overview 1

 Introduction..... 1

 Problem Statement 2

 Purpose of the Study 4

 Research Questions 4

 Definition of Terms..... 5

 Delimitations..... 6

 Limitations 6

 Significance of Study 7

 Summary 7

Chapter Two—Review of Literature 9

 Teacher Readiness 9

 Instructional Coherence and Practice..... 12

 Summary 18

Chapter Three—Methodology 19

 Research Design..... 19

 Methodology 19

 Development of the Survey Instrument 19

 Implementing the Survey 20

 Phase I: Pre/Post-test Survey 20

 Phase II: Qualitative Interviews..... 21

Variables in the Quantitative Analysis	22
Target Population and Sample	22
The District’s Professional Development Experience	23
Reliability and Validity	24
Quantitative Data	24
Qualitative Data	25
Data Analysis	25
Research Permission and Ethical Considerations	26
The Role of the Researcher	27
Summary	27
Chapter Four—Findings	29
Introduction	29
Phase I: Quantitative Survey Overview	29
Study Methodology	30
Participant Sample Description	32
Phase I: Quantitative Results	39
Gender of Respondent	40
Years of Experience by Respondent	41
Grades Taught by Respondent	43
Subject Taught by Respondent	44
Phase II: Qualitative Findings	45
Interview Participants	45

Interview Questions	45
Interview Responses	46
Initial Interview—Question 1	46
Summary: Initial Interview Question 1.....	47
Initial Interview—Question 2	47
Summary: Initial Interview Question 2.....	48
Research Question Responses.....	48
Research Question 1	48
Summary: Research Question 1.....	49
Research Question 2	50
Summary: Research Question 2.....	52
Research Question 3	52
Summary: Research Question 3.....	55
Research Question 4	55
Summary: Research Question 4.....	57
Summary of Interviews.....	57
Summary of Survey Responses and Interviews.....	58
Chapter Five—Summary of Findings.....	59
Purpose of the Study	59
Summary of Survey Findings	60
Findings by Sub Group	61
Gender.....	61

	iv
Years of Experience	62
Grades Taught by Respondent	62
Subjects Taught.....	63
Survey Item Analysis	63
Survey Items Demonstrating Greatest Growth Over Time.....	63
Survey Items Demonstrating Least Growth Over Time	64
Survey Items Demonstrating Weak Results	65
Summary of Quantitative Findings.....	65
Summary of Qualitative Findings.....	66
Impact	67
Consistency	67
Engagement.....	67
Chapter Six—Summary of Phase I (Quantitative) and Phase II (Qualitative)	69
Future Research	69
Predictions.....	70
References.....	71
Appendices.....	74

List of Figures

Figure 1	Gender of Respondent.....	41
Figure 2	Years of Experience by Respondent.....	42
Figure 3	Grades Taught by Respondent.....	43
Figure 4	Subjects Taught by Respondent.....	44

List of Tables

Table 1	Professional Development	13
Table 2	Chronological Order of Events	31
Table 3	Percent of Respondents that Provided Instruction	32
Table 4	Pre-survey Results	33
Table 5	Post-survey Results	36
Table 6	Initial Interview and Research Questions	46
Table 7	Greatest Growth Over Time.....	64
Table 8	Least Growth Over Time	65
Table 9	Weak Results	66

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Common Language of Instruction Survey	74
Appendix B	Semi-Structured Interview Protocol	87
Appendix C	Letter of Permission	89
Appendix D	Informed Consent Letter	91
Appendix E	District Permission to Perform Study	94
Appendix F	Invitation to Take Survey.....	97
Appendix G	Invitation to be Interviewed	99
Appendix H	IRB Letter of Approval.....	101

Chapter One

Overview

Introduction

The question on how to best instruct and facilitate learning has been asked since the beginning of formal education itself. We, as educators, strive to do our best for those we educate and hope that our efforts and those of our pupils will be enough to prepare them for the next challenge. What we struggle to understand is, how to best approach this seemingly insurmountable task. Is there a best program that will meet all our students' needs? Is there a perfect amount of time that should be spent on any given subject? School districts all over the country have made adjustments from how long they teach certain subjects such as reading to whether they purchase scripted programs that tell the teacher exactly what to say during instruction. These efforts are successful for some but many times fall short of helping all groups of students succeed. The question still remains, is it the materials or approach to instruction that needs to be adjusted? In their research on instructional coherence, Newman, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk (2001, p. 305) found, "a strong positive relationship between improving coherence and improved student achievement." Is the real issue about what we are teaching, how we are teaching, or how we are working together? The authors go on to state, "school improvement efforts that strengthen instructional program coherence can lead to increased student achievement" (Newman et al., 2001, p. 312). So where are our efforts best placed, in finding better programs, teaching for longer periods of time, and/or finding a more cohesive and consistent way to instruct that allows teachers to build upon

one another's efforts and creates a greater amount of instructional scaffolding for students.

Problem Statement

Will the implementation of a consistent and common approach to instruction increase teacher effectiveness? Due to the increased emphasis on data, student growth, and the use of high stakes testing across our nation, more attention has been directed toward the question, "What is the most effective way for students to learn?" School leaders, teachers, and students have never before felt so much pressure to demonstrate that students are growing and meeting state and national standards. The 45th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools shows some support for teacher evaluations being connected with student growth (Bushaw & Lopez, 2013). The poll reports that 41% of Americans feel that teacher evaluations should include student scores. This same poll also shows that 60% of Americans feel teacher evaluations should be released to the public. While this poll also demonstrates a high trust level for our schools with 72% of Americans trusting their child's teacher and 65% trusting the principal, it does indicate that people want to see results (Bushaw & Lopez 2013).

In my 19 years as an educator this researcher has experienced a growing concern over teacher and student performance. In my first years, few expectations seemed to be placed on the teachers other than to make sure students were safe and well behaved. The concept of everyone having to teach the same curriculum at the same time did not exist in many of the schools in my district. In fact, some districts in my state had not yet adopted

an official curriculum for many of the core subjects such as reading, math, and science until the early 90s. Fast-forward to today and many districts are expecting more precise plans from their staff and are developing most of those plans for them. In the past teachers created their schedule and had flexibility over what to teach and when to teach it. Now, we see more and more schools dictating what will be taught, the schedule and times, and expecting all teachers to use the adopted curriculum. The questions that must be asked are as follows: Are we moving in the right direction? Is there benefit to having such a unified and cohesive plan as opposed to a system where all certified staff members are allowed greater flexibility in what and how they teach? Is a common approach to instruction helpful in developing teacher effectiveness and therefore student growth? In their study on Instructional Program Coherence, Newman and his colleagues (2001) stated,

To our knowledge, no studies have offered a thoughtful, systematic definition and exploration of school-level instructional program coherence. Some direct and indirect arguments in favor of greater curricular, organizational, or policy coherence in education have been raised, but they do not address three important matters. First, they do not address instructional program coherence and how it might constitute an important school improvement strategy. Second, they do not provide a theoretical explanation for why strong instructional program coherence might be expected to advance student learning. And third, they do not offer an operational definition that could support empirical study of effects of greater coherence on student learning. (p. 298)

This dissertation will add to research on the effectiveness of a common approach to instruction. A mixed methods design will be used combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data and results will provide a basic picture of the research question, i.e., what is the effectiveness of a common language of instruction,

while the qualitative data and its analysis will define and explain the statistical results by examining the participants' views in more depth (Creswell, 2002).

It is this researcher's belief that if we are to continue growing and improving in the practice of education, we must utilize the best information at hand to make the necessary changes, as explained by the National Reading Panel (2006, p. 1):

The primary purpose of teacher education research is to inform the effective practice of classroom teachers in order to improve student performance. Rigorous experimental and qualitative research that defines and characterizes effective teaching methodologies that demonstrate improved student performance is limited. This persistent and major gap in the knowledge base must be addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction.

Research Questions

For the quantitative phase of this study the guiding research questions were:

1. Has a common language of instruction affected teachers' understanding of instruction?
2. Has a common language of instruction improved the efficiency and ability for teachers to work together?

For the second, qualitative phase of this study the guiding questions were:

1. What were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management prior to training?
2. What are your experiences and beliefs now?

3. How has this training affected your approach to instruction and classroom management?
4. What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students? Did any of these come from the training?

Definitions and Terms

Common Language of Instruction—refers to a consistent vocabulary and approach to instruction. This vocabulary and approach will be based on the work of Dr. Robert Marzano (Marzano, Boogren, Kanold-McIntyre, & Pickering, 2012).

For this study a common language/model of instruction must:

- a. accurately reflect the complexity and sophistication of the teaching/learning process;
- b. identify the key strategies revealed by research for effective teaching;
- c. go beyond a narrow list of “high yield” strategies;
- d. identify which research-based strategies are appropriate for different types of lesson segments;
- e. include rubrics or scales with clearly defined continuums of implementation and evidences sufficient to impact student learning; and
- f. allow for flexibility for this district to adapt the adopted model to reflect local needs and priorities yet retain the common language. (Schooling, Toth, & Marzano, 2012, p. 6)

Instructional Program Coherence—a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and are pursued over a sustained period (Newman et al., 2001).

Teacher or Certified Staff—refers to an instructional staff member that holds a degree in teaching and spends the majority of his/her time in the instructional setting.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study included:

1. The study was confined to a single Class-B rural school district.
2. Participants' responses were reflections of, and confined to, their experience and learning provided by the school district's professional development during one academic year.
3. All certified staff receiving training were asked to complete an exit survey.
4. Since the survey and interviews were to be conducted in the same school district as the primary researcher an intermediate and impartial representative conducted the interviews. All certified staff were invited to take the electronic survey by email. The program Google Documents was used to create the survey and collect the responses. Any staff member choosing to take the survey entered a four-digit code to conceal their identity from the researcher. The researcher and those conducting interviews participating in this study received Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training in adherence to University of Nebraska's Institutional Review Board (IRB) expectations.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included:

1. Due to the nature of qualitative research, the data obtained in the second phase of the study may be subject to different interpretations by different readers.

2. Because of the interpretive nature of the qualitative research, the investigator may have introduced his bias into the analysis of the findings.
3. There was a potential for bias in the qualitative results interpretation as the researcher had also spent a year studying the Marzano frameworks in preparation for this study.

Significance of the Study

This study may prove significant in contributing to the understanding of the effects of a common approach to instruction among a group of educators. The main significance of this study allowed the researcher to examine the effects of the implementation of a common language of instruction on a school district that has previously not received this type of training. It is also worth noting that this training and possible effect took place in all grade levels and subject areas PreK-12. This researcher has not uncovered another study of this type with these same variables.

Research of this kind and on this topic is significant to administrators and other school districts examining how best to plan for future student and staff growth. It will provide added understanding of the possible benefits of having a common language of instruction. Additionally, this study may yield valuable results due to the mixed methods research design. There appears to be a need among the professional education community for this type of information and feedback.

Summary

The notion that a group of highly trained and skilled professionals working together with a coherent and common approach can accomplish more, seems to be less of

a question and more common sense. The profession of teaching has historically been one based more on teachers working independently in their own classrooms. While many may share strategies and ideas, they may not however plan, organize, or implement curriculum in the same way. Will a more organized and consistent approach to instruction across a district create a better learning environment for both students and teachers?

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Teacher Readiness

In classrooms around the world today various styles of teaching and instructional strategies are in use. In the United States one can find schools within the same district and classrooms within the same school where various and sometimes inconsistent approaches to teaching are in place. Byrk and Raudenbush (1988) stated, “In research and instruction, we are concerned about the interactions of students with a teacher around specific materials” (p. 66). It is not uncommon to find teachers, especially at the elementary level, who feel unprepared to teach a specific subject. In many cases these teachers are tasked with teaching all the core subjects such as reading, writing, math, social studies, and science. In a study conducted by Harris et al. (2012) on practice based professional development using the Self-regulated Strategy Development model of instruction, findings were that students who received writing instruction from teachers that received consistent professional development with follow-up training saw student success in writing increase significantly. In this study, prior to providing any professional development, teachers were interviewed regarding their past experiences with professional development. “Teachers felt they had not received adequate pre-service preparation in teaching writing; some had received none. Most had received limited in-service professional development in writing” (Harris et al., 2012, p. 108).

Haystead and Marzano (2009, p. 3), in their white paper on creating an aligned system, shared “Research has shown that effective teachers are a dominant factor in

student learning and are key to student success.” They go on to further strengthen this statement with,

It has also been noted that a teacher who is classified as “most effective” (i.e., at the 98th percentile in terms of his or her pedagogical skill) will be expected to produce student achievement that is 54 percentile points higher than the achievement produced by a teacher who is classified as “least effective.”

The concept that teachers, or any other professionals for that matter, are more capable when they are at the top of their field is not shocking. The question that seems to jump out is: How do schools help ensure that more of their teachers are well prepared to be effective teachers? Bidwell and Kasarda (1980) have suggested that the allocation of school resources and varying policies produce differential learning opportunities for the students within them. Since these vary across schools, heterogeneity of regression is a likely empirical consequence.

In the past several years, with the increased pressure from high stakes testing and mounting pressure to have higher performance each year, the role of school leadership has shifted. Principals now find themselves much more involved in instructional leadership rather than school management. In fact, around the country many stakeholders from school districts and states have begun to ask for teacher assessments to be based on student performance. Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) stated, “New teachers are given so little support that sometimes they are simply doomed to fail. Yet, no one notices and they finish their probationary status without a negative evaluation” (p. 15).

The Race to the Top initiative endorsed by the White House and President Obama reiterates this new focus on teacher and student performance as well as instructional

leadership from school administration. “Over the past four years, states have taken action to develop strategies that have created more opportunities for America’s students” (White House & Department of Education, 2014, p. 3).

As the Race to the Top (White House, 2014) grants became more competitive

leaders began to design plans and create the conditions for reform. As the Race to the Top competition got underway, many states changed laws to increase their ability to intervene in their lowest-performing schools or to improve teacher quality, including alternative certification and systems to support educators and evaluate their effectiveness. (White House, 2014, p. 3)

Race to the Top has focused on providing better support and resources for America’s most important leaders: teachers and principals. Under these grants, schools and districts are making sure we have excellent principals leading our schools and skilled teachers who inspire students. Through Race to the Top, grantees are developing new tools and resources, by promoting rigorous plans to develop, support, and evaluate teachers and principals, and by recognizing and rewarding their success. (White House, 2014, p. 7)

The failure to assess variations in instructional effectiveness also precludes districts from identifying specific development needs in their teachers. In fact, 73 percent of teachers surveyed said their most recent evaluation did not identify any development areas, and only 45 percent of teachers who did have development areas identified said they received useful support to improve. (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 6)

The Widget Effect (Weisberg et al., 2009) shed more light on the issue that schools consistently fail to identify or recognize differences in teacher performance.

“The fact that information on teachers’ performance is almost exclusively used for decisions related to teacher remediation paints a stark picture: In general, our schools are indifferent to instructional effectiveness – except when it comes time to remove a teacher” (p. 3). The article goes on to share that novice teachers who require more intensive development do not always receive what they need or are granted tenure in absence of data that substantiates student learning. While this dissertation is meant to

examine the effects of a common language of instruction on a small rural school district it is not without merit as student achievement is a natural part of more successful teachers. Schooling et al. (2012), stated that, “A common language/model of instruction provides a framework for a way to talk about instruction that is shared by everyone” (p. 5). This researcher can find no substantial or conclusive evidence in any research that would suggest that one type of instruction or strategy is better for all students. In fact, it is clear that much controversy still exists on the philosophy of teaching with regard to best practices with each proponent sharing evidence to support their opinion. With that said, Schooling and colleagues suggest that “principals and teachers using a common language of instruction to give and receive feedback can be highly effective for both student and teacher growth and success” (p. 5) would seem like the most appropriate path with regard to overall school improvement.

Instructional Coherence and Practice

The National Staff Development Council Study released in 2009 offers the following findings on professional development that will “improve both teaching practice and student achievement” (p. 9).

In Table 1 the only area that may not be affected by the use of a common language of instruction may be “address the teaching of specific curriculum content.” While that is possibly a debatable area, all other areas noted in this table can and may be affected by the use of a common language of instruction.

Table 1

Professional Development

The Research Finds...	Learning Keys Delivers...
Professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice	In-depth and sustained professional development that includes 24/7 access to resources that focus on the core of education—teaching and learning
Professional development should focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content	Professional learning and resources that are designed to deepen understanding of content and promote proven, effective instructional practices aimed squarely at raising student achievement
Professional development should align with school improvement priorities and goals	Professional learning that is contextualized to reflect the priorities, goals and needs of district partners
Professional development should build strong working relationships among teachers	Adult learning that takes place in professional learning communities that promote knowledge, skills and professional collaboration
School-based coaching may enhance professional learning	Multimedia resources and support that enable coaches to hone their skills and districts to protect their investment in coaches
Mentoring and Induction programs for new teachers may support teacher effectiveness	Professional learning programs and resources specifically designed to help new teachers build competence and confidence and promote retention of valuable new professionals

Source: National Staff Development Council (2009, p. 9).

In a meta-analysis conducted by Haystead and Marzano (2009) on the effects of the utilization of instructional strategies they found that independent studies represent a “gain of 16 percentile points over what would be expected if teachers did not use the instructional strategies” (p. 14). This meta-analysis examined 329 independent studies and does not directly point to the need for a common language of instruction. It does however suggest that teachers receiving instruction on specific instructional strategies can make a difference in the growth of their students.

The National Reading Panel's initial report in 1998 sheds light on the need for a consistent process or approach to teaching. While this report chose not to recommend a specific type of instruction or instructional strategy, much can be learned from their findings. One such practice the panel found to be highly effective was the use of "systematic phonics instruction" (National Reading Panel, 1998, p. 2). While they did not suggest a specific author or process, they were clear that teaching phonics specifically and explicitly was effective. They stated that, "It is therefore important that teachers be provided with evidence-based pre-service training and ongoing in-service training to select (or develop) and implement the most appropriate phonics instruction effectively" (National Reading Panel, 1998, p. 2). The panel also stated that they were "unable to find a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvements in reading achievement" (National Reading Panel, 1998, p. 3). Yet, in many classrooms today you can find teachers that thoroughly believe in the practice of sustained silent reading time. How did many educators, including myself at one time, decide that this was a valid and effective instructional strategy?

The National Staff Development Council (2009) challenges teachers and administrators to design a professional development system in such a way that "every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves" This challenge urges schools and districts to create ongoing, sustained, and results-driven professional learning experiences for teachers. An interview with Dr. Robert Marzano in 2008 suggested,

The educational field is lacking a common language/model of instruction to describe effective teaching. Having a comprehensive model in which everybody talks about teaching in the same way communicates a message that “we are serious about good teaching, we talk about teaching in this way, we expect you to think about teaching in this way and to use this model to examine your strengths and weaknesses and create a platform to allow for real reflective practice. In this way, the school or district becomes a place where you get better at teaching. (Schooling et al., 2012, p. 7)

In this researcher’s investigation, no suggestions were found from any studies stating that professional development is inappropriate if done correctly. On the contrary, many experts agree that more professional development is appropriate but it must be focused on the correct area and be sustaining (Newman et al., 2001) to define instructional program coherence as:

A set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period. Reform that strengthens instructional program coherence contrasts with efforts to improve schools through the adoption of a wide variety of programs that are often uncoordinated or limited in scope or durations. (p. 297)

These researchers go on to explain why some schools, regardless of professional development, may fail to make improvement. “Over the past decade, many poorly performing elementary schools have sought to improve their instructional programs and outcomes by adopting numerous school improvement projects, programs, and partnerships” (Newman et al., 2001, p. 297). This is a problem that is seen in many school districts and schools and has seemed to increase with the mounting pressure to perform on state and national tests. School leaders and teachers adopt and/or are trained on a variety of strategies and programs, many failing to integrate with one another or use the same vocabulary or metrics for measuring student growth.

They want to acquire programs and materials that might help them to teach more effectively, but they soon find themselves in a large and fragmented circuit of school improvement activity. Principals may recognize that faculty members' attention is scattered, but hooking up with multiple initiatives seems to be the only way to gain needed resources and to promote the commitment of staff with different interests and strengths. (Newman et al., 2001, p. 298)

The article "Bring Powerful Writing Strategies into Your Classroom" by Harris, Graham, Friedlander, and Laud (2013) focused on a research based instructional strategy to teach writing. They found that "the majority of teachers report inadequate pre- and in-service preparation in writing instruction and often do not implement evidence-based interventions" (Harris et al., 2013, p. 104). Some come with a wide variety of knowledge and skill while others seem lacking in even the most basic of instructional concepts and classroom management. With each school district having only so many days for professional development, how do school leaders decide what the priorities are?

In many other professions there has long been a call for greater efficiency, which has lead to the examination of how people best work together. In the recent past, and still today, it is not uncommon in many schools for teachers to teach based on their own preferred style and, in some cases, use a curriculum that is largely created by themselves. In these school cultures, how do schools create greater program coherence among teachers? Newman et al. (2001) made two of the most compelling statements based on their research, when they stated "Students learning to read, for example, are more likely to gain basic skills and the confidence to tackle more challenging tasks if they learn in settings where all of their teachers assist their reading in a consistent manner" (p. 300). In the same paper they made the following contrasting statement,

When faced with incoherent activities, students are more likely to feel that they are targets of apparently random events and that they have less knowledge of what should be done to succeed. Such feelings reduce student engagement in the hard work that learning often requires. Thus incoherent activities undermine opportunities to gain mastery and the confidence that motivates further learning. (Newman et al., 2001, p. 301)

It would seem that, for many schools, we have skipped a step. While we are concerned with strategies and in some cases the “magic practice” that will provide the greatest learning for students, the question of instructional coherence has been lost. It is this researchers position that many schools should be far less focused on what programs or strategies are being taught and more concerned with the overall plan for instruction and whether a common and cooperative instructional language and practice is in place.

As schools and districts continue to look for strategies and methods to address the needs of their students it continues to become more challenging to improve student performance. One of the first methods to help struggling learners overcome areas of need was to provide more time. Schools across the nation have increased after school programs, summer school sessions, and even taken elective classes away in place of intervention classes for math and reading. As an active participant in many of these practices I constantly ask myself, and the professionals I work with, are these choices doing more harm than good? Teachers have learned various ways to teach and are encouraged to try new things and take classes to improve their own understanding of instruction. When they come back to their districts with this new knowledge though, how are they supported? How do they cooperate with their fellow teachers that may not be aware or agree with their newly learned information?

Summary

From this researcher's review of the literature, a common reoccurring theme is that consistent and cohesive instructional practices, approaches, and expectations will benefit the learner. If incoherent activities can affect a student's confidence and ability to learn, regardless of the strategy, it would seem the issue is less about the individual teacher and more about the system in which they work. Do our schools provide strong support and staff development to strengthen and grow coherence among all staff? Are schools proactive in identifying a teacher's needs in developing and helping them grow or are we still working under a model that is more punitive and based on remediation? Our educational system, across the nation, has experienced greater emphasis on identifying needs and strengths of our students in the pursuit of helping everyone achieve. In my review of the research I find little evidence that this type of approach is taking place for teachers.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design

This researcher utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, consisting of two distinct phases, for collecting, analyzing, and processing both quantitative and qualitative data during the research process of this single study, to gain a greater understanding and enable the researcher to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2002). “Mixed methods are often more efficient in answering research questions than either the QUAL or the QUAN approach alone” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 167).

Methodology

A Dependent Samples t-Test was used to measure both pre- and post-test scores based on the developed survey utilizing the 41 instructional elements (Marzano et al., 2012, p. 185). A Repeated Measure related t-test was used to evaluate the overall effect of training on a Common Language of Instruction. The quantitative results from surveying the certified staff members of a Class-B rural school district were the basis for the t-Test.

Development of the Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was directly based on the 41 instructional elements designated by the Marzano Research Laboratories (Marzano et al., 2012). This version of the survey, and specific wording of the questions, were taken in part from a survey utilized by the Educational Service Unit #6 located in Milford, NE. This survey has been

used as both a pre- and post-test with multiple teacher groups during their professional development. To the best of this researcher's knowledge it has not been used by an entire school district implementing a common language of instruction in all grades and subject areas. The instrument was also field tested with local teachers and reviewed by both the superintendent and myself. Feedback from both groups was used to make final adjustments for clarity, communication, and fidelity.

Implementing the Survey

On August 25, 2014, an electronic survey utilizing a Google Docs form was sent to all 58 elementary, 38 middle, and 40 high school teachers. Each staff member was randomly assigned a four-digit code to enter to access the survey. This took place prior to any training on a common language of instruction. Participants then entered this same number at the end of the year for their post-assessment. The post-survey was conducted on May 4, 2015.

The code teachers used to access the survey was labeled in a textbook that all staff used during the 2014-2015 academic year for professional development on Marzano's Common Language of Instruction (Marzano et al., 2012).

Phase I: Pre-/Post-test survey. In the first phase, the quantitative, numeric data was collected using a web-based pre-survey. For each survey question there were five answer choices: Innovating, Applying, Developing, Beginning, and Not Using. This survey was administered prior to any professional development within the early part of the 2014-2015 academic year. The following rubric was included in both the pre-survey

given in September of 2014 and the post-survey given in April, 2015 to provide guidance to respondents.

InnovativeI am highly skilled and adapt this strategy for students with unique needs

ApplyingI am a skillful user of this strategy

Developing.....I use this strategy at a basic level and am somewhat inconsistent

Beginning.....I may use the strategy incorrectly

Not Using.....This is a strategy I do not use

All responses were converted to a five point Likert scale for quantitative analysis with Innovative having a value of 5 and Not Using having a value of 1. The results of this pre-survey were to serve as the baseline or pretest for understanding.

Toward the end of the academic year, after certified-staff engaged in multiple professional development trainings on the 41 instructional elements and Marzano's Domains of Instruction, the same quantitative, web-based survey was administered.

Phase II: Qualitative interviews. Phase II, the qualitative interview was based on four open-ended questions regarding the subjects' belief and understanding of the newly gained information. All certified staff were invited to be interviewed. The first eight staff members who volunteered and turned in the appropriate paperwork were interviewed by an outside agency. The interviews were recorded both digitally and using paper/pencil and were later transcribed. These transcripts were coded and common threads and beliefs were documented. Both Phase I (quantitative) and Phase II (qualitative) were integrated for the discussion of outcomes.

Variables in the Quantitative Analysis

The survey for this study was based on the 41 instructional elements (Marzano et al., 2012). Various demographic characteristics such as age, gender, length of career, personal beliefs on teaching, teaming, supervision, and the certified staff members overall demeanor and attitude toward their profession and school may affect how they view the training and therefore their beliefs on its effectiveness. The quality of the presenter/trainer for the professional development on a common language of instruction along with the differences in building leadership and attitude may also impact the overall perspective of the subjects. The following six variables constituted six sub-scales. Each sub-scale was examined using a t-test.

Continuous Variables:

- a. The grade the teacher instructs.
- b. The teacher's years of experience instructing

Categorical Variables:

- a. Gender of teacher
- b. Subject instructed by teacher
- c. The teacher's varying attitudes and moral at different times of the year

Target Population and Sample

The target population in this study was the certified staff members employed by a single Class-B Nebraska rural school district educating approximately 1900 students in grades Kindergarten through 12th. Certified staff who were unable to complete the entire training process because of illness, early release from contract, or being hired late in the

year were not included in the survey. Since the survey and training were part of the overall professional development plan for 2014-2015 of this school district, it was hoped that 100% of the participating teachers would fill out the survey. That said, any certified staff member that felt uncomfortable for any reason could option out of taking the survey and interview if randomly selected.

All certified staff invited to take the pre- and post-electronic survey were also invited, via email, to participate in an interview for the qualitative portion of this study. The first 8 staff members to volunteer and fill out the appropriate permission form were interviewed by an outside agency. This 2014-2015 professional development on Marzano's 41 elements of instruction/common language of instruction was part of the school district's training plan. All certified staff members were expected to participate in the training. The surveys and interviews, which were instruments of this study, were not a part of the district's training plan and in no way connected to any staff member's employment. A certified staff member's choice of whether to participate in this study had no impact on their relationship with the researcher or their standing in the district.

The District's Professional Development Experience

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year all instructional certified staff in the rural Class-B school district participated in professional development based on Dr. Robert Marzano's research. The professional development took place during four professional development days spaced throughout the year. Each training session lasted two to three hours and was led by a group of professional development specialists from a local educational service unit.

Additional levels of support for all staff during this initial year of training were as follows:

1. All district administrators participated in Marzano training one year prior to the beginning of staff training. This was done to increase their overall knowledge of Marzano's instructional strategies and provide them with a base of understanding to strengthen their ability to lead from a place of knowledge.
2. A core team of "Marzano Team Leaders" was created to add continuous support and encouragement between trainings. This core team was made up of 21 certified instructional staff members. They met once a month to receive additional training. This training focused upon the next Marzano strategy the entire staff would receive on the following professional development day. Each core team member was assigned 5 to 6 fellow staff-members as their team. The pre-training provided them with the advance knowledge to answer questions for their team and provide peer support during and after training. These core members also acted as a cheerleader of sorts for those staff members willing to try new strategies but wanted some assistance or encouragement to get started.

Reliability and Validity

Quantitative data. The reliability and validity of the instrument was extremely important for decreasing the risk of errors that could arise from measurement problems in the research study. The instrument being used in this study was field-tested on numerous occasions by both the Marzano Research Laboratories and our local Educational Service

Unit. It was with their permission that the researcher used this measurement tool. Although this tool has been implemented before, it was the understanding of the researcher that it has never been used with an entire school district both before and after a large scale training that was aimed at all certified staff in a district. To further examine the face validity, the survey instrument was reviewed by two teachers in our district, myself, and my direct supervisor and Superintendent. Cronbach's Alpha was used to investigate the internal consistency/reliability of the scales.

Qualitative data. The qualitative phase of this study focused on examining in greater detail the subjects' understanding and beliefs toward a common language of instruction after training. The primary technique used was conducting in-depth, semi-structured personal interviews with eight teachers.

The Interview Protocol included four open-ended questions that were piloted prior to use for this study. The content of the questions were based on grounded research presented during the literature review of this study. Beliefs on instructional coherence and common instructional vocabulary and practices were the source for developing the interview questions. Participants received the interview questions prior to their scheduled interview and were informed that the interview would be audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

In the qualitative phase of the study, the text and recorded data obtained through the interviews, was transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. The steps in qualitative analysis included: (a) preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the

transcripts and writing memos; (b) coding the data by segmenting and labeling the text; (c) using codes to develop themes by aggregating similar codes together; (d) connecting and interrelating themes; and (e) constructing a narrative (Creswell, 2002).

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

Ethical variables were considered and addressed during all phases of this study. In compliance with the regulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the permission for conducting the research was obtained. The Request for Review Form was filed, (Appendix H) providing information about the principal investigator, the project title and type, source of funding, type of review requested and the number and type of subjects. Application for research permission contained a description of the project and its significance, methods and procedures, participants, and research status.

An informed consent form was provided to all participants in compliance with IRB. The form stated that the participants were guaranteed certain rights, agreed to be involved in the study, acknowledged their rights were protected, and clearly stated that their participation in this study was completely voluntary. The same statement was included at the beginning of all electronic surveys used via the web.

All participants' identities were protected by coding each returned questionnaire and keeping the responses confidential. All eight volunteers were assigned a numerical name for reporting results. The interviews were conducted and transcribed by an outside agency so this researcher would not know their identity. All study data, including the survey results, electronic files, and transcripts, were kept in a locked metal file cabinet in the researcher's office. The data and survey responses will be kept for a period of one

year from the completion and acceptance of this study. The audiotapes of the interviews were destroyed once transcripts had been developed. Summary data will be disseminated to the professional community but steps will be taken to ensure that responses cannot be traced back to individual participants.

The Role of the Researcher

This researcher maintained a detached involvement during the gathering of data, both during the qualitative and quantitative portions. In the first, quantitative phase, the researcher administered the survey and collected the data using the electronic agent Google Documents. Although the survey was done electronically, the researcher presented the survey to the participants and invited them to take the survey during an after-school meeting. The data analysis was performed using rigorous statistical analysis techniques and the results were interpreted based on the established values for the statistical significance of the functions.

During the qualitative portion of the study this researcher employed an outside agent to administer the interviews. It was imperative that the researcher distance himself from the participants during this portion of the study given the personal and professional relationship he had with all of the respondents.

Summary

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study, consisting of two distinct phases, using Dependent Sample t-tests provided this researcher with a greater understanding of the impact that a common approach to instruction can have on a school district. The pre- and post-surveys, along with the semi-structured qualitative interviews,

were intended to give this researcher a rich understanding of staff perceptions, acceptance, and usage. The target population, teaching staff members of a class-B rural school district, was the focus of this study. It was this researcher's understanding that this will be the first time an entire district has participated in such a training and study.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

This study aimed to increase the current research on instruction and provide an additional understanding of best practices and approaches for improving instruction. The main purpose stated in the study was “to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach of Instruction.” The research study was structured as a mixed-methods design organized into two phases; Phase I was a quantitative study and Phase II was a qualitative study. In Phase I a pre-survey was administered before training began in September, 2014 and a post-survey was administered after the final training session in April of 2015. These two surveys provided the quantitative data to begin analyzing the effect of this training. During Phase II eight interviews were conducted in May of 2015. The eight interviews provided qualitative data to give greater understanding and insight of the effect of this common approach to instruction.

Phase I: Quantitative Survey Overview

Phase I consisted of a pre- and post-survey administered to certified staff members participating in a district-wide professional development experience on a common approach to instruction. This quantitative survey was based on the work of the Marzano Research Laboratory and their 41 elements of instruction. All 136 certified staff members were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the pre-survey before training began and post-survey after 9 months of training and practice. Of the 136 staff

members, 66 staff members chose to participate in the pre-survey and 47 staff members participated in the post-survey creating 29 matched pairs of participants of both the pre- and post-survey. Each staff member was given a randomly assigned 4-digit code that was entered when taking the survey. This allowed for the use of a Dependent Samples t-Test.

The study began in August of 2014 when all certified teachers were invited to take the pre-survey. In September, a 2-hour training was held for selected “Marzano Team Leaders.” This group consisted of 23 teachers that were asked by the school district to be leaders in the development and training on the Marzano 41 elements of instruction. This group received instruction prior to the entire district training. They were each assigned 6 to 7 fellow teachers to be on their team. They served as coach, teacher, and mentor to their team members during the four “all certified staff” trainings that took place during the 2014-2015 academic year. They also provided additional support between trainings as individuals needed added assistance. In September 2014, during a professional development training day, the first 3 hour “all certified staff” training was held. Table 2 provides the chronological order of events for this 2014-2015 mixed methods study.

Study methodology. This researcher conducted a sequential explanatory mixed methods design study, consisting of two distinct phases, for collecting, analyzing, and processing both quantitative and qualitative data during the research process of this single study, to gain a greater understanding and enable the researcher to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2002).

Table 2

Chronological Order of Events

Event	Date	Description
Pre-Survey	August 2014	Given before any training began
Team Leaders Training	September 2014	Two hour training
All Certified Staff	September 2014	Three hour training
Team Leaders	October 2014	Two hour training
All Certified Staff	October 2014	Three hour training
Team Leaders	November 2014	Two hour training
Team Leaders	January 2015	Two hour training
All Certified Staff	January 2015	Three hour training
Team Leaders	February 2015	Two hour training
All Certified Staff	February 2015	Three hour training
Team Leaders	March 2015	Two hour training
Team Leaders	April 2015	Meeting to discuss progress this year
Post-Survey	April 2015	Given after final training
Phone Interviews	April 2015	First eight volunteers

A Dependent Samples t-Test was used to measure both pre- and post-test scores based on the developed survey utilizing the 41 instructional elements (Marzano et al., 2012, p. 185). A Repeated Measure related t-test was used to evaluate the overall effect of training on a Common Approach to Instruction on the entire participant population and sub groups within. The quantitative results from surveying the certified staff members of a Class-B rural school district were the basis for the t-Test.

Participant sample description. Of the 29 respondents, 79.3% were female and 20.7% were male. Of those respondents 17.2% have taught between 0-5 years, 20.7% between 5-10 years, 13.8% between 10-15 years, 17.2% between 15-20 years, and 31% have taught more than 20 years. Of those same teachers 65.5% taught grades Kindergarten through 4th, 24.1% teach grades 5th-8th, and 10.3% instruct grades 9th-12th. Table 3 demonstrates the percent of respondents that provided instruction in respective subject areas.

Table 3

Percent of Respondents that Provided Instruction

Subject Taught	Percent of Respondents
Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts	65.5%
Industrial Tech., Computers, Business, Family Consumer Science	6.9%
Foreign Language, Art, Music/Band, Media, P.E.	6.9%
Special Ed., Enrichment, ELL, Guidance	20.7%

Results of the pre-survey are provided in Table 4. Participants rated themselves on the use of each strategy using the following scale: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, and Innovating. These responses were converted into Likert Scale values respectively (1-5). The results of those responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre-survey Results

Pre-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by scale or rubric that describes levels of performance relative to the learning goal.	31	18	41	3	7
The teacher facilitates tracking of student progress on one or more learning goals using a formative approach to assessment.	10	17	31	31	10
The teacher provides students with recognition of their current status and their knowledge gain relative to the learning goal.	14	10	45	24	7
The teacher organizes the physical layout of the classroom to facilitate movement and focus on learning.	0	10	7	52	31
The teacher reviews expectations regarding rules and procedures to ensure their effective execution.	0	0	10	62	28
The teacher identifies a lesson or part of a lesson as involving important information to which students should pay particular attention.	0	3	24	45	28
The teacher organizes students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new information.	10	3	17	52	17
The teacher engages students in activities that help them link what they already know to the new content about to be addressed and facilitates these linkages.	3	7	34	45	10
Based on student needs, the teacher breaks the content into small chunks (i.e. digestible bites) of information that can be easily processed by students.	7	3	21	55	14
During breaks in the presentation of content, the teacher engages students in actively processing new information.	7	14	41	31	7
The teacher asks questions or engages students in activities that require elaborative inferences that go beyond what was explicitly taught.	17	17	28	31	7
The teacher engages students in activities that help them record their understanding of new content in linguistic ways and/or represent the content in nonlinguistic ways.	17	31	21	21	10

Table 4 continues

Pre-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher engages students in activities that help them reflect on their learning and the learning process.	0	28	41	14	17
The teacher engages students in a brief review of content that highlights the critical information.	3	3	34	34	24
The teacher uses grouping in ways that facilitate practicing and deepening of knowledge.	7	14	31	41	7
When appropriate (as opposed to routinely) the teacher designs homework to deepen students' knowledge of informational content or, practice a skill, strategy, or process.	38	14	7	38	3
When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining similarities and differences.	0	28	41	31	0
When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining their own reasoning or the logic of the information as presented to them.	10	31	28	28	3
When the content involves a skill, strategy, or process, the teacher engages students in practice activities that help them develop fluency.	3	14	28	41	14
The teacher engages students in revision of previous knowledge about content addressed in previous lessons.	7	14	14	55	10
The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypotheses.	34	24	28	10	3
The teacher engages students in complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis.	24	24	38	14	0
The teacher acts as a resource provider and guide as students engage in cognitively complex tasks.	17	14	34	28	7
The teacher scans the room, making note of when students are not engaged and takes overt action.	0	0	10	69	21
The teacher uses academic games and inconsequential competition to maintain student engagement.	3	7	31	45	14
The teacher uses response rates techniques to maintain student engagement.	17	10	28	31	14

Table 4 continues

Pre-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher uses physical movement to maintain student engagement.	3	3	34	41	17
The teacher uses pacing techniques to maintain students' engagement.	3	10	28	38	21
The teacher demonstrates intensity and enthusiasm for the content in a variety of ways.	3	0	14	62	21
The teacher uses friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement.	28	10	14	41	7
The teacher provides students with opportunities to relate to what is being addressed in class to their personal interests.	0	14	41	34	10
The teacher uses unusual or intriguing information about the content in a manner that enhances student engagement.	3	21	38	31	7
The teacher uses behaviors associated with "Withitness" to maintain adherence to rules and procedures.	38	7	24	28	3
The teacher applies consequences for not following rules and procedures consistently and fairly.	0	0	28	55	17
The teacher consistently and fairly acknowledges adherence to rules and procedures.	0	0	24	62	14
The teacher uses students' interest and background to produce a climate of acceptance and continuity.	0	0	45	41	14
When appropriate, the teacher uses verbal and nonverbal behavior that indicates caring for students.	0	0	14	66	21
The teacher behaves in an objective and controlled manner.	0	3	10	66	21
The teacher exhibits behaviors that demonstrate value and respect for low expectancy students.	0	0	24	55	21
The teacher asks questions of low expectancy students with the same frequency and depth as high expectancy students.	0	10	41	34	14
The teacher probes incorrect answers of low expectancy students in the same manner as he/she does with high expectancy students.	0	10	45	28	17

Results of the post-survey are provided in Table 5. The original categories participants used to rate themselves on the use of each strategy were, Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, and Innovating. These responses were converted into Likert Scale values respectively. The results of those responses are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Post-survey Results

Post-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by scale or rubric that describes levels of performance relative to the learning goal.	10	7	34	45	3
The teacher facilitates tracking of student progress on one or more learning goals using a formative approach to assessment.	3	0	17	62	17
The teacher provides students with recognition of their current status and their knowledge gain relative to the learning goal.	0	3	28	55	14
The teacher organizes the physical layout of the classroom to facilitate movement and focus on learning.	3	0	0	55	41
The teacher reviews expectations regarding rules and procedures to ensure their effective execution.	0	0	3	55	41
The teacher identifies a lesson or part of a lesson as involving important information to which students should pay particular attention.	0	0	14	45	41
The teacher organizes students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new information.	0	3	14	66	17
The teacher engages students in activities that help them link what they already know to the new content about to be addressed and facilitates these linkages.	0	3	17	66	14
Based on student needs, the teacher breaks the content into small chunks (i.e. digestible bites) of information that can be easily processed by students.	0	0	21	52	28

Table 5 continues

Post-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
During breaks in the presentation of content, the teacher engages students in actively processing new information.	0	3	34	48	14
The teacher asks questions or engages students in activities that require elaborative inferences that go beyond what was explicitly taught.	7	7	31	45	10
The teacher engages students in activities that help them record their understanding of new content in linguistic ways and/or represent the content in nonlinguistic ways.	0	7	28	52	14
The teacher engages students in activities that help them reflect on their learning and the learning process.	0	7	24	62	7
The teacher engages students in a brief review of content that highlights the critical information.	0	7	7	55	31
The teacher uses grouping in ways that facilitate practicing and deepening of knowledge.	3	0	24	69	3
When appropriate (as opposed to routinely) the teacher designs homework to deepen students' knowledge of informational content or, practice a skill, strategy, or process.	28	7	17	41	7
When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining similarities and differences.	0	7	24	55	14
When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining their own reasoning or the logic of the information as presented to them.	7	7	38	48	0
When the content involves a skill, strategy, or process, the teacher engages students in practice activities that help them develop fluency.	0	7	21	48	24
The teacher engages students in revision of previous knowledge about content addressed in previous lessons.	0	7	17	59	17
The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypotheses.	10	21	45	24	0
The teacher engages students in complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis.	14	21	38	28	0

Table 5 continues

Post-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher acts as a resource provider and guide as students engage in cognitively complex tasks.	0	17	31	48	3
The teacher scans the room, making note of when students are not engaged and takes overt action.	0	0	7	41	52
The teacher uses academic games and inconsequential competition to maintain student engagement.	3	0	21	48	28
The teacher uses response rates techniques to maintain student engagement.	3	3	10	41	41
The teacher uses physical movement to maintain student engagement.	0	3	17	31	48
The teacher uses pacing techniques to maintain students' engagement.	0	3	21	38	38
The teacher demonstrates intensity and enthusiasm for the content in a variety of ways.	0	0	14	38	48
The teacher uses friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement.	7	7	21	41	24
The teacher provides students with opportunities to relate to what is being addressed in class to their personal interests.	0	3	28	52	17
The teacher uses unusual or intriguing information about the content in a manner that enhances student engagement.	3	3	28	48	17
The teacher uses behaviors associated with "Withitness" to maintain adherence to rules and procedures.	0	3	7	72	17
The teacher applies consequences for not following rules and procedures consistently and fairly.	0	0	7	55	38
The teacher consistently and fairly acknowledges adherence to rules and procedures.	0	0	3	59	38
The teacher uses students' interest and background to produce a climate of acceptance and continuity.	0	0	10	59	31
When appropriate, the teacher uses verbal and nonverbal behavior that indicates caring for students.	0	0	3	41	55
The teacher behaves in an objective and controlled manner.	0	0	3	59	38

Table 5 continues

Post-Survey Questions	Percent of Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
The teacher exhibits behaviors that demonstrate value and respect for low expectancy students.	0	0	7	55	38
The teacher asks questions of low expectancy students with the same frequency and depth as high expectancy students.	0	3	24	59	14
The teacher probes incorrect answers of low expectancy students in the same manner as he/she does with high expectancy students.	0	0	24	66	10

Phase I: Quantitative Results. A dependent samples *t*-test was used to measure both pre- and post-survey scores utilizing the 41 instructional elements (Marzano et al., 2012, p. 185). This repeated measures related *t*-test evaluated the effect of training on a common approach to instruction over time. Since the primary purpose of this study was to examine if a statistical effect would take place over time this first test of the hypothesis was essential. Based on the findings of this statistical evaluation, a statistically significant effect was found between pre- and post-survey, it was determined that factorial ANOVA hypothesis testing for each sub group was valid. Each sub category, grades taught, years of experience, subjects taught, and gender will be discussed and the aggregate interrelational results between various factors will be examined.

To further understand and evaluate the results of the study this researcher also examined the internal consistency of the instrument using Chronbach's Alpha. In this reliability index, ranges from 0 – 1 were used and scores above .8 indicated acceptable reliability. The pre-test reliability of the instrument used had a Chronbach's Alpha of .964 indicating a high rate of internal reliability. Since the main purpose of the study was

to evaluate the effects of a district wide implementation of a common approach to instruction, this step was essential in testing if all survey items consistently measured the same construct.

The results of the 41 items survey completed by respondents was an average pre-survey score of 138.71 with a standard deviation of 26.27. The post-survey score was an average of 159.17 with a standard deviation of 21.14. Across all respondents there was an average 21 point increase.

To determine if this constituted a statistically significant effect, a paired samples *t*-test was used. Alpha was set to .05. The results of the paired samples *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post-test scores ($t = 4.89$, $df = 28$, $p = .001$). Across all respondents there was on average a 21 point increase.

Ho: No significant statistical effect was seen as a result of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction.

H1: A significant statistical effect will be seen as a result of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction.

Gender of respondent. A repeated measures factorial ANOVA was conducted to investigate the effects of gender on the training of a common approach to instruction. The results indicated that there was an interaction between the intervention and gender ($F=11.166$, $df = 1$, $p = .002$). Investigating the means of each gender at the two time points pre- and post-indicated females had a lower average score ($M = 130.91$, $s = 21.57$) on the pre-test as compared to males ($M = 166$, $s = 25.42$). However, at time point

2 the average female score increased substantially ($M = 158.22$, $s = 23.34$), while the average male scores remained relatively constant ($M = 162.83$, $s = 16.94$). These results can be seen in Figure 1.

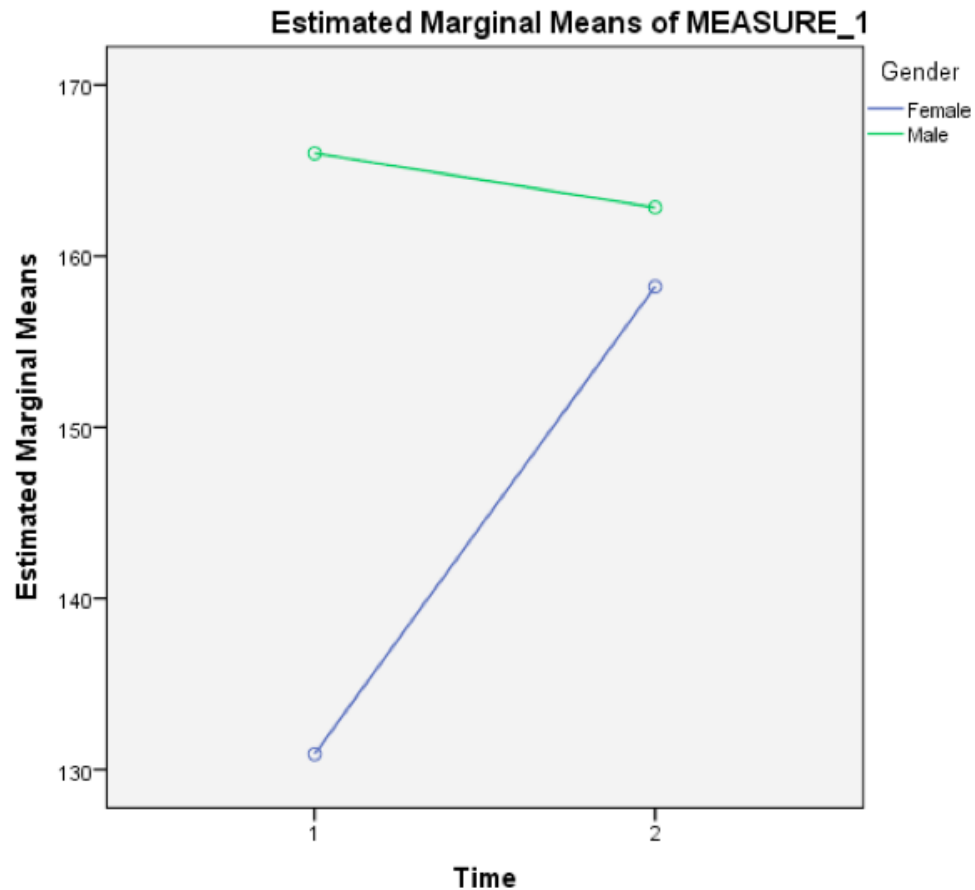


Figure 1. Gender of respondent.

Years of experience by respondent. A repeated measures factorial ANOVA was conducted to investigate the relationship between years of experience and the effect of the treatment. The interaction between years of experience and the treatment was not statistically significant ($f = 2.39$, $df = 4$, $p = .08$). The test of the within-subject effects

indicated that the treatment was effective across all years of experience ($f = 20.38$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$). The average mean for the pre-test was 138.83 and the mean for the post test was 157.28. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = .85$, $df = 4$, $p = .51$). The results can be seen in Figure 2.

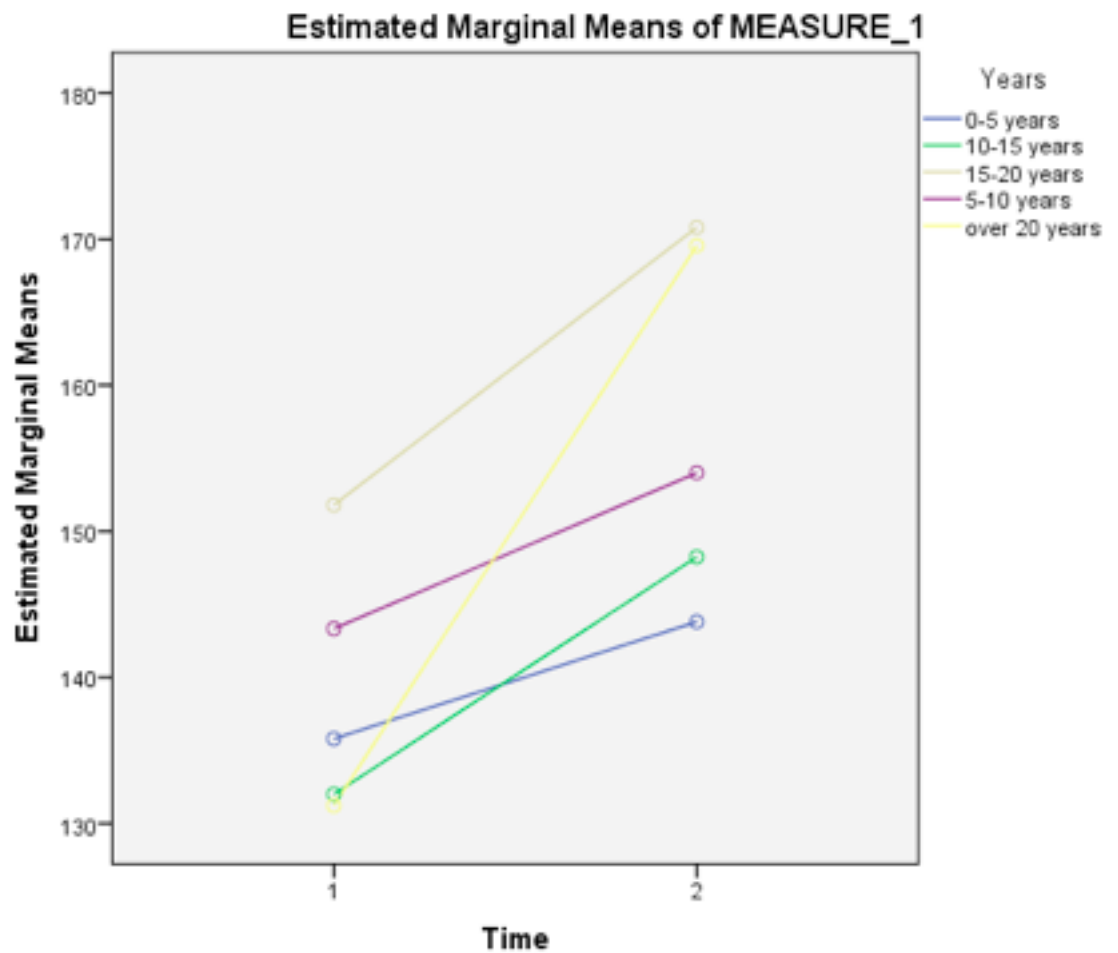


Figure 2. Years of experience by respondent.

Grades taught by respondent. A repeated measures factorial ANOVA was conducted to investigate the relationship between grades taught and the effect of the treatment. The interaction between grades taught and the treatment was not statistically significant ($f = 2.62, df = 2, p = .09$). The test of the within-subject effects indicated that the treatment was effective across all participants teaching any grade ($f = 6.34, df = 1, p = .02$). The average mean for the pre-test was 144.01 and the mean for the post test was 157.43. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = .19, df = 2, p = .83$). The results can be seen in Figure 3.

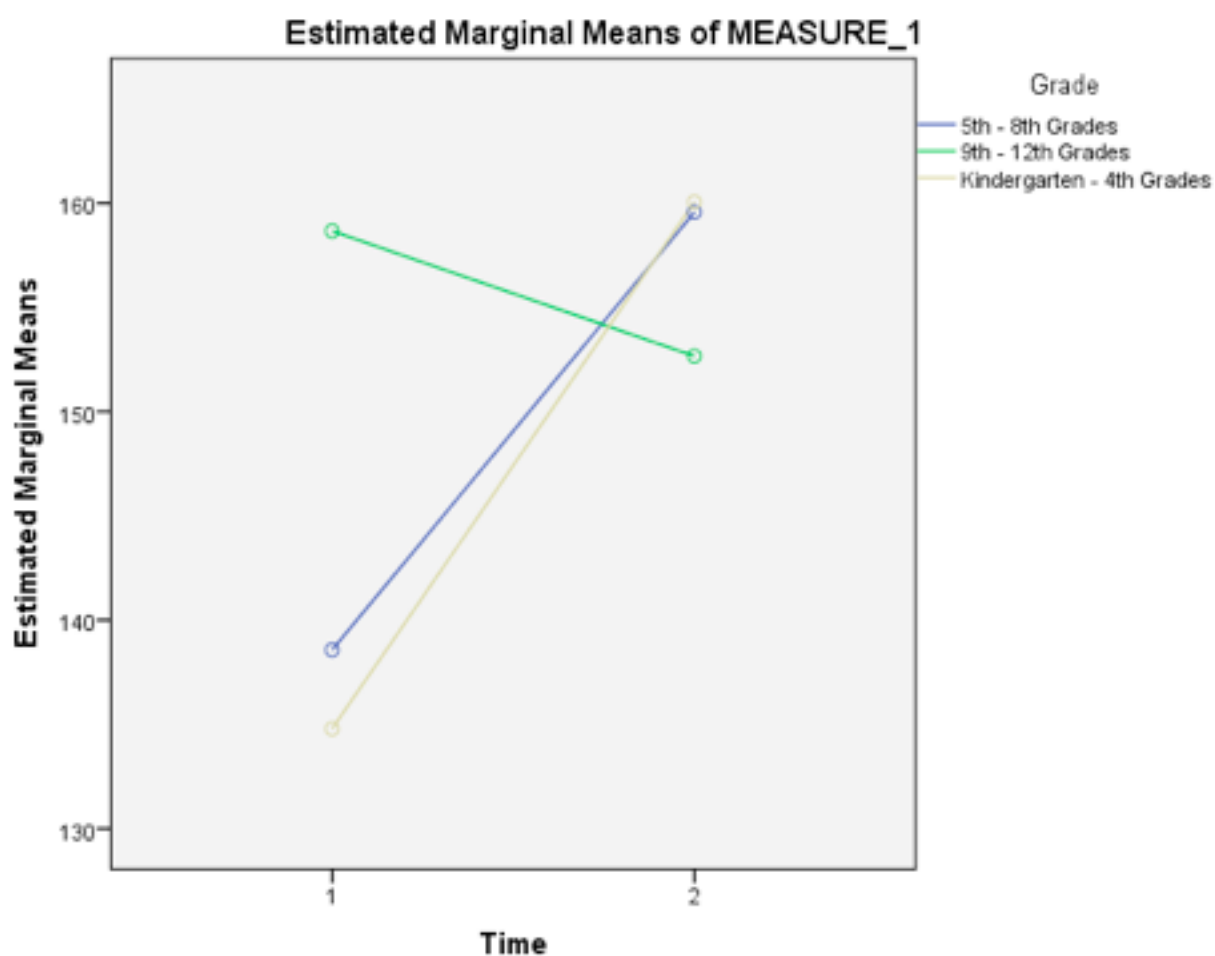


Figure 3. Grades taught by respondent.

Subject taught by respondent. A repeated measures factorial ANOVA was conducted to investigate the relationship between subjects taught and the effect of the treatment. The interaction between subjects taught and the treatment was not statistically significant ($f = 2.18, df = 3, p = .17$). The test of the within-subject effects indicated that the treatment was effective across all participants teaching any subject ($f = 15.44, df = 1, p = .001$). The average mean for the pre-test was 129.75 and the mean for the post test was 153.49. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = .291, df = 3, p = .055$). The results can be seen in Figure 4.

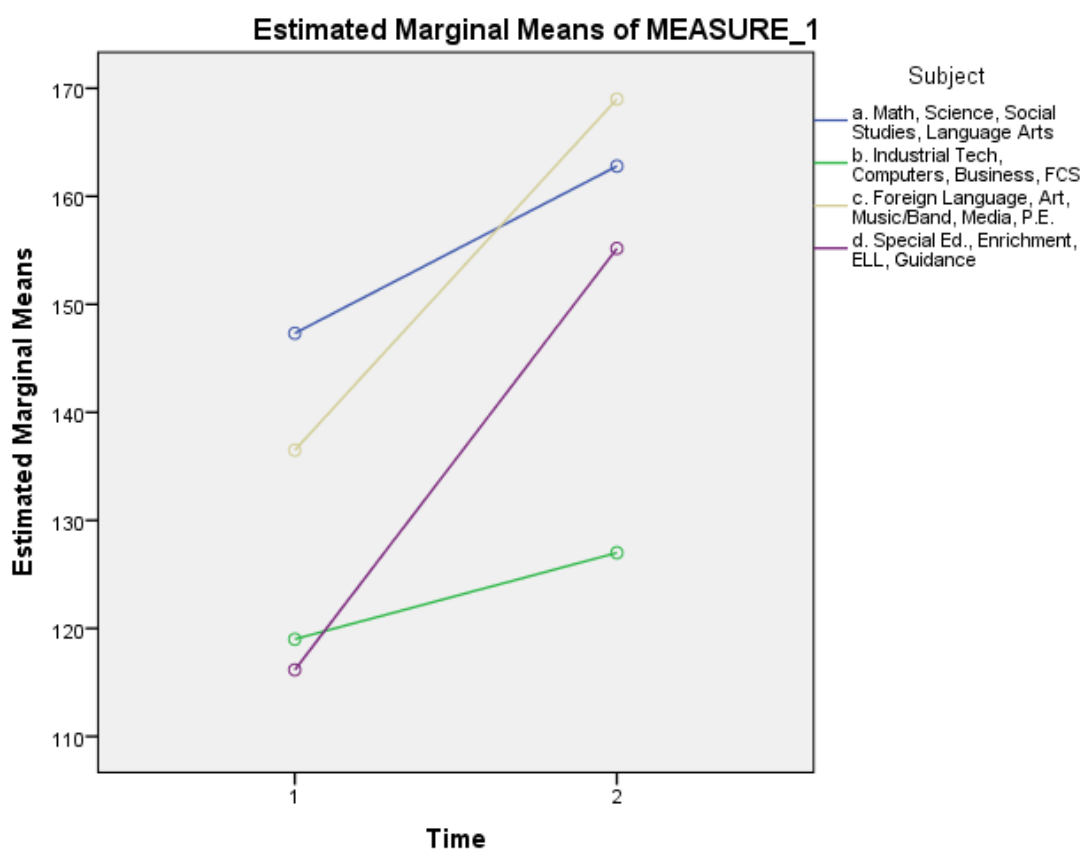


Figure 4. Subject taught by respondent.

Phase II: Qualitative Findings

Interview participants. The researcher contracted with the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to conduct the eight phone interviews. The interviews were contracted using a neutral agency because the primary researcher is an administrator within the district where the study took place. This helped to ensure that the researcher had no knowledge of the participants that chose to take place in the interviews. The researcher was provided with the transcribed interviews conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska.

The interviewee's volunteered to participate in the interview process by sending a signed letter of consent to the Bureau of Sociological Research. All certified teaching staff that had attended the professional development training on a common approach to instruction were invited to be interviewed. In the invitation the six overall questions (see Table 6) containing the four main research questions were included. The first eight volunteers who completed the interview process were included in these findings.

Interview questions. The initial interview questions were intended mainly to make the interviewee feel more at ease and comfortable with the interviewer. Although these first two questions were not specifically designed around gathering information regarding the impact of the training; they were included as they shed some light as to the perspective and attitude of the interviewee toward their own educational experience.

Table 6

Initial Interview and Research Questions

<p>Initial Interview Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When you were as child what did you like about school 2. What do you like best about teaching? <p>Research Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management prior to the training? 2. What are your experiences and beliefs now, after the training? 3. How has this training affected your approach to instruction and classroom management? 4. What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students? Did these come from the training?

Interview responses. The interview responses provided are not exact quotes as comments such as “um” and/or “like” have been removed for clarity. Repeat phrases have also been deleted. No additional phrasing or comments have been added to the respondent’s answers.

Initial interview - Question 1. When you were a child what did you like best about school?

Respondent 1: I was really good at school and very successful.

Respondent 2: I like activities and figuring out problems. I had good relationships with the teachers.

Respondent 3: I liked my friends and teachers. I was a good speller and reader.

Respondent 4: I had caring teachers and enjoyed hands on activities.

Respondent 5: I liked helping the teacher and experiences with other students.

Respondent 6: I was good at math and I liked my friends.

Respondent 7: I like reading.

Respondent 8: I enjoyed my friends and challenges in P.E.

Summary of initial interview question 1. In summarizing the first question, “When you were a child what did you like best about school,” all of the interviewees shared one or more skills they found enjoyable. While many of the respondents shared a strength such as reading or math they were good at, 5 of the 8 interviewees included some type of relationship as part of what they enjoyed about school.

Initial interview - Question 2. What do you like best about teaching?

Respondent 1: Interacting with students and watching their growth.

Respondent 2: I love that it is different from day to day. I have to plan my objectives and we have our routine but it’s still so different from day to day just depending upon student interactions. I think that’s what I love about it and I really enjoy my students. I love working with a group of colleagues that are at my same teaching level.

Respondent 3: Building relationships is a strength of mine, that is probably my favorite aspect of teaching. Just be able to establish relationships for the benefit of student growth is really fun to watch.

Respondent 4: I most enjoy not only that I taught them but that I’ve created a relationship with them because it will carry through life.

Respondent 5: I enjoy student growth, knowing that I helped them accomplish goals for the school year and I enjoy getting to know the families and often having siblings of former students.

Respondent 6: I like to watch where they start at the beginning of the school year and then where they end up at the end of the year and how they gain new knowledge and experiences throughout.

Respondent 7: Seeing kids’ growth. Seeing how they change from the start of the year to the end of the year.

Respondent 8: Really just to see the kids learn and know they have learned. You can see it in their facial expressions you know,

their emotions, and just seeing that progress from point “A” and getting to point “B” over a series of time.

Summary: Initial interview question 2. In summarizing the second question, “What do you like best about teaching,” all eight of the interviewees included an aspect of relationship building as part of their answer. A few interviewees clearly indicated the importance of relationships, “Building relationships is a strength of mine, that is probably my favorite aspect of teaching” and others indicate this value of relationships in statements such as, “I like to watch where they start at the beginning of the school year and then where they end up at the end of the year and how they gain new knowledge and experiences throughout.”

Research question responses.

Research question 1. Prior to the training, what were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management?

- Respondent 1: I would say my belief, my expectation was that every student could succeed if I had the right techniques to be able to help them succeed and I believe instruction should be tailored to the student, lesson plans should be tailored to meet the needs of the students.
- Respondent 2: I knew before training that there needed to be clear expectations and consequences. The instruction part of it just following the objectives of the lesson and then using what I learned in college courses like how to hook them at the beginning of the lesson, tell them what they’ll be learning...modeling, checking for understanding.
- Respondent 3: The classroom teacher needs to be able to have strategies that they can use to maintain their own classroom and not have other teachers or administrators handle those management issues because the more you need outside influence to manage your own classroom the more the students are going to be able to pick up on that. I think the teachers that can manage their own room gain more respect of their students. My belief on instruction is

that our students do not improve unless the teacher improves and so the teacher has to be constantly improving the instruction they give, so that the student, you can see student growth and I mean that's obviously going to get into your next question but I really do believe in a framework for instruction. My first project in teaching we didn't do any work with a framework for instruction so I believe; I believe good instruction follows a research-based framework.

Respondent 4: Well, my beliefs in classroom management basically it kind of boiled down to that if I sent them out of the room to have someone else handle their behavior they had zero respect for me. So I learned early on in my teaching career that I needed to spend most of my effort on positive reinforcement, saving negative reinforcement for only when it was really needed. And even when I have to give negative reinforcement it still has to be done with courtesy because as soon as a teacher gets rude with a student, you've lost them.

Respondent 5: I felt that as a teacher I needed to establish the rules and expectations to students and be clear with those.

Respondent 6: Regarding instruction: making it appropriate for the different levels that were in the classroom and making it not necessarily fair in the sense that everyone gets what they need not necessarily the exact same thing. In classroom management: building a classroom community and taking the time to get to know students and demonstrating expectations for behavior and routine.

Respondent 7: Being positive, positive reinforcement, consistency, making sure the kids knew the expectations.

Respondent 8: The Boys Town model and I will be honest, I didn't use it to every step that they suggested we do but that was probably the model we used the most you know in classroom management. Kids understanding that for every choice or action they choose there is some type of consequence may it be positive or negative.

Summary: Research question 1. In summarizing the first research question,

“Prior to the training, what were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management,” a theme of clear expectations and maintaining a strong sense of

classroom control with little assistance from outside help is a common thread. Only one interviewee named a specific classroom management model, “The Boys Town Model,” but many others made statements that would fit into such a plan with clear rules and expectations. Interviewees spoke less about instructional strategies but comments such as “hook them at the beginning of the lesson” and “instruction should be tailored to the student” demonstrated that a foundation for instruction was evident. A theme of relationship building is less evident in these responses as it was in the prior two questions.

Research question 2. After the training, what are your experiences and beliefs now?

- Respondent 1: No difference I don't think. I'm an instructional coach so that's kind of made the whole process interesting. The training has probably helped me to reanalyze why I do what I do and make sure it has a purpose and if there's anything that needs to change so it's given me an opportunity to reexamine those beliefs but I don't think I changed any beliefs in the process.
- Respondent 2: After the training, I feel like I have a much more detailed view on things like it really helped me to look at behavior and look at individual behaviors rather than just an entire class, classroom management system. It helped me to tailor things to individual student's needs and what we're all needing at different times during the day whether it be during reading instruction; that might look different than when we're doing their math lesson or behavior expectations might be a little bit different if we're doing a lesson on farm animals. I think it really helped me focus more and be more detailed in my instruction and definitely my behavior management.
- Respondent 3: I still believe what I believed before but it's only been enhanced through this training. Through the past 4 years of my own graduate work I got to experience researching Charlotte Danielson's model of instruction as well as the Marzano's model--. After the training I've become completely 100% in favor of the Marzano model versus any other framework of

instruction. I think that me personally, my beliefs on instruction match very well with the Marzano model that really wants to improve the teacher first so that you see the student growth second. That's not always the case. Sometimes instruction models, obviously you want to focus on the students but they kind of, some models that I've seen miss the boat in terms of the improvement of the teachers.

- Respondent 4: I think the one thing that I've learned is, I used to always praise, basically based on how much achievement a child did and what I'm learning more and more is to praise their hard work and their efforts. Students regardless of what their achievement is they always realize that they can see they're learning. Their setbacks are a learning opportunity. No one has to feel unsuccessful. Everyone can feel successful, it's just a matter of comparing themselves to themselves.
- Respondent 5: I learned that it was important to continue what they said; to be clear on expectations and routines. So one of the things we did was to create an expectation so in the hallway the expectations are this, in the classroom, in the lunchroom, when we use the restrooms, we made more specific to the whole so being rather than to the classroom. So originally to me I just thought more of my classroom and yes we talked about in the hallway you have your hands down and your voices off but when I applied it to the whole building, so when you walk in the hallway, when you eat in the lunchroom, when you're at recess, when you use the restroom and then I go as a staff other teachers did this as well so students knew the expectations in all of the areas of the building.
- Respondent 6: I'm still kind of the same but I've been more methodical in thinking through different engagement games or explaining procedures or having kids help me develop different ways of doing them.
- Respondent 7: Similar, they were just reinforced and it just made me aware of having teachers across the building using the same, like the same disciplining techniques, the same attention grabbers, the same procedures so the kids know what to expect from teacher to teacher since we do so much moving around.
- Respondent 8: I can't say I totally changed everything. I did get some insight on different ways to look at data. The main thing that I got out of this was changing different routines. I've been teaching for 26 years so--. Over those 26 years I've developed different routines

that have worked on my part and not that I'm not open to new ideas. I start class a little differently and it was through an example that I got through one of our group sessions that I picked up on and to be honest it is a big part, it's a simple thing but it's a big part of my class now. I got a sign that says "Be a cardinal today!" and we are the cardinals, we're cardinals and it's got a cardinal head and the kids come in, it's right on my door, the gym door and they have to touch it and then they enter the gym and generally we do a warm up but it also has some other aspects where if a kid chooses not to follow one of our school rules which we have 3, I warn them usually once and I'm kind of an easy guy so usually once sometimes twice, and then if they continue I will send them back to the cardinal to touch it, to "Be a cardinal today!" and then they have to go sit. I have a list of the three rules by my bulletin board and when I have time I will go over and redirect them or ask them what they feel they've done wrong. At first I must admit I was kind of hesitant but they understand you know these 3 rules, be safe, be respectful, and be responsible is basically being a cardinal at the elementary. That's part of being a cardinal.

Summary: Research question 2. In summarizing the second research question, "After the training, what are your experiences and beliefs now," it appears that for all the participants interviewed the training has not created a situation in which any interviewee changed their approach to teaching in a drastic way. What seems to be most prevalent in the responses to this question is that all respondents found benefit in the training that helped them to enhance, made them more consistent as a whole school, and more methodical in thinking through their approach to instruction. In every response to research question number 2 each interviewee shared an example in which they improved a strategy, approach, or procedure.

Research question 3. How has this training impacted or changed your approach to instruction and classroom management?

Respondent 1: Maybe it has, maybe the interaction with the other teachers gives some great ideas as you hear about how other people are

implementing things and gives me ideas. I think trying to be very specific when celebrating success. To consistently communicate what our learning goals are and to validate those goals when I'm in the room with the students. Much of the engagement strategies are what you're thinking of as it's happening because you don't, you can't predict how your students are going to come in so you almost need to have a whole set of things to pull from that you can apply to different situations on the spot.

Respondent 2: I changed the way I monitor behavior, I don't know what word to use but in the past I did a whole classroom management system where students can move up or down on like a clip chart. I decided to take that away and give each student their own opportunity to achieve success for themselves. So I went to a punch card system and each student gets a little punch card and they can receive punches for following our school rules, getting their work done, being a good helper, being a nice friend, and so it's really up to them how quickly or slowly they receive the punches on their punch card. Then I set up a reward system where they draw out of a bag once they get their punch card filled and it could be like they get a sweet treat or a prize out of the box, just some type of reward and then they start over with a new punch card so it's continuous. As far as instruction there's lots of things I've added to my instruction. Little things but they make a big difference like how I call on students. Instead of the old traditional raise your hand and I'll call on you, we started name strips out of a bag and then when they seemed to kind of get tired of that I decided to do a little theme each month. So like February I had a little heart whistle with their name on it-- . So I pulled their heart whistle out and then it was their turn. Then the next month it was a little flute, like a little plastic flute. This month it's a rubber ducky-- . On the last day of the month they get to take it home. It's been so reinforcing.

Respondent 3: I believe much more now in the goal setting of the teacher. Before I just kind of had a very wide viewpoint that we need to improve. The training did a great job of understanding that there are a lot of different aspects of instruction but, when you make a specific goal to improve on gradually as you go that helps the big picture and so kind of torquing that growth down a little bit can be much more effective.

Respondent 4: It hasn't changed it a lot; like I said because I had been trained prior. But I will say the one thing I've made a big effort to do in

the past three years with my math instruction is to incorporate a lot more songs and dances to help students remember important vocabulary words, important concepts, a lot of them are Nebraska state standards so I try to link it to that.

- Respondent 5: I learned that you have to first look at yourself as a teacher and look at areas where I can grow. I learned a lot of engagement strategies, that it was important to add brain breaks or movement to the lesson. It was important to be specific with transition so for example, I would tell the students when I say, "Go," this is what you're going to do. Those were the most specific things that I took away. Just more involvement for my students and more physical movement.
- Respondent 6: I've just been more intentional with the things that I've planned and the activities that I've planned and thinking more about incorporating the different essential questions, things that we worked into the lessons that we do. Taking more time to incorporate the essential questions or whatever the goals were that we set into the different lessons that we do daily.
- Respondent 7: I think it's made me more aware of what I do really well and also more aware of the things I need to improve on, doing things I didn't even realize may be affecting student learning and student behavior. So it was just a good way to reflect on what I've been doing and things I need to change and then also got me to learn about what other people do, and just people in the building not necessarily my own grade level but other teachers in the building. Like asking for attention, waiting for attention, more wait time. Kids can think about their answers and kind of stopping those blurters [laugh]--who will steal the thunder from somebody else who just needed a little more time to think and decide what they were going to say.
- Respondent 8: I guess that's a part of my classroom management dealing with if people get off path or if they choose to not follow our rules. I've implemented that. I've added a couple of things but I'm not, I'll be real honest it's not, it's not a daily routine where we give out what are called cardinal compliments. I utilize those but it's not like I said, it's not set into my instructions daily. I would say that's more like 2 times a week, that's probably pushing it, probably one to two times a week.

Summary: Research question 3. In summarizing Research Question 3, “How has this training impacted or changed your approach to instruction and classroom management,” a pattern of significant change or a major impact of the training is not evident. What continues to be a theme is that most, if not all, of the interviewees found the training helpful and made them reflect on their current practices with an eye for improvement. One interviewee’s statement, “I learned that you have to first look at yourself as a teacher” seems to be a common thread within these responses. All of the participants in their answer to Research Question 3 indicated some type of reflection on their current practices and a change to improve some aspect of their teaching. Statements such as “goal setting,” “being more intentional,” and “it’s made me more aware of what I do really well and also more aware of the things I need to improve on” are strong indicators.

Research question 4. What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students?

Respondent 1: I think it’s difficult with the time frame but I think connecting to students personally. Finding out about their background and being able to tailor instruction to connect with their background knowledge and make it relevant to them in that way.

Respondent 2: One thing that I really wanted to do that I tried but it’s something I just haven’t gotten a hold of yet, one of the goals was to have a two minute conference but not a conference, like a conversation, informal conversation with each of my students. Like once a week and it’s so hard to find the time--. To have that where it’s not about academics, something very school related and so that was one of my goals; to have more of an informal time with each of my kids for that relationship building so that’s still a big thing that I want to work on for next year. Just try to take that extra time to get to know them, each one of them, just a little bit better.

I think the training has been very valuable. It has really, really made me look at, like I said before, just details in my teaching--. And details in how I relate to students and how I want them to relate to each other so I'm excited to use the strategies I learned this year again next year and see what more I can do with it.

- Respondent 3: I really want to continue to put the learning in the hands of the students by allowing them to create that next step from where they can take the learning. What I mean by that is if they create their own sort of learning goal or if they create their own hypothesis and then taking that and allowing them to choose the avenue in which they meet that learning goal whether that be through creating their own website about a topic or whether that's using the I-pods, or computers we have access to. Their meeting their learning goals in their own specific way instead of always, predicated by me and that's a big step but that's something that I think that I'm more prepared to do next year than I was a year ago. Having the common language for the building wide perspective, or the district wide perspective I think it's such a good thing--. I hope that moving forward we continue to put in more special hours for the Marzano model. I'm a big believer in it and when teachers are talking about the common language it's only going to be beneficial to us and I'm excited to use the Marzano model.
- Respondent 4: I think one thing that I'd like to implement in the future is more games. I don't think I do enough with games. I think the kids love them.
- Respondent 5: I would say possibly like partner things, so turn to your partner and then when you're ready touch your nose with the response so then at least they have an opportunity to talk with someone before they are called upon and then also, incorporate more learning games or make more games out of a lesson that we're doing.
- Respondent 6: I still want to do more with technology whether it's through the learning games or else through the actual presentation of the lesson and involving kids with technology and then just continuing to do the different goals that we set.
- Respondent 7: I'd like to do more with class management and you learned a lot this year about building relationships especially with parents, with students and so next year my goal is to work more on

building those relationships. I'm looking forward to August when kids come back being able to get started right away. Maybe setting up some new classroom routines like a class meeting and just ways to do some problem solving in our classroom but starting that from the beginning of the year instead of where we started this year it was kind of in January where we came back. You know, it'll be nice to implement some of these things from the get go right in August.

Respondent 8: Academic games, I do use some academic stuff in my classroom but I will tell you it's mainly focused on fitness and movement. Then I've got vocabulary that I implement into the fitness and movement stuff but they came up with the 10,000 Pyramid game show and how we could use it maybe when they're lining up and maybe we're waiting on the teacher to come where I could just throw that out. And there were other examples that they used, I bet over a dozen where I would call "throw down activities," you know a simple sheet or just maybe vocabulary and then implement that into the activity. I only kind of grasped a few aspects of Marzano. It's pretty elaborate I will say.

Summary: Research question 4. In summarizing Research Question 4, "What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students?" The implementation of more academic games was prevalent along with a goal to improve or increase student partnering during instruction to allow students to share answers and assist one another. Comments regarding continued development of activities that build and reinforce student relationships with the teacher were also evident.

Summary of interviews. In summarizing the eight interviews that were conducted, one of the most consistent themes was the view that the training had not created a major change to the current instructional practices taking place. Interviewees used words such as "enhance" or "being more intentional." It appeared that while the training has not significantly altered anyone's approach to instruction it has brought about a greater practice of self-reflective and evaluation. A message of looking at oneself as

well as the students when trying to improve learning in the classroom seemed to be apparent. In every response to Research Question number two, every interviewee shared an example in which they improved a strategy, approach, or procedure.

Another theme that emerged was the impact of being more consistent across grade levels and throughout the building. Multiple comments focused on the need to change the approach and view regarding a single classroom set of rules and procedures in comparison to consistent rules and procedures across the building. One interviewee suggested that having a single set of consistent expectations for students across all areas of the building would help students avoid having to learn multiple systems and expectations.

A third theme was the engagement and empowerment of students within their daily instruction. Several interviewees commented on the use of academic games to increase engagement and help students enjoy learning. Participants also mentioned the move to having students work together more to check each others' understanding and provide additional opportunities for learning. One interviewee suggested giving students more opportunities to decide on learning activities in the classroom.

Summary of survey responses and interviews. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction.

In Chapter Five we will summarize the quantitative survey information and qualitative survey results. This researcher will emphasize similarities and differences between the two approaches and the information gathered.

Chapter Five

Summary of Findings

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a Common Approach to Instruction. The research questions used were:

1. Has a common approach to instruction affected teachers' understanding of instruction?
2. Has a common approach to instruction improved the efficiency and ability for teachers to work together?

In attempting to answer these questions this researcher used a mixed methods approach. Four open-ended questions were used during Phase II (Qualitative Phase) to help this researcher gain further insight of Phase I (Quantitative Phase).

1. What were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management prior to training?
2. What are your experiences and beliefs now?
3. How has this training affected your approach to instruction and classroom management?
4. What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students? Did any of these come from the training?

Summary of Survey Findings

Sixty-six (66) participants responded to the pre-survey given in August, 2014. The initial quantitative results demonstrated a wide range of understanding with regard to the 41 instructional strategies (Table 4). While many of the respondents felt they did use most of the strategies to some degree, the level of confidence or understanding in their usage varied. Some strategies that could be considered uncommon such as “The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis,” showing a far greater number of teachers, 38%, identifying themselves in the “never use” category of the survey.

The post-survey was given in April of 2015 after all training on the instructional strategies had been completed. Forty-seven (47) certified staff members chose to complete the second survey as shown in the post-survey results (Table 5). In this table we see a change in responses that demonstrate some growth in understanding and usage of the strategies. The example strategy used above “The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis,” now has a 10% response rate in the “never use” category.

The total participation for both pre- and post-surveys constituted 29 matched pairs that were used in our Dependent Samples t-test item analysis. A repeated measures related t-test was used to evaluate the effect of this training on a common approach to instruction over time. Based on the findings of this statistical evaluation, a statistically significant effect was found between the pre- and post-survey. This analysis indicates that growth and change did occur during the training, taking place from August 2014 to

April 2015. While this initial indicator shows change it was also a part of the study to examine the sub categories. A factorial ANOVA hypothesis test was used to assess each sub group's validity. Each sub group was found to be valid. The sub group categories were:

1. Grades Taught
2. Years of Experience
3. Subjects Taught
4. Gender

Findings by Sub Group

Gender. The results in the sub group, gender, indicated a significant effect. The results demonstrated that there was an interaction between the intervention and gender ($F = 11.166$, $df = 1$, $p = .002$). Investigating the means of each gender at the two time points pre- and post-indicated females had a lower average score ($M = 130.91$, $s = 21.57$) for the pre-survey as compared to males ($M = 166$, $s = 25.42$). However, at time point 2 the average female score increased substantially ($M = 158.22$, $s = 23.34$), while the average male score remained relatively constant ($M = 162.83$, $s = 16.94$). While a positive interaction between the two time points in relation to gender was present, this researcher has no information to suggest why female scores on the pre-survey were lower than the males. One hypothesis this researcher might suggest is that female participants may have been more reserved when initially assessing their understanding of the 41 instructional elements as compared to their male counterparts. It might also indicate that

while the training had an effect on all staff members, female staff were more receptive to receiving and implementing training.

Years of experience. The results in the sub category, Years of Experience, demonstrated no significant effect took place. The interaction between years of experience and the treatment were not statistically significant ($f = 2.39$, $df = 4$, $p = .08$). The test of the within-subject effects indicated that the treatment was effective across all years of experience ($f = 20.38$, $df = 2$, $p = .001$). The average mean for the pre-survey was 138.83 and the mean for the post-survey was 157.28. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = .85$, $df = 4$, $p = .51$). These results indicated that training on a common approach to instruction has a statistical effect on all teachers and that years taught was not a factor in assessing the overall effect.

Grades taught by respondent. The results in this sub category, Grades Taught by Respondent, demonstrated no significant effect took place. A repeated measures factorial ANOVA was conducted to investigate the relationship between grades taught and the effect of the treatment. The interaction between grades taught and the treatment was not statistically significant ($f = 2.62$, $df = 2$, $p = .09$). The test of the within-subject effects indicated that the treatment was effective across all participants teaching any grade ($f = 6.34$, $df = 1$, $p = .02$). The average mean for the pre- survey was 144.01 and the mean for the post-test was 157.43. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = .19$, $df = 2$, $p = .83$). These results indicated that the training on a common approach to instruction had a statistical effect on all teachers and that grades taught by participants was not a factor in assessing the overall effect.

Subjects taught. The results in this sub category demonstrated no significant effect took place. The interaction between subjects taught and the treatment was not statistically significant ($f = 2.18$, $df = 3$, $p = .17$). The test of the within-subject effects indicated that the treatment was effective across all participants teaching any subject ($f = 15.44$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$). The average mean for the pre-survey was 129.75 and the mean for the post-survey was 153.49. The test for between subjects effects was not statistically significant ($f = 2.91$, $df = 3$, $p = .055$). The results indicated that training on a common approach to instruction had a statistical effect on all teachers and the subject taught by the participant was not a factor in assessing the overall effect.

Survey Item Analysis

To better identify patterns that exist within the survey items, the responses of all 29 participants were averaged for both the pre- and post-survey results. These percent averages were then compared and the following three categories became apparent.

1. Survey items (instructional strategies) that showed the greatest growth over time (Table 7).
2. Survey items (instructional strategies) that showed the least growth over time (Table 8).
3. Survey items (instructional strategies) that showed a weak average at the beginning of the study and did not increase to a level commensurate with the other post-survey averages at the end (Table 9).

Survey items demonstrating greatest growth over time. These strategies seem to be geared toward engaging students in the learning process and increasing their

personal ownership of the learning. This set of responses shows the most growth on average when comparing the responses from all 29 participants (see Table 7).

Table 7

Greatest Growth Over Time

Survey Questions	Pre-Score Average	Post-Score Average
The teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by scale or rubric that describes levels of performance relative to the learning goal.	2.37	3.24
The teacher provides students with recognition of their current status and their knowledge gain relative to the learning goal.	3.00	3.79
The teacher engages students in activities that help them record their understanding of new content in linguistic ways and/or represent the content in nonlinguistic ways.	2.75	3.72
The teacher uses response rates techniques to maintain student engagement.	3.13	4.13
The teacher uses friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement.	2.89	3.68
The teacher uses behaviors associated with "Withitness" to maintain adherence to rules and procedures.	2.51	4.03

Survey items demonstrating least growth over time. Table 8 highlights the five instructional strategies that showed the least amount of growth when averaging the overall response score between pre- and post-surveys of all 29 participants. The lack of growth in comparison to other survey items can be attributed to the overall high score average found in the pre-survey results. Of these five instructional elements, teachers on average rated themselves higher than on all other items contained in the surveys. This may be a factor of the lack of complexity of these instructional strategies. Many, if not

Table 8

Least Growth Over Time

Survey Questions	Pre-Score Average	Post-Score Average
The teacher organizes the physical layout of the classroom to facilitate movement and focus on learning.	4.03	4.31
The teacher reviews expectations regarding rules and procedures to ensure their effective execution.	4.17	4.37
The teacher identifies a lesson or part of a lesson as involving important information to which students should pay particular attention.	3.96	4.27
The teacher behaves in an objective and controlled manner.	4.03	4.34
The teacher asks questions of low expectancy students with the same frequency and depth as high expectancy students.	3.51	3.82

all, are centered around processes that are considered more common or everyday in most classrooms.

Survey items demonstrating weak results. Table 9 shows three survey items that demonstrated a weak understanding at the beginning of the study and did not grow to a level comparable to other survey items over the course of the study.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

While the statistical analysis of the study demonstrated that a significant effect was present, it is clear that a participants experience, subject taught, or grade taught did not demonstrate a benefit or difference. Gender was however statistically significant. This may suggest that the training was more effective for females since their average growth was greater during the study period or it may imply that females were more reserved when initially rating themselves at the beginning of the study.

Table 9

Weak Results

Survey Questions	Pre-Score Average	Post-Score Average
When appropriate (as opposed to routinely) the teacher designs homework to deepen students' knowledge of informational content or, practice a skill, strategy, or process.	2.55	2.93
The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypotheses.	2.24	2.82
The teacher engages students in complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis.	2.41	2.79

In the survey item analysis we see the greatest growth in instructional strategies that seemed to deal with student engagement, motivation, or ownership of ones' learning. Survey items (instructional strategies) that are more common place and consistent with generally daily expectations of most lessons demonstrate little growth but also have the highest pre-survey average scores leaving less room for overall growth. The third category of our survey item analysis will be called "Weak Results." These item averages show, when compared to other survey item results, less knowledge and understanding by staff at the beginning of the study. Table 9 shows that these surveys displayed little growth over the course of the study. The instructional strategies in these items appear to be more complex than the others and may require more training and experience.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Of the eight interviews conducted as part of this study three main themes emerged: Impact, Consistency, and Engagement. Each of these themes will be examined separately.

Impact. Of the eight interview respondents, no single comment or group of responses indicated a major shift or significant change in the way participants approached instruction as a result of the training received during the 2014-2015 academic year. A clear and consistent theme that was present was that training did affect their approach to instruction by encouraging participants to examine their own practices in comparison with the instructional elements presented. Interviewees used words such as “enhance, being more intentional,” and “greater practice of self-reflection and evaluation” when sharing if they felt the training improved a strategy, approach, or procedure.

Consistency. A secondary theme that emerged was the impact of being more consistent across grade levels and throughout the building. Multiple comments focused on the need to change the approach and view regarding a single classroom set of rules and procedures in comparison to consistent rules and expectations across the building. Comments suggested a benefit for both the school and students regarding classroom management, behavior, and expectations. The belief that having a single set of consistent expectations for students across all areas of school would help students avoid having to learn multiple systems.

Engagement. The use of student games and instructional strategies modeled during the training has been a major thread in 7 interviews. The suggestion that academic games can be used to instruct students while improving engagement and even empowering students in their own learning was evident. Interviewees also commented on providing more opportunities in the classroom for students to work together and check

each others' understanding thus making them more actively involved in the learning process.

Chapter Six

Summary of Phase I (Quantitative) and Phase II (Qualitative)

The purpose of this study was to examine the instructional understanding and effectiveness of a district wide implementation of a common approach to instruction. In summarizing the quantitative survey results and the qualitative interview responses it was clear that the training on the 41 elements of instruction to create a more cohesive approach to instruction had a statistical affect. In analyzing the statistical data we see an overall significant affect from the pre- to the post-survey results demonstrating that change has taken place with regard to teachers' approaches to instruction. With gender being the only subgroup to demonstrate a statistical difference, this researcher is cautious to suggest that any one subgroup was more or less affected by the training provided in the study. The interview responses added to this understanding by highlighting three main instructional areas that were most effected within the study: Impact, Consistency, and Engagement. The interview responses and survey data suggest that an overall change to instruction has taken affect, although it is one that is more subtle based on improvement and increasing use of strategies. The information available in this study does not demonstrate that any participant dramatically changed their approach to teaching as a result of the implementation.

Future Research

For future studies in the area on district wide implementations of a common approach to instruction, this researcher would recommend that any further research on this topic be carried out for a longer period of time following the same group of teachers.

The overall timeline for a district or large group of professionals to fully adopt and utilize a system-wide cohesive approach to instruction, would take a period of years with continual professional development. While this study, lasting over one academic year, does shed some light on the impact of such an implementation and demonstrates that a significant effect was apparent, a longer study period would add to this understanding.

Predictions

The expectation that schools will be graded, ranked, and held to standards and goals set by their state and federal government is well established. The term “high stakes” testing has become a common term in educational nomenclature and the pressure only seems to be increasing. Although many argue that this “high stakes” environment has had negative affects on the public education system, it has brought about positive changes as well. More and more schools review data and curriculum to a greater and more detailed degree as a result of these increasing expectations. School leaders are looking for better ways to help students achieve in a system that is short on time and resources. This researcher believes that more and more schools and districts will begin looking at a common and consistent approach to instruction to allow for greater cohesiveness and cooperation among their staff. This study of the affects of such an implementation in a class-B rural school district demonstrates that this type of change has an effect.

References

- Bidwell, C., & Kasarda, J. (1980) Conceptualizing and measuring the effects of school and schooling. *American Journal of Education*, 88(4), 401-430.
- Bryk, A., & Raudenbush, S. (1988). Toward a more appropriate conceptualization of research on school effects: A three-level hierarchical linear model. *American Journal of Education*, 97(1), 65-108.
- Bushaw, W., & Lopez, S. (2013). The 45th PDK/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools – Which way do we go? *Kappan Magazine*, 95(1), 9-25. Retrieved from http://www.oapcs.org/files/u1/2013_PDKGallup.pdf
- Creswell, J. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Harris, K., Graham, S., Friedlander, B., & Laud, L. (2013). Bring powerful writing strategies into your classroom! *The Reading Teacher*, 66(7), 538-542.
- Harris, K., Lane, K., Graham, S., Driscoll, S., Sandmel, K., Brindle, M., & Schatschneider, C. (2012). Practice-based professional development for self-regulated strategies development in writing: A randomized controlled study. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63(2), 103-119.
- Haystead, M., & Marzano, R. (2009). *Meta-analytic synthesis of studies conducted at Marzano Research Laboratory on instructional strategies* (pp. 1-38).
Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Marzano, R., Boogren, T., Kanold-McIntyre, J., & Pickering, D. (2012). *Becoming a reflective teacher*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

- National Reading Panel. (1998). *Report of the National Reading Panel*. Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Retrieved on March 23, 2014, from <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Pages/intro.aspx>
- National Reading Panel. (2006). *Teaching children to read*. Retrieved in March 2014, from <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Page/next.aspx>
- National Staff Development Council. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession*. Retrieved from <http://learningkeys.org/AboutUs/NationalStaffDevelopmentCouncil/tabid/279/Default.aspx>
- Newman, F., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. (2001). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(4), 297-321.
- Schooling, P., Toth, M., & Marzano, R. (2012). *Whitepaper: Creating an alignment system* (pp. 1-49). Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., & Keeling, D. (2009). *The widget effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness* (pp. 1-45). Brooklyn, NY: The New Teacher Project.

White House (The) & Department of Education. (2014). *Setting the pace: Expanding opportunities for American's students under race to the top*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/settingthepacerttreport_3-2414_b.pdf

Appendix A

Common Language of Instruction Survey

Common Language of Instruction Survey

I grant permission for this survey to be used in a research study. Yes No

Please complete the following demographic information by circling one of the choices for each question:

1. Years of experience teaching:
 - a. 0-5
 - b. 5-10
 - c. 10-15
 - d. 15-20
 - e. Over 20

2. What grade(s) do you teach? (If you teach multiple grades select the choice that best fits your schedule.)
 - a. Kindergarten – 4th Grades
 - b. 5th – 8th Grades
 - c. 9th – 12th Grades

3. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

4. Subject Instructed by teacher (Please choose the category that is most appropriate.)
 - a. Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts
 - b. Industrial Tech, Computers, Business, FCS
 - c. Foreign Language, Art, Music/Band, Media
 - d. Special Ed., Enrichment, ELL, Guidance

Please use the following rubric to rate your current skill, understanding, and use of the instruction element.

InnovativeI am highly skilled and adapt this strategy for students with unique needs

ApplyingI am a skillful user of this strategy

DevelopingI use this strategy at a basic level and am somewhat inconsistent

BeginningI may use the strategy incorrectly

Not UsingThis is a strategy I do not use

The teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by scale or rubric the describes levels of performance relative to the learning goal.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher facilitates tracking of student progress on one or more learning goals using a formative approach to assessment.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher provides students with recognition of their current status and their knowledge gain relative to the learning goal.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher reviews expectations regarding rules and procedures to ensure their effective execution.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher organizes the physical layout of the classroom to facilitate movement and focus on learning.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher organizes the physical layout of the classroom to facilitate movement and focus on learning.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher identifies a lesson or part of a lesson as involving important information to which students should pay particular attention.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher organizes students into small groups to facilitate the processing of new information.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in activities that help them link what they already know to the new content about to be addressed and facilitates these linkages.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

Based on student needs, the teacher breaks the content into small chunks (i.e. digestible bites) of information that can be easily processed by students.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

During breaks in the presentation of content, the teacher engages students in actively processing new information.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher asks questions or engages students in activities that require elaborative inferences that go beyond what was explicitly taught.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in activities that help them record their understanding of new content in linguistic ways and/or represent the content in nonlinguistic ways.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in activities that help them reflect on their learning and the learning process.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in a brief review of content that highlights the critical information.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses grouping in ways that facilitate practicing and deepening of knowledge.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

When appropriate (as opposed to routinely) the teacher designs homework to deepen students' knowledge of informational content or, practice a skill, strategy, or process.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining similarities and differences.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

When the content is informational, the teacher helps students deepen their knowledge by examining their own reasoning or the logic of the information as presented to them.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

When the content involves a skill, strategy, or process, the teacher engages students in practice activities that help them develop fluency.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in revision of previous knowledge about content addressed in previous lessons.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher organizes the class in such a way as to facilitate students working on complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypotheses.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher engages students in complex tasks that require them to generate and test hypothesis.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher acts as a resource provider and guide as students engage in cognitively complex tasks.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher scans the room, making note of when students are not engaged and takes overt action.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses academic games and inconsequential competition to maintain student engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses response rates techniques to maintain student engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses physical movement to maintain student engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses pacing techniques to maintain students' engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher demonstrates intensity and enthusiasm for the content in a variety of ways.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher provides students with opportunities to relate to what is being addressed in class to their personal interests.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses unusual or intriguing information about the content in a manner that enhances student engagement.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses behaviors associated with "Withitness" to maintain adherence to rules and procedures.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher applies consequences for not following rules and procedures consistently and fairly.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher consistently and fairly acknowledges adherence to rules and procedures.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher uses students' interest and background to produce a climate of acceptance and continuity.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

When appropriate, the teacher uses verbal and nonverbal behavior that indicates caring for students.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher behaves in an objective and controlled manner.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher exhibits behaviors that demonstrate value and respect for low expectancy students.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher asks questions of low expectancy students with the same frequency and depth as high expectancy students.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

The teacher probes incorrect answers of low expectancy students in the same manner as he/she does with high expectancy students.

- Innovating
- Applying
- Developing
- Beginning
- Not Using

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of professional development provided to an entire public school district in all subject areas on a “common language of instruction.”

Initial Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your experiences in teaching.

Research Questions:

1. What were your experiences and beliefs regarding instruction and classroom management prior to the training?
2. What are your experiences and beliefs now, after the training?
3. How has this training affected your approach to instruction and classroom management?
4. What are some examples of practices that you have or plan to put into place to assist your students? Did these come from the training?

Signature of Research Participant:

Date:

_____ By checking this box, I agree to have my interview with the researcher audio taped.

Appendix C

Letter of Permission

Marzano Research Laboratory
12577 East Caley Avenue
Centennial, CO 80111

July 23, 2014

Dear Dr. Robert Marzano:

I am writing to request permission to use your 41 elements of "The Art and Science of Teaching" model in my dissertation. Examples of these are located in your book, "Becoming a Reflective Teacher" on pages 185-226. These 41 elements will be the basis for my survey instrument being given to teachers as a pre-and post examination of their instructional understanding. The survey will be given in September before our first training on your common language of instruction and in May after the final training. All certified staff within the Crete School District will receive training and we will utilize the book you co-authored titled "Becoming a Reflective Teacher." The study will take place during the 2014-2015 academic year and will only be implemented in the aforementioned school district. A copy of the survey is enclosed.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and would be happy and honored to share my findings with you.

Your signature below indicates permission for me to use the 41 elements to create a survey instrument for use in this study, and only this study, for the 2014-2015 academic year.

I, _____, grant permission for Bret Schroder to use the 41 elements of ~~instruction~~ to develop the survey instrument to be used in his research study.

Very truly yours,

Bret Schroder
Doctoral Student
Director of Instruction, Crete Schools

Appendix D

Informed Consent Letter

IRB Approval: Pending**Identification of Project:**

THE EFFECTS OF A COMMON LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of professional development provided to an entire public school district in all subject areas on a “common language of instruction.” This letter is a request for permission to use survey results from your staff, both pre(before training at the beginning of the year) and post(after the last training session in May) in this study. Although this permission letter is intended for the school district leader, each individual survey will ask the participant for permission to use their survey results in this study.

A second phase of the study, consisting of one-on-one interviews with 8 randomly selected staff members will also be conducted. Permission from each staff member will be obtained for their participation in the interview and results included in the study.

Procedures:

Participation in this study will require approximately 50 minutes of staff members’ time. They will be asked to complete two surveys, one pre- and one post- professional development. An additional hour of time will be needed for the eight staff members participating in the qualitative survey.

Benefits:

The study will help to determine the overall effectiveness of professional development on a “common language of instruction.” This may also aid in helping to plan and adjust training the following year for new and experienced teachers. The survey also categorizes participants and will provide added understanding as to what subjects, grades taught, or years of experience may be most effected by the training.

Risks and/or Discomfort:

There are no known risks or discomforts with this research.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study, which could identify a staff member, will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a password protected computer. Rosters linking individual staff members with results will be maintained by an independent representative. The data will only be seen by the principal investigator during the study, and will be discarded after the study is finalized in December 2015. The information in this study may be published in scientific journal or presented at professional conferences but the data will be unidentifiable.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask questions about this research by contacting the investigator listed below. If you would like to speak to someone else, please contact Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-7211.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska, or any other way receive penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Superintendent:

Date:

Name and Phone number of:

Principal Investigator:

Bret Schroder

402-540-1937

Advisor

Jody Isernhagen, EdD, Associate Professor of Educational Administration

402-472-1088

Appendix E

District Permission to Perform Study

District Level Informed Consent Letter
IRB Approval: Pending

Identification of Project:

THE EFFECTS OF A COMMON LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of professional development provided to an entire public school district in all subject areas on a "common language of instruction." This letter is a request for permission to use survey results from your staff, both pre (before training at the beginning of the year) and post (after the last training session in May) in this study. Although this permission letter is intended for the school district leader, each individual survey will ask the participant for permission to use their survey results in this study.

A second phase of the study, consisting of one-on-one interviews with 8 randomly selected staff members will also be conducted. Permission from each staff member will be obtained for their participation in the interview and results included in the study.

Procedures:

Participation in this study will require approximately 40 minutes of staff members' time. They will be asked to complete two surveys, one pre- and one post-professional development. An additional 30 minutes of time will be needed for the eight staff members participating in the qualitative survey.

Benefits:

The study will help to determine the overall effectiveness of professional development on a "common language of instruction." This may also aid in helping to plan and adjust training the following year for new and experienced teachers. The survey also categorizes participants and will provide added understanding as to what subjects, grades taught, or years of experience may be most effected by the training.

Risks and/or Discomfort:

There are no known risks or discomforts with this research.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study, which could identify a staff member, will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a password protected computer. Rosters linking individual staff members with results will be maintained by an independent representative. The data will only be seen by the principal investigator during the study, and will be discarded after the study is finalized in December 2015. The information in this study may be published in scientific journal or presented at professional conferences but the data will be unidentifiable.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask questions about this research by contacting the investigator listed below. If you would like to speak to someone else, please contact Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965.

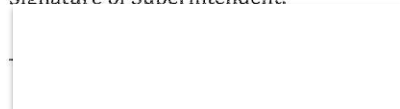
Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska, or any other way receive penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to have Crete Public Schools participate in this study. Your signature certifies that you have granted permission for this study to be conducted in your district. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Superintendent:



Date:

8-14-14

Name and Phone number of:

Principal Investigator:

Bret Schroder
402-540-1937

Advisor

Jody Isernhagen, EdD, Associate Professor of Educational Administration
402-472-1088

Appendix F

Invitation to Take Survey

“The Effects of a Common Language of Instruction”

Dear Educator,

I am requesting that you take part in a research study to increase our understanding of how the professional development you received this year is impacting your instruction and ability to work and communicate with fellow staff members. The study consists of three parts. The first part is a web-based survey you will be invited to take in a few days. The second part of this study is a second, identical web based survey you will be asked to complete in May after this year’s professional development. The third part of this study is an interview that all participants will be invited to volunteer for and eight will be randomly selected.

As an educator receiving training in Marzano’s Common Language of Instruction you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first hand information from your own perspective.

Each survey takes around 17 minutes and is done over the web via a Google form. We are simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on the training and how it has impacted you professionally. Your responses to the survey items will be kept confidential using the four-digit code found in the front cover of your Marzano books. Each survey will only be identified using the number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. The interviews conducted in late May will only involve those that have volunteered for them and will take around 30 minutes.

There is no compensation for participating in this study and participation in this study, or any part of this study, is completely voluntary. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to greater professional understanding of the impact of this professional development.

If you are willing to participate please click on the link below and take the survey. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1fAt0bfOEF_L8XM2cde5NzdPI0XBA_ftUZ7fKoi4HpVw/viewform

Thanks!

Bret Schroder
and
Dr. Jody Isernhagen

Appendix G

Invitation to be Interviewed

“The Effects of a Common Language of Instruction”

Dear Educator,

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase our understanding of how the professional development you received this year is impacting your instruction and ability to work and communicate with fellow staff members.

As a educator receiving training in Marzano’s Common Language of Instruction you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first hand information from your own perspective.

The phone interview takes around 30 minutes and is very informal. We are simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on the training and how it has impacted you professionally. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and interviews will be conducted by someone other than myself. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to greater professional understanding of the impact of this professional development.

If you are willing to participate please email Lindsey Witt-Swanson at lwitt2@unl.edu with your name, phone number, and a good time to reach you. She will then reply back either by email or phone to set up a time for the phone interview. Lindsey works for the Bureau of Sociological Research who I have contracted with to perform these phone interviews. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanks!

Bret Schroder
and
Dr. Jody Isernhagen

Appendix H

Institutional Review Board

Letter of Approval

August 25, 2014

Bret Schroder
Department of Educational Administration
775 Saint Johns Ct Crete, NE 68333

Jody Isernhagen
Department of Educational Administration
132 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20140814609 EX
Project ID: 14609
Project Title: The Impact Of A Common Language Of Instruction within a Nebraska Rural School District

Dear Bret:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 08/25/2014.

1. Your stamped and approved informed consent documents have been uploaded to NUgrant (file with "Approved.pdf" in the form files). Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent documents, please submit the revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other

finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;

* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



--

Bret Schroder
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Crete Public Schools

Confidentiality Notice: This email and attached documents may contain confidential information. All information is intended only for the use of the named recipient(s). If you are not the named recipient, you are not authorized to read, disclose, copy, distribute, or take any action other than immediate delivery to the named recipient. If you have received this email in error, do not read the information, and please immediately notify the sender. If you are the named recipient, you are not authorized to reveal any of this information to any other unauthorized individual.