INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TO ENHANCE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IN SECONDARY ENGLISH

By

KAREN MALLORY

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2014

To my husband, Rick, and all of my family and close friends

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my husband, Rick, for his patience and understanding during my

research. Also, I want to express my appreciation to my family and friends for their support,

without which I would never have been able to complete this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TO ENHANCE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IN SECONDARY ENGLISH

By

Karen Mallory

August 2014

Chair: Alyson Adams
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers continue to struggle with effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) due to the magnitude of instructional shifts required in addressing the new standards. Many educational experts believe a collaborative leadership team, comprised of administrators and staff developers, is the most effective way to implement reform and help foster long-term partnerships with teachers as these instructional changes begin to take place.

This purpose of this study was to examine how I, as a staff developer, could provide effective instructional leadership to secondary English teachers transitioning to the CCSS. Specifically, I wanted to examine ways in which I could combine the instructional vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and effectively support teachers in the implementation process.

This study was framed as practitioner research, and the main sources of data were interviews with district and school leaders and teachers, as well as personal reflections on my responsibilities in supporting secondary English teachers in two high schools.

As I analyzed the data from my study, it became clear to me that my role as a staff developer was a complicated leadership responsibility which involved balancing teacher needs with the sometimes conflicting leader vision. Four main themes emerged across both teacher and

leader interviews: Vision of Leadership, Support for Teachers, Collaboration, and

Communication. The substance of each theme sometimes varied between teachers, principals,

and the district leader, and it became clear that my role as an instructional leader was to balance

the tensions which emerged, with communication being the most challenging to navigate.

This study has significant implications for my personal practice as a staff developer and

aspiring instructional leader, district leaders who develop systems to build leadership capacity at

various levels, and principals who want to maximize the extent of their instructional leadership.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When national school reforms sweep the country, it is easy for educators to get caught up in the propaganda of change. Since 2010, 44 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which raise academic expectations and have as their goal college and career readiness for all students (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). The CCSS provide an opportunity to realize systemic change and ensure that American students are held to the same high expectations in mathematics and literacy as their global peers — regardless of their state or zip code. However, the implementation timeline is short, and educators are engrossed in the process of learning the new standards and readying themselves for the instructional shifts necessary in adopting the new standards. In this study, I am employing practitioner research in order to closely examine the implementation of Common Core reform in my district, particularly in two high schools where I serve as a reading staff developer and a member of an instructional leadership team. It is through these smaller elements of implementation that we might understand greater lessons of widespread educational reform.

Common Core State Standards: National, State, and District Context

Current educational reform is linked to the popular notion that high school students are not ready for the rigors of post-secondary university work, nor are they prepared for many career entry-level positions. The majority of students graduating from our nation's high schools cannot sufficiently navigate complex text, which is necessary to be successful in post-secondary education and careers. Although post-secondary reading demands have remained somewhat consistent over the last several decades, texts in Kindergarten through grade 12 have actually lessened in complexity, and schools, for the most part, have paid little attention to students'

ability to read complex texts independently. As a result, a serious gap has been created between many high school graduates' reading skills and the reading requirements they will encounter after graduation (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

In fact, only 51% of high-school graduates who took the ACT test in 2005 were deemed ready for college-level reading (ACT, 2005). College and career readiness, as defined by ACT, is the attainment of the knowledge and skills necessary for a student to register for and successfully complete credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution without having to first participate in remedial courses. These benchmarks represent the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests, which predict a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding first-year credit-bearing college courses. ACT also reports that of the college-ready benchmarks in English, reading, mathematics, and science, 15% of ACT-tested students in 2011 met one of the benchmarks, 17% met two of the benchmarks, 15% met three of the benchmarks, and only 25% met all four of the benchmarks, while 28% met none of the college-ready benchmarks (ACT, 2011).

In Florida, 54% of high school graduates who took the state college placement test were required to complete remedial work in at least one subject, while the national average for first-time students needing remediation is 40% (State Impact Florida, 2012). Demand for remedial courses in Florida has doubled since 2007 and indicates a significant deficit in the number of students who are able to enroll in college-level freshmen courses. Therefore, it is vital to reduce the number of high school graduates in Florida who are considered not college-ready for a number of reasons. To begin with, taking developmental courses increases the cost of a college degree for both students and taxpayers. In 2009-2010, 147,123 students enrolled in developmental education, which cost the state and students $156,686,624 (Florida Department of

Education, 2011). In addition, research shows that students who take remedial classes are less likely to graduate from college than those who arrive ready for college-level work. Also, more college-educated workers are needed to fill jobs in Florida's rebounding economy. Finally, workers without a college degree earn lower wages (State Impact Florida, 2012).

Considering the vast number of students graduating from Florida public schools who were not ready for the rigors of college-level coursework, the state began reforming primary and secondary education in its public schools. These changes included more rigorous curriculum and graduation requirements, which were designed to improve student performance in core content areas such as reading, math, writing, and science. Standardized tests became high-stakes assessments, with student scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) serving as the basis of school funding, determining whether schools would be under local or state control, and serving as an element of consideration in teacher incentive pay (Florida Department of Education, 2013). The main objective of these reform efforts was to increase the high school graduation rate, and the more stringent requirements accomplished this task. However, increasing the number of students graduating from high school did not necessarily produce more students who were academically ready for college (State Impact Florida, 2012).

To address the lack of academic preparedness, Florida and many other states decided to adopt the CCSS, which require students to critically analyze a wide variety of informational and literacy texts in English language arts and literacy and to master a broad range of mathematical concepts. These standards enable these states to purposefully implement consistently rigorous educational benchmarks, which will prepare our nation's students to be ready for the academic demands of college and 21st century careers. The standards are aligned with college and career expectations, are well-defined, reasonable and coherent, include arduous material and application

14

of knowledge through high-order competencies, are built upon strengths and curricula of existing state standards, are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society, and are research-based (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

In addition, the CCSS provide an opportunity for school districts across the United States to create a national curriculum in English language arts and mathematics, which offers a number of benefits. To begin with, schools would have shared academic expectations for students, regardless of where they lived. Students who must relocate during their schooling would stand a better chance of maintaining consistency in their coursework. Secondly, the standards would purposely help bring more attention to the state and quality of education in America. National forums and interest groups would more closely monitor educational programs. Next, states could more efficiently create assessments to monitor levels of proficiency associated with the standards. If states have identical standards, it is a logical assumption which the states could work together on adopting the same assessments. Finally, the CCSS could greatly enhance the quality of assessments by offering electronic access (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). Assessment results could be obtained much sooner, and updates could be incorporated more consistently.

In a large school district in Florida, where I work as a high school instructional leader, the school system took a proactive approach to implementing the CCSS and during the 2012-2013 school year began a district-wide orientation and introduction to the Standards. Cross-curricular teams came together in a CCSS institute during the summer of 2012 to explore the new standards and literacy strategies which would need to be infused into instruction. An introductory training in Common Core and the instructional shifts necessitated through implementation was facilitated

with district and site-based administrators, instructional staff developers and coaches, and teachers. Discussion platforms were developed by the district's Secondary Language Arts and Reading supervisors and shared through literacy leadership teams at middle schools and high schools across the district. These discussion platforms, which included facilitator guides, presentation files, handouts, and examples, covered the Standards, text complexity, text-dependent questions, and text-based performance tasks.

In a joint venture later in the 2012-2013 school year, the district's Professional Education Department initiated Leading the Learning cadres, comprised of cross-curricular educator and administrator teams from all schools in the district. These cadres afforded training pathways for administrators, coaches, and teachers to learn more about the CCSS and implications for their specific area of responsibility and expertise. Cadres met together in area groups; and individuals participated in ASCD online learning modules, which covered creating a vision for CCSS implementation, building systems of purpose, inquiry, and practice to implement the Standards, tying interim and formative assessments to the Common Core, engaging in data dialogues at all levels, improving practice through CCSS evidence walks, and leading professional learning for the CCSS (ASCD, 2013). During the summer of 2013, follow-up CCSS institutes were held and enabled English language arts and reading teachers to drill deeper into selecting appropriate complex text, creating suitable text-dependent questions, and designing rigorous culminating writing tasks for units of study aligned with their specific curricula. At the same time, supplemental and complementary training was offered for teachers in developing CCSS lesson modules.

However, teachers continued to struggle with effective implementation of the CCSS because of the significant shifts necessitated in literacy and mathematics instruction. The shifts in

English language arts and literacy instruction focus on balancing informational and literary text, building knowledge in the disciplines, a staircase of increasing complexity, text-based answers, writing from seminal documents and primary sources, and academic vocabulary. English language arts and reading teachers will need to design more detailed, in-depth lesson plans and include more instructional time for multiple close readings of text. Mathematics instructional shifts deal with focus, coherence, fluency, deep understanding, applications, and dual intensity. Mathematics teachers will need to narrow and deepen the focus or drill down on those learning concepts specified in the CCSS (engageNY.org, 2012).

In addition, many administrators have not yet reached the proficiency level of instructional leadership needed to adequately facilitate school-wide implementation of Common Core and provide the pedagogical expertise to effectively support classroom teachers in making the shifts in instruction. Time constraints placed on administrators because of operational and supervisory responsibilities which demand their immediate attention contribute to the unfortunate inability of many site-based administrators to serve as instructional leaders. Therefore, it is vital that school leaders assemble instructional leadership teams, made up of assistant principals, instructional staff developers, literacy coaches, and teacher leaders, to collaborate on a shared vision for Common Core implementation and creating a support system which will enable classroom teachers to make the necessary shifts in instruction. Although many emerging instructional leaders have already begun to share leadership responsibilities with others, the idea of an instructional leadership team functioning as an extension of the principal is still a relatively new concept for many site-based administrators.

Fullan (2007) states educational change is much more than implementing the latest mandates and policies, that it is widespread reform in the cultures of classrooms, schools,

districts, and post-secondary institutions. Many change initiatives fail because those attempting to implement reform use either a top-down approach or a bottom-up approach. Top-down change initiatives do not improve buy-in from all stakeholders, nor do they secure commitment from those most affected by the proposed change. Bottom-up change efforts do not have the level of support needed from administration to successfully implement and sustain. The most effective change efforts, according to Fullan (2007), use a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach and involve building capacity and developing leadership in others while focusing on results and include all stakeholders in the change process.

Even though the CCSS are aimed at improving student achievement as well as classroom practices, their adoption creates a certain amount of stress and anxiety for teachers, who are most impacted by the necessary shifts in instruction. Site-based administrators who understand teachers need a great deal of support in implementing the CCSS and incorporate some type of motivation in and realization of the potential benefits in their adoption, facilitate greater acceptance of the instructional shifts and more effective instructional practice as a result of incorporating the standards. District personnel, school administrators, and instructional coaches must provide the instructional leadership necessary to teachers who will be implementing these new academic standards in their classrooms.

My Role in the Implementation of the Common Core

As a staff developer who facilitates literacy instruction professional development (PD) for the district and who also is responsible for supporting the instructional needs and managing classroom resources for reading intervention teachers in 13 high schools, I am very much aware of the need for more effective and efficient professional learning opportunities for teachers as our district moves toward full implementation of the CCSS. I have learned a great deal about the components of high-quality PD in my doctoral coursework, and I attempt to infuse as many of

those elements as possible during the trainings I regularly facilitate. The teachers who participate in these sessions constantly express to me their appreciation for efficient organization of the training, the opportunities provided for immediate and active learning, a focus on specific curricular content, multiple and consistent sessions, opportunities for collaboration with their peers, and job-embedded support in their individual schools. During the past school year, these PD sessions focused mainly on program-specific issues and encouraged program fidelity in teaching the reading intervention courses. Program fidelity is defined as understanding the philosophy of instruction and the available tools within the adopted research-based program well enough to know how to use the materials to support the instructional needs of the students. Using the program as a vehicle, the teacher uses on-going formative assessment to vary the instruction according to the needs of the individual students (Kolosey, 2011).

As I and other staff developers focused on reading intervention programs, secondary instructional coaches were embedded in schools and focused their support to teachers on those shifts in instruction necessitated by implementation of the CCSS and in anticipation of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or a similar assessment prepared by the state of Florida. The assessments will be the primary tools used in aligning Florida's K-12 educational goals to the CCSS and are scheduled to begin during the 2014-2015 academic year. The embedded reading/literacy coaches collaborated with teachers to encourage collegial discussions in professional learning communities (PLCs) and worked with school-based literacy leadership teams. Their work in the classroom focused on text complexity, rich and rigorous performance tasks aligned to the CCSS, and instructional methods necessary for student success with the standards (Campbell, 2012). Although the embedded literacy coaches spent a majority of their time in classrooms delivering CCSS exemplar lessons, their

19

efforts were spread thin and merely provided an overview to the rigors of student interaction with complex text and practice with extracting textual substantiation on performance tasks.

Unfortunately, it was almost impossible for me to introduce text complexity, rigorous performance tasks aligned to the CCSS and the instructional shifts necessary for student success with the standards to the teachers with whom I worked. Being assigned to multiple schools and needing to spend quality embedded time in those schools meant that I had to choose the teachers who needed the most support and work with them on a fairly limited basis before moving on to the next school and embedded PD opportunity. For changes in instructional practice to effectively take place, job-embedded PD must take place on a regular basis, teachers must be afforded multiple opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues and sufficient time to reflect on required shifts in instruction, and school-based leadership must support the PD efforts. It is vital for school administrators to provide relevant PD opportunities for teachers and allocate time for them to engage in collegial conversations. Quality PD opportunities do not automatically take place. They are organized and led by instructional leaders who are willing to share their authority and engage in productive, collaborative discussions on issues of concern to educators (Vernon-Dotson, et al, 2009).

Purpose of this Study

My study addressed the gap in collaborative instructional leadership, specifically as it deals with supporting teachers in the implementation of the Common Core. I wanted to analyze the implementation of the CCSS at the district level with secondary English teachers, particularly in two of the high schools to which I was assigned as a staff developer, in order to understand how district staff developers could most effectively support teachers in infusing the new standards into their instruction.

As an instructional leader, it is important for me to establish and build healthy professional relationships with those teachers I will be supporting in the implementation of the CCSS. One of the goals I have as an instructional staff developer and educational leader, and one which is contingent upon strong professional relationships, is to build capacity in teachers and empower them to be catalysts of instructional reflection and change. Another goal I have as instructional staff developer and educational leader is to share my pedagogical expertise and content knowledge in a non-threatening way with the site-based administrators with whom I work, thereby building their knowledge of Common Core, effective literacy instructional strategies, and implementing changes in classroom teaching practices.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to more thoroughly understand the professional shifts necessary as I transition from the role of reading staff developer and program manager to that of instructional leader who shares responsibilities with other members of an effective leadership team in helping teachers make changes in instructional practice.

In light of the current emphasis on implementation of the CCSS, part of my job as an instructional staff developer is to work closely with teachers in a collaborative lesson-planning cycle using the following outline: (a) an initial meeting to determine Common Core support priorities as identified through teacher self-assessments and collegial conversations, (b) a co-planning session developing lesson goals, selecting complex text, creating text-dependent questions, and designing culminating tasks, (c) joint classroom presentation of the collaboratively-planned lesson, and (d) a debriefing session after presentation of the lesson to adjust the lesson and conduct a formative analysis of Common Core instructional descriptors including the following: use of challenging passages, multiple close readings, presentation of text-dependent questions, design of rich and rigorous performance tasks, infused explicit

21

instruction, assignment of appropriate level of texts, presentation of authentic fiction and informational texts, modeled attentive reading, student engagement in progress monitoring, incorporation of formative assessments, design of research and writing opportunities (claims and evidence), student practice in providing evidenced-based answers, use of rubrics, focus on general academic and discipline-specific vocabulary, emphasis on high-level comprehension and critical literary analysis, scaffolded instruction in student question generation, inquiry, and research processes, infusion of differentiated instruction, and assignment of independent reading with accountability (PCSB, 2013).

This analysis of CCSS instructional descriptors provided the basis for a discussion on how to engage students in deep learning of the standards and a reflection of the type of instructional leadership support needed, how that leadership can be most effectively shared, and how instructional assistance can be offered to others.

The work I do with individual teachers described above occurred as part of my regular job, and I reflected on that work with teachers through my researcher journal, outlining what I did related to CCSS implementation, and how things went. However, I did not study the details of the work in teachers' classrooms, as this was not a study about changing their practice. It was a study framed as practitioner research in order to refine my own role as an instructional leader.

The main data sources in my study were reflections on my work and my role, as well as a series of interviews with district and school leaders and teachers as I attempted to combine their vision for instructional leadership with my own vision in order to refine my practice. Interviews were conducted with: (a) the Executive Director of High School Education, who is responsible for coordinating the implementation of CCSS in all district high schools, (b) two high school principals at the schools where I am supporting teachers, and (c) three English teachers who

participated in collaboratively-planned CCSS lessons with me. These semi-structured interviews provided a deeper understanding of how I can be a more supportive instructional leader in effectively implementing CCSS in the high schools where I operate as an instructional staff developer. Throughout the research process, I noted my personal observations on shared instructional leadership related to Common Core implementation and insights I have gained on my personal instructional leadership skills and abilities. Drawing on my data as well as existing bodies of literature regarding shared instructional leadership, I endeavored to develop systems of instructional leadership support which can be replicated in other high schools.

The main research question, which guided my study, is: In what ways can I, as an instructional staff developer, provide effective instructional leadership to secondary English teachers as they implement the CCSS? Two sub-questions also directed my study:

- How can I combine the instructional leadership vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and provide effective support for teachers?
- What instructional leadership strategies support teachers in effectively implementing the CCSS?

My goal in conducting this practitioner research project was to explore and enhance my literacy content expertise in pedagogy and instructional leadership skills, as well as reflect on how I can be an effective member of a school-based instructional leadership team responsible for supporting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS. My research has a practical and relevant application in my current role as instructional staff developer and serves to enrich my work with teachers. This research can possibly benefit other instructional leaders, at the school, district, and state levels, by providing insight into those instructional leadership skills necessary to support teachers in making shifts in their teaching practice and helping them to gain knowledge of best instructional practices to better inform their assistance to teachers. The study can also inform

university instructional leadership programs, identifying additional courses of study appropriate for practitioner scholars.

The availability of empirical research on instructional leadership to support teachers in the implementation of the CCSS is extremely limited. Therefore, to inform this study, I relied on the existing bodies of literature which focus on implementation of the CCSS, school change theory—effective literacy instruction and instructional shifts necessary to implement the CCSS, and instructional leadership theory—collaborative or shared instructional leadership to support teachers in making changes in instructional practice. I also gleaned insight from the literature which focused on the implementation of new instructional practices and follow-up support through content coaching and mentoring. Regarding literature focusing on implementation of the Common Core, I incorporated existing research on the following categories: (a) elements comprising the standards and suggestions for their effective implementation, (b) issues complicating implementation of the standards, and (c) professional learning opportunities and instructional preparation. My review of the literature dealing with shifts in literacy instruction required in the CCSS focused on the following categories: (a) effective literacy instruction and instructional shifts necessary to implement the CCSS, (b) instructional shifts necessary in the Common Core, and (c) relevant CCSS professional learning opportunities. Finally, a review of the literature regarding instructional leadership theory concentrated on the following areas: (a) the changing nature of educational leadership, (b) the importance of collaboration in effecting educational reform, and (c) the influence of leadership on instructional practice in implementing new teaching practices and follow-up support in infusing the new methods or pedagogy into practice, and (d) the need for shared instructional leadership.

Significance of the Study

As the CCSS are implemented, instructional leadership teams will need to scaffold teacher growth in preparing appropriately rigorous lesson plans and activities and making the instructional shifts necessary to help their students become more critical thinkers, readers, and writers. School instructional leaders will need to focus on building capacity in teachers instead of looking at individual processes. In addition, they will need to implement many school-based changes in order to help teachers make the instructional shifts necessary in Common Core. These reform efforts include creating a culture of learning in the school, focusing on school-wide literacy initiatives, emphasizing the importance of using complex texts in close-reading lessons, highlighting the importance of additional writing instruction, focusing on student engagement, and providing more instructional time for teachers (MetLife Foundation, 2013). My study will highlight a structure in which instructional leaders will be able to provide more effective support for teachers implementing the Common Core.

With full implementation of the CCSS taking place in the 2014-2015 academic year, instructional leaders feel a sense of urgency in supporting teachers as they make the necessary shifts in instruction and guiding students in more rigorous and relevant coursework. In addition to developing a comprehensive knowledge of the standards and the requisite shifts in instruction, instructional leaders must have a thorough understanding of effective school reform and the elements necessary in creating a learning culture in schools. They need to provide ample PD opportunities for teachers to participate in relevant study and practical application of the CCSS in their classrooms. In addition, instructional leaders must allocate time for teachers to engage in collegial discussions about rigorous lesson plans designed around student interaction with complex text in English language arts. Through this focused support, instructional leaders will help prepare teachers to face the various challenges presented by implementation of the CCSS.

Instructional leaders must provide relevant support to empower teachers to effectively implement the new standards and help them to develop within the parameters of the school environment, which will facilitate the improvement of the culture of the school as well (Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009).

In Chapter 2, I will outline the literature on implementation of the Common Core, shifts in literacy instruction necessary to implement the CCSS, and instructional leadership theory--collaborative and shared instructional leadership to support teachers in making changes in instructional practice. In Chapter 3, I will review the methodology used in the study and how the project was framed as practitioner research. I will discuss study findings and implications in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE TO FRAME STUDY

The purpose of my study was to examine my own practice as I supported implementation of the Common Core with secondary English teachers. However, the availability of empirical research on instructional leadership to support teachers in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is extremely limited. Eilers and D'Amico (2012) describe six essential elements instructional leaders can use to guide teachers through the implementation of any change, including the transition to the Common Core. These elements include establishing a shared purpose and vision, aligning instructional staff members in order to utilize the strengths of individuals, prioritizing steps within the change process, building professional communities in which learning and collaboration flourish, creating a school culture in which staff members feel confident in taking instructional risks in an effort to improve practice, and continually supporting teachers through helpful and explicit feedback.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013) encourages school leaders to begin implementing school-based changes as soon as possible in anticipation of the CCSS and list areas of focus for instructional leaders in their initial reform efforts. These areas of focus include creating a strong school culture which welcomes change and innovation, implementing school-based literacy initiatives, challenging teachers to use appropriate grade level complex texts in their instruction, emphasizing close reading and text-based responses, encouraging teachers to incorporate more student writing opportunities, helping teachers develop classroom protocols which inspire student engagement, assisting teachers in maximizing their instructional time, guiding teachers to facilitate student collaborative learning, and facilitating opportunities for professional learning.

Therefore, the literature I used to frame my study focused on implementation of the CCSS, the shifts in literacy instruction required in the Common Core, and instructional leadership theory (collaborative or shared instructional leadership to support teachers in making changes in instructional practice).

Implementation of the CCSS

In a review of the literature regarding implementation of the CCSS, several categories emerged and include the following: (a) elements or components comprising the standards and suggestions for their effective implementation (b) issues complicating implementation of the standards, and (c) educator preparation.

Elements Comprising the Standards

The CCSS are (a) based on research and evidence, (b) aligned with post-secondary expectations (university and workforce), (c) arduous, and (d) benchmarked internationally. The standards establish mandates not only for English language arts and reading, but also incorporate literacy requirements in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The expectation of the Common Core is that students learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in various content areas; and, therefore, the standards delineate the literacy achievement levels necessary for college and career readiness in a variety of academic disciplines (CCSS, 2012). The CCSS offer a reliable, well-defined understanding of what students should learn, in order for teachers and parents to provide them with the most appropriate academic support. They are intended to be rigorous and relevant to the real world, indicating the knowledge and abilities which our high school graduates must have to be successful in college and in the workforce. In addition, the standards establish consistent academic criteria across the United States (CCSS, 2012).

In English language arts, the new standards place more importance on non-fiction texts, close reading of text, proficiency in literacy skills, text complexity, the use of textual evidence, and enhancement of academic vocabulary. To be deemed college or career ready, students need to be able to grapple with complex texts and demonstrate proficiency in comprehending meaning of those texts and authors' purposes in writing various passages. Students must engage in critical thinking and analysis when engaging with complex text in multiple content areas (Zygouris-Coe, 2012). Students will also engage in wide reading of fiction and non-fiction, and the complex texts they will read in class will incorporate seminal documents from American history, classic literature of the United States, and timeless literary works by authors such Shakespeare. The standards are organized in four different categories, which are presented below.

Key Ideas and Details:

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it, cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development, summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure:

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8.   Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9.   Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

    Range Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

10.   Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. (CCSS, 2012, pp. 1-2).

    Regarding implementation of the CCSS, states which have adopted the CCSS are at various stages of implementation and are analyzing specific instructional components related to the new standards. Results from a Center on Education Policy survey which monitors progress on CCSS implementation indicate a majority of the 40 states who responded say they have already infused an instructional curriculum aligned with the CCSS in at least some of their districts or grade levels (Robelen, 2013). Approximately 10% of the states have mandated the use of specific curricular materials which have been validated by the state education agency as reflecting the standards.

    Almost all the 40 states which responded to the survey said they are providing professional learning experiences for educators to teach the CCSS, which have been adopted by 44 states and the District of Columbia. The Glenn County Department of Education in California is looking at expanded learning opportunities to reinforce effective implementation of the CCSS (Gonzales, Gunderson, & Wold, 2013). Additionally, many organizations and departments of education provide tools, templates, and guidelines for school districts to use in implementing the CCSS (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013; Campbell, 2012; engageNY, 2012; Gonzales, Gunderson, & Wold, 2013).

Issues Complicating Implementation of the CCSS

Although many states and districts have already introduced CCSS and begun implementing the new standards, a number of issues may hamper full implementation of the standards by 2014-2015.

Inadequate funding and access to resources. To begin with, a lack of funding and an inability to access necessary Common Core resources is a major hurdle many school districts must overcome in order to effectively and appropriately implement the CCSS. Over half of the states which have adopted the CCSS identified inadequate resources as a challenge to implementation of the standards, with approximately 97% of school districts in those states viewing inadequate funding in the implementation of the CCSS as a significant challenge (Rentner & Kober, 2012).

Effecting school-based instructional change. Another issue complicating implementation of the new standards is that of effecting school-based instructional change. The focus of elementary and secondary education will change dramatically from that of high school graduation to college and career readiness. Teachers and instructional leaders will need to develop new ways of thinking about teaching and learning in light of the rigorous demands of the standards. School administrators will need to rethink high school graduation requirements. The focus can no longer be solely based on satisfying the minimum course and academic requirements to receive a diploma. Now, instructional leaders will need to help prepare students for the rigors of post-secondary academic work. Old and ineffective leading and teaching practices which do not contribute to college and career readiness will need to be discarded, and teachers will need to use instruction which requires students to engage in higher-order thinking tasks and make real-world connections. These more complex literacy skills are embedded into the CCSS for English language arts, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Teachers in these content areas will be expected to present instruction which incorporates literacy skills and understandings necessary for college and career readiness, in addition to their specific content standards. This more specialized literacy strategy instruction is a major shift in teaching practices for most content area teachers.

However, these shifts in instructional practice will not take place without thoughtful and purposeful effort, planning, and practice (Riddile, 2012). Instructional leaders need to meet regularly with teachers from various content areas to ensure ongoing collaboration regarding best practices in instructional delivery, infusion of effective literacy strategies into instruction, and identification of students who are struggling with the more complex texts and performance tasks they are presented and the academic support they need. A member of the instructional leadership team can help cross-curricular groups of teachers to develop a logical and collaborative approach to appropriate literacy instruction and academic support systems across grade levels and content areas (Zygouris-Coe, 2012).

Equitable access to college readiness instruction. In addition, the concept of college readiness, one of stated goals of the CCSS, is not a concept which applies equally to all learners and presents another challenge to effective Common Core implementation. Instructional leaders need to look at the broad scope of more stringent curricular requirements and accountability measures, which lead to academic preparedness (Barnes & Slate, 2013). In addition, instructional leaders must ensure the employment of instructional accommodations for students with specialized academic needs: English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, gifted students, and students entering school with inadequate exposure to books and rich learning experiences. Some content materials will need to be adapted for ELLs and students with disabilities to satisfy Common Core guidelines and address discipline-specific literacy

requirements. English language learners need to be exposed to literacy-rich environments (books, printed material, and other forms of media), as well as engaged in assorted opportunities to experience the English language. Students with disabilities need to be motivated and engaged in the rigorous work expected in the standards (Zygouris-Coe, 2012). An instructional staff developer, as a member of the school's instructional leadership team, is in an excellent position to assist teachers with infusing instructional strategies, resources, and materials which will make the complex texts and performance tasks more accessible to these students.

Adequate teacher planning and preparation time. Another issue complicating the effective implementation of the CCSS is that of adequate teacher planning and preparation time. Teachers will need an appropriate amount of time to collaborate with their peers and participate in collegial learning groups (Armstrong, 2013). Aligning instruction to the Common Core will not only require teachers to significantly adjust their teaching practices, but it means they will have to modify their lesson plan development and preparation as well. Educators will need to thoroughly understand the fundamental reasons behind the development of the CCSS, how to assess student work involving the new standards using rubrics, how to create text-dependent questions and culminating writing tasks, and how to monitor progress in meeting the requirements of the Standards. School administrators will need to help teachers maximize their instructional time in order to develop and deliver more rigorous close reading lessons using complex text. In addition, instructional leaders will need to consider common planning time for teachers, restructuring professional learning communities (PLCs) to explore literacy instructional strategies with the CCSS, and facilitation of lesson study cycles to research and develop close reading lesson plans using complex text and incorporating rich performance tasks.

Teacher buy-in on the CCSS. Instructional leaders will need to implement school-based literacy initiatives in order for teachers in all content areas to infuse literacy strategies into their instruction (Riddile, 2012). However, some educators question whether the CCSS has adequately addressed significant components, such as the changing face of literacy and use of the Internet as a source for complex text (Drew, 2012; Ohler, 2013). Therefore, an added challenge for school administrators is getting teacher buy-in on the new standards and making the instructional shifts necessary for effective implementation. Strategic planning of cross-curricular instructional teams prior to implementation of the CCSS is vital, and school districts which have incorporated these initial planning sessions realize the importance and benefits of collaborative planning, teaching, and learning. Collaborative, cross-curricular groups are excellent platforms for sharing school-based literacy initiatives. Educators who engage in these cooperative work sessions have a better understanding of text complexity and how best to help students access the staircase of text complexity, as well as which literacy instructional strategies are most effective in their particular academic discipline (Zygouris-Coe, 2012).

Educator Preparation

Adequate educator preparation and facilitation of professional learning opportunities regarding the CCSS is vital for effective implementation of the new standards. Because English language arts and reading teachers will no longer be the educators solely responsible for delivery of literacy strategy instruction, professional learning opportunities must be provided which give content area teachers the appropriate training in close reading of complex text, academic vocabulary, and writing in response to reading (using textual evidence). These teachers must engage in collaborative inquiry to thoroughly explore the standards and implications for their practice (Zygouris-Coe, 2012). Effective professional learning opportunities must be provided to teachers and include a breakdown of the CCSS, which will enable educators to compare and

contrast current state standards and the new standards (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013). To facilitate more effective and widespread implementation of the standards, school districts need to provide high-quality PD which involves teachers in discussions about the change process. The instructional shifts necessitated by the CCSS highlight the vital role teachers play in ensuring student achievement gains (Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013). Instructional leaders will need to build greater capacity in teachers and instructional coaches in a shorter period of time. They will need to focus on the collective capacity of all instructional staff members, not just one teacher at a time, and develop a specific set of teaching practices to guide every teacher (Riddile, 2012).

Shifts in Literacy Instruction Required in the CCSS

Widespread acceptance of the CCSS and literacy strategy integration in the content areas has not yet been achieved. Teachers' beliefs about the importance of content literacy instruction or the long-term expectations of the CCSS frequently serve as obstacles to effective implementation, which can be attributed to a disconnect between literacy teaching methods and content area instruction, especially in middle and high schools. Secondary curriculum is divided into separate subject areas with distinct departmental autonomy and teaching styles. Content area teachers in middle and high schools typically use teacher-centered instruction. Literacy instructional methods and the CCSS, in contrast, focus on student-centered learning such as peer collaboration and discussion, inquiry and questioning, and placing teachers in the role of guide or facilitator. Students learn to master critical thinking and problem solving skills, vital for success among internationally competitive 21st century scholars. It is important for secondary teachers to help students to balance conceptual understanding with procedural fluency as they grapple with the increasingly complex texts and instructional activities required in the Common Core.

The CCSS use close readings of complex text to help students ascertain the meanings of words, expand their academic and content-specific vocabulary, and prepare them for the workforce and post-secondary studies. Common Core requires an appropriate balance of fiction and nonfiction texts, emphasizing the need for students to read a greater number of nonfiction texts so they will be able to access the types of text they will read in college and in their future careers (Zygouris-Coe, 2012). This call for increased exposure to informational texts is in stark contrast to the amount of literary texts English language arts teachers typically incorporate into their instruction.

Effective Literacy Instruction

This balanced approach to literacy instruction in the secondary classroom which focuses on more non-fiction texts is one which will best prepare students for the rigorous course of study in college, the demands of 21st century employers, and success on high-stakes and other standardized assessments. Vital components in Common Core literacy instruction include fluency, academic vocabulary, developing a deeper understanding of texts, and writing using textual evidence. This is a significant shift in instruction for many secondary content area teachers who struggle with embedding these literacy strategies into their content instruction (Barry, 2002).

However, research shows that incorporating these research-based strategies and emphasizing metacognitive instruction helps improve students' literacy and reading skills and enables them to more easily comprehend the complex texts and successfully respond to the rigorous instructional activities (Lawrence, Rabinowitz, & Perna, 2009). Biancarosa and Snow (2004) believe secondary students must have instruction which provides them with skills and strategies which facilitate increased reading comprehension in core academic classes. They believe effective secondary literacy instruction infuses comprehensive literacy programs and

fosters student engagement and motivation. As content area texts become more rigorous and require additional background knowledge and an extended range of experiences, reading and comprehending the material in those texts becomes a challenge for many students. In addition, content area teachers must understand how to scaffold the development of close reading skills for their students, especially those struggling readers, and just what effective Common Core literacy strategy instruction is (Lovett, 2013).

One of the most important instructional strategies necessitated through the Common Core is that of planning and presenting close reading lessons through which students can engage with multiple complex texts. The first and the last of the ten anchor standards in the CCSS focus on close readings of complex text:

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it, cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently (CCSS, 2012, p. 9).

The emphasis on close readings appears repeatedly throughout the English language arts standards, the content area literacy standards, and the writing standards, which require students to cite specific textual evidence in support of claims and arguments. By definition, close reading of text is an investigation of a relatively short piece of text, with students re-reading the text multiple times over numerous instructional sessions. Through text-dependent questions and collaborative discussions, students are encouraged to carefully analyze different parts of the text, including vocabulary (academic and contextual), text features and structure, rhetorical devices, and the significance of word choice and syntax (Brown & Kappes, 2012).

The goal of close reading is for student comprehension levels to deepen with each reading. Carlisle and Rice (2002) describe close reading as a complex activity, with a skilled reader rapidly, accurately, and simultaneously decoding the words, attaching meaning to words and sentences, connecting text information to relevant background knowledge, maintaining a mental representation of what he or she has already read, forming hypotheses about upcoming information, and making decisions based on his or her purpose for reading. Close readings of complex texts need to take place in all content area classrooms, and teachers in these content areas need to be trained in how to choose grade-appropriate complex texts, plan close reading lessons of complex text, create text-dependent questions, and design rigorous culminating writing tasks in response to the close readings.

Instructional Shifts Necessary in the Common Core

Effective implementation of the CCSS requires many instructional shifts in instruction to take place. Both teachers and instructional leaders will need to become learners in the process. The New York State Department of Education (2012) articulates several instructional shifts for secondary teachers, including focusing on literacy experiences in their planning and instruction, connecting classroom experiences to the text being read, helping students to develop skills in making evidentiary arguments in conversation and in writing, focusing on the use of textual evidence to inform or substantiate an argument, using increasingly complex texts, and helping students to consistently build the vocabulary necessary, academic and contextual, to access grade level texts.

Student Achievement Partners (2013) outline three instructional shifts for teachers:

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts.
2. Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text.
3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary (p. 1).

Research indicates secondary content area teachers are not adequately prepared to teach the close reading skills, nor are they inclined to differentiate the CCSS instruction necessary in their classrooms. They are ill-equipped to provide struggling students with the skills necessary to successfully comprehend the increased literacy demands of their subject areas (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Furthermore, they have not been adequately trained in the implementation of the CCSS. This lack of teacher preparedness and the inability of many teachers to provide varying levels of literacy instruction leaves many adolescent readers frustrated and disenfranchised with the complex texts and rigorous tasks presented through Common Core (Hall et al., 2011; Ness, 2009).

A vital step in effecting a reform in instructional practice, such as those necessitated through the implementation of the CCSS, is empowering teachers to focus their efforts on stimulating student learning. Effective teachers stimulate inquiry into instructional strategies, facilitate openness to new ideas and trends, and help establish connections between current instructional practice and new initiatives in student achievement. However, this beneficial collegial conversation must take place in an environment in which participants feel free to share openly with one another. The greatest plans for school improvement and change are useless if no one participates in them; when teachers are involved in the decision phase of instructional change, they take more ownership of the reform process, in this case, full implementation of the CCSS.

Although many school districts, including mine, have made admirable attempts to infuse literacy strategy instruction into secondary content areas, the actual implementation of the teaching of reading comprehension and related skills amounts to generalized approaches to

literacy instruction. Teachers use basic literacy strategies, such as summarizing, predicting, and questioning, with students responding on simple graphic organizers.

Relevant CCSS Professional Learning Opportunities

It is imperative to provide PD which not only helps change content area teachers' beliefs about content literacy instruction and implementation of the CCSS, but also assists teachers in incorporating these standards into their content area instruction and helps them make the shifts necessary in their teaching practice (Hall, 2005). Administrators and an instructional leadership team need to facilitate this PD for teachers.

Effective PD in literacy instruction for content area teachers will include modeling, demonstration, opportunities for teachers to practice teaching strategies, and time to reflect on their implications for use (National Reading Panel, 2000). In fact, model classrooms provide a great opportunity for teachers to observe best instructional practices in action. Guskey (1986) contends teachers will typically implement learning from PD when they are given various opportunities to see practical application of these instructional strategies in their own classrooms. Instructional staff developers, as members of the leadership team, play an important role in facilitating the PD opportunities necessary for teachers to become more knowledgeable about and sufficiently engage in practice with the instructional shifts necessary for effective implementation of the CCSS.

In addition, research indicates there is an insufficient amount of student interaction with complex text and rigorous comprehension instruction in classrooms. Although many teachers believe they are teaching comprehension adequately and introducing sufficient amounts of complex text to their students, they are merely asking low-level questions and expecting students to provide answers. As content area texts become more rigorous and require additional

background knowledge and an extended range of experiences, reading and comprehending the material in those texts becomes a challenge for many students. Incorporating the literacy anchor standards into English language arts instruction is a way to meet the various needs of students and to provide equitable access to the more rigorous and demanding Common Core lessons and activities (Shanahan, 2004; Sturtevant, Duling, & Hall, 2001; Vacca, 2002). Additional professional learning opportunities will show teachers how to infuse the new standards into their teaching and help their students master the more rigorous Common Core instructional activities.

Recent research on PD and effective classroom instruction has begun to develop our understanding of how to most appropriately help teachers continuously improve their classroom practices (Putnam, Smith, & Cassady, 2009). Furthermore, the complexities of literacy instruction required with implementation of the CCSS emphasize the need for district personnel, school administrators, and instructional coaches to provide opportunities for teachers to participate in high-quality PD.

Traditionally, teacher PD has taken the form of full- or half-day training sessions in which teachers received information provided by their district content supervisors. These sessions rarely provided opportunities for teachers to practice the strategies explained during the PD sessions, nor did they incorporate follow-up training sessions to ensure proper implementation and relevant connection in the classroom. This dichotomy of approach usually shared new guidelines or instructional practices which were designed to replace previous ones. In light of the CCSS implementation, teachers need to be afforded the opportunity to participate in high-quality PD which shares pertinent knowledge regarding the CCSS and literacy instruction, while engaging them in relevant activities designed to achieve a practical understanding of those instructional shifts.

Instructional Leadership Theory

Considering the lack of preparedness of many secondary content area teachers to infuse literacy strategies into their instruction, as well as the instructional shifts necessitated by Common Core, many instructional leaders face a daunting task in encouraging teachers to effectively implement the CCSS. In addition, instructional leaders must understand the basics of educational reform and effecting widespread educational change to sufficiently support teachers in implementing the Common Core. They need to have a practical understanding of the school-based changes mandated by the CCSS and how to effectively lead instructional staff members in making those changes, as well as creating a positive learning culture within the school.

A review of the literature regarding instructional leadership theory revealed several themes: (a) the changing nature of educational leadership and (b) the importance of collaboration in effecting educational reform, (c) the influence of leadership on instructional practice in implementing new teaching practices and follow-up support in infusing the new methods of pedagogy into practice, and (d) the need for shared instructional leadership.

Changing Nature of Educational Leadership

The roles of administrators and educational leaders at the school, district, and state levels have changed dramatically during the past decade and include a focus on teaching and learning, professional learning opportunities, instruction guided by analysis of data, and accountability. Tasks typically expected of these new instructional leaders consist of leading the learning in schools, concentrating on teaching practices and learning activities, building capacity in teacher leaders, creating a culture which is conducive to professional growth and student learning (Barth, 2002), analyzing data to inform decisions, and using teaching resources creatively (Honig, 2012; King, 2002).

Principals and site administrators cannot singularly provide the instructional leadership necessary to guide teachers through the process of effective implementation of the CCSS. Therefore, the formation and alignment of a productive instructional leadership team, which includes assistant principals, content area staff developers, literacy coaches, and teacher leaders, is vital in implementing school-based literacy initiatives and empowering teachers to incorporate the CCSS into their instruction (Fenton, 2009). The instructional leadership team should meet regularly to analyze formative and summative assessment data, monitor the implementation of the CCSS, and collaborate on next steps to ensure effective infusion of the standards into instruction. Each member of the team operates in the role of an instructional leader who helps facilitate greater student achievement through a reform in instructional practice and supports teachers in the implementation of the CCSS. The instructional leadership team can achieve this goal by helping teachers transfer conceptual knowledge into practice.

In addition, the changing shape of instructional leadership involves shared responsibilities among site-based administrators, staff developers, and teachers (Celikten, 2001). According to Marks and Printy (2003), shared instructional leadership involves collaboration with teachers on curricular matters, instructional practices, and assessment issues. It also includes staff developers, district personnel, and school-based administrators to enhance student achievement through a consistent focus on learning, promoting communities of professional learning, and engendering coherence (Knapp et al, 2003). Research indicates effective instructional leaders collaborate with teachers in curricular matters and instructional challenges, facilitate professional learning opportunities, and develop an instructional emphasis in schools, developing a shared instructional vision and group goals, holding high expectations, and

providing individual and differentiated instructional support for teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart,1993; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990).

The Importance of Collaboration

The research suggests that components or elements of effective instructional leadership include (a) provision of appropriate resources and materials (including access to multiple and various complex texts), (b) facilitation of professional learning opportunities and information on effective instructional practices relating to curriculum, pedagogical strategies, and assessment, (c) positive communication concerning the ability of all students to learn and their access to equitable learning experiences, and (d) personal involvement in the professional learning process, focusing on learning goals, demonstrating a learning stance, and creating high-quality academic programs and instructional activities (Whitaker, 1997). Blase and Blase (2000) identify specific instructional leadership characteristics, such as providing alternative solutions, engaging in coaching and collegial conversations, modeling effective instruction, providing opportunities for peer collaboration, and facilitating professional development opportunities.

Kelley (2010) offers suggestions for establishing and developing capacity in an instructional leadership team, which can assist the principal in maximizing his or her instructional leadership impact: (a) choose team members who will help build school-based commitment to continuous improvement of student learning outcomes, (b) embrace a shared vision to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, (c) build the capacity of instructional leadership team members to facilitate staff learning opportunities, work with difficult people, and overcome perceived obstacles, (d) empower members of the instructional leadership team to problem-solve challenging issues, and (e) align the structure of the team and member job responsibilities to support school improvement efforts.

Research indicates that a team approach to developing school culture is associated with a transformational leader and supports the belief that instructional leaders can effectively impact and guide the perceptions and interpretations of the teachers, which contributes to the school's unique culture. It appears transformational leaders act as a filter of appropriate practices, features, and procedures within a school (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Transformational instructional leaders promote collegial discussions among teachers and interact socially and professionally with teachers. They support the ideology that teaching is a challenging profession and that all students should be treated equitably. Instructional leaders who foster trust among their teachers, encourage teacher collaboration, and support cultural unity usually have teachers who are more inclined to pursue innovative and creative instructional practices (Dumay, 2009). Members of the instructional leadership team, as system leaders, play a vital role in helping to shape the culture of a school. However, they need development at both the instructional level and the level of organizational and system change (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

When instructional leaders use collaborative structures, they share creative leadership with teachers and other instructional staff members. Since the eventual attainment of any reform is contingent on the performance of teachers, it is beneficial to involve them in the change implementation process. When good teachers collaborate, they encourage one another on their journey toward more effective instruction, such as in lesson study (Kohm & Nance, 2009). In multiple sessions, teachers work together to enhance a research-based lesson, observe the lesson being taught, collect data during the lesson, and then debrief the lesson outcomes (Lewis & Hurd, 2011).

Abbott and McKnight (2010) maintain distributed leadership supports the implementation of collaborative learning teams and supports the following outcomes: (a) a more

precise identification of student learning needs and effective instructional strategies, (b) cross-curricular conversations and communication across grade levels, and (c) improved instructional and professional satisfaction among teachers. This process of collaboration promotes energy, creative thinking, and effective instructional practice. Teachers have a common goal and work together in harmony. Instructional leaders can nurture a school environment in which collaboration and teacher leadership flourish by sharing responsibility with teachers as often as possible and by helping them to develop collaborative problem-solving skills.

The Influence of Leadership on Instructional Practice

Furthermore, research indicates instructional leadership can have a significant effect on teaching practices through the setting of the school mission and goals, creating a culture of learning and professional collaboration (DuFour, 2002), and actively supporting effective instruction (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). A particularly effective tool in establishing a positive learning environment is that of classroom walkthroughs, which serve to better acquaint instructional leaders with courses and teaching practices and help them measure student engagement. Instructional leaders who routinely visit classrooms, not for evaluative purposes, but to stay abreast of learning activities and teaching practices, engender a culture of strategic, reflective, and collaborative adult learning.

For the most part, teachers welcome these type of walkthroughs, which provide opportunities for feedback, collegial discussions, improved support of teachers in the continuous improvement of their practice, and to assist staff members in attaining school goals for improved student learning (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002; PCSB, 2013). Distributed or shared instructional leadership, in developing a school mission and goals, an environment of collaboration and trust, and a focus on continuous instructional and student improvement, can cultivate an environment

46

in which teachers collaborate with administration and other teachers in an effort to improve their

practice and enhance student learning (Supovitz, Henry, & May, 2010).

When learning becomes the main focus of the school and when all the teachers study the

efforts and plans of the school through the lens of their impact on student achievement, the

organization and culture of the school begin to transform in substantial ways. Instructional

leaders promote this structural and cultural change when they begin to help groups of teachers

(as opposed to individual teachers) enhance their instructional practice (DuFour, 2002). One of

the primary responsibilities of an instructional leader is to ensure that educational reforms help

facilitate greater student achievement. Instructional leaders emphasize student learning and seek

to implement skills and strategies which will help students learn, and student achievement needs

to be placed at the center of the work of an instructional leader. They continually think about the

gap which exists between current practice and best practice in the classroom, and the

discrepancies and inconsistencies they observe urge instructional leaders to challenge the status

quo (Ackerman & MacKenzie, 2006).

Educational reform is most successful when the change is implemented in not only a top

down approach, but also a bottom up approach. Instructional leaders need to secure teacher buy-

in on any classroom level changes. Therefore, to be successful, educational reform action plans

must have motivators built into them. Fullan (2006) includes the following conditions as

necessary in motivating educators to change: a greater good, empowerment, resources,

collaboration, and stakeholder participation. He states the more one invests in capacity building,

the more one has the right to expect greater performance. In essence, large-scale educational

reform cannot take place without grassroots, classroom-level change. For successful, long-lasting

reform to take place in education, change efforts must involve all stakeholders, members of the

school and community, as well as district and state personnel. When all stakeholders take an active role and responsibility in the change process, substantial change will be a reality.

The Need for Shared Instructional Leadership

Shared instructional leadership has become a critical element in educational reform and is gaining momentum in school districts across the nation, which indicates that instructional staff developers, teacher leaders, and content specialists have an important role, along with the principal, in forming new operational structures and educational pathways. The current era of educational reform has dictated a change in the role of school administrators, supervisors, and instructional leadership teams. No Child Left Behind legislation mandates accountability at every level of instruction and educational oversight. As school leaders attempt to move their schools forward academically, they often are forced to do so with inadequate resources and an insufficient number of effective teachers. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2007) describe school leadership as the research, acquisition, and coordinated implementation of the resources necessary to enhance instructional practice and ensure student learning. These tasks are performed by a team of instructional leaders, who include the principal and assistant principal(s), district office curriculum specialists and supervisors, and instructional staff developers and coaches.

It is a daunting task to lead teachers through changes in instructional practice, but especially in the implementation of CCSS, which requires significant shifts in teaching methods and in the selection of curriculum materials. Nevertheless, instructional leaders can perform certain tasks which will help them to be more effective in that role. For example, administrators can lead the learning in their schools by participating in professional learning opportunities, working with collaborative teacher groups, and seeking to increase their pedagogical knowledge of curriculum and instructional practices. In addition, they can focus on teaching and learning by

48

maintaining and modeling a focus on student achievement through classroom walkthroughs, collegial discussions with teachers, and engaging conversations with students. School administrators can also build capacity in teachers by distributing leadership responsibilities and involving instructional staff developers and content area coaches in resolving school-based academic issues and concerns. Another practice adopted by effective instructional leaders is that of creating a culture of learning in the school through professional learning communities, lesson study groups, and collaborative professional development experiences. Effective instructional leaders also collect and use multiple types of formative assessment data to guide the decisions affecting teaching and learning in their school (King, 2002).

Effective instructional leaders recognize a key element in collaboration is the building and maintaining of relationships with teachers. In fact, Rubin (2009) refers to relationship building and management as the 4th R in education. As teachers will be required to make shifts in instructional practice as the CCSS are implemented, so instructional leaders will be called upon to be collaborative leaders in helping to facilitate this process, assembling resources, advocating for additional instructional funds, and developing stakeholder relationships. In addition, they will need to focus their attention on enhancing the educational achievements of their students.

A collaborative approach to instructional leadership is an effective way to maximize the efforts of all leaders to improve teaching and learning, with each leader's task dependent on the efforts of the others. For instance, high-stakes assessment data are collected and analyzed by instructional coaches, who in turn, share the resulting analysis with school administrators. School administrators, who are responsible for determining teaching assignments and making student placement decisions, create master schedules which will put the most effective teachers with the students who need the greatest level of instructional intervention. Teacher placement is

extremely important in facilitating student achievement, because it is the actual implementation of effective instructional practices by teachers which enable students to make achievement gains.

This shared approach to instructional leadership is one which is vital in the implementation of the CCSS and requires a concerted effort from administrators, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers. The instructional shifts required as teachers incorporate more complex text into their lessons, require students to regularly complete rigorous academic activities using textual evidence, and consistently motivate students to interact with complex texts and academic vocabulary dictate a collaborative approach to instructional leadership. District leadership, administrators, instructional staff developers and coaches, and teachers must work together to ensure effective teaching practices are in place to maximize student learning as the rigorous demands of CCSS implementation are initiated.

Summary

As an instructional staff developer and leader, one of my job responsibilities is to build capacity in teachers and empower them to be catalysts of instructional reflection and change. Empowering teachers to incorporate enhancements to instructional practice and helping them to grow professionally is the most logical way to increase the reach of my effectiveness as an instructional leader. As we continue moving toward full implementation of the CCSS, it is vital that instructional leaders provide the appropriate support for teachers in making the instructional shifts necessitated by the Standards. In the next chapter, I will outline the methodology used in my study, which was framed as practitioner research, to examine instructional leadership to support the implementation of CCSS with secondary English teachers.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to discover ways in which I, as an instructional staff developer, could best support English language arts (ELA) teachers to make the necessary shifts in instruction to effectively implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Throughout the study, I analyzed various types of support which would help teachers implement the CCSS and built my own knowledge of effective instructional leadership skills. In addition, I attempted to more thoroughly understand the professional changes necessary as I transitioned from the role of reading staff developer and intervention program manager to that of an instructional leader who shares responsibilities with other members of a leadership team in helping teachers make changes in instructional practice.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

As an instructional staff developer assigned to 13 different high schools, 7 of which have no embedded literacy coach, it is a daunting task to provide timely and appropriate support to ELA teachers as our district moves toward full implementation of the CCSS. I want to be able to effectively support teachers within the scope of the instructional vision of district and school leaders. Consequently, I wanted to study my own practice and examine how I could be more effective in the role of staff developer and instructional leader. The most appropriate methodology for my study, therefore, was practitioner research.

Practitioner research is defined as the "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In this type of study, educators strive to reform their practice through a cyclical reflection process which involves asking questions or presenting wonderings, collecting data to provide greater understanding of their wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading pertinent literature, taking action to change their practice based on

insight gained through their inquiry, and sharing findings and relevant implications with other professionals (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012).

As a practitioner researcher, I am positioned or situated within this study, providing ongoing support to teachers and school administrators in the Common Core implementation process. Orgill (2007) describes situated learning as concept understanding continuously evolving, knowledge acquisition taking place in a relevant and meaning context, and interactions between individuals producing knowledge. In this study, I served as the researcher and the learner, continually gaining additional knowledge about my practice. The personal journal I used to record my activities and reflections provided insight and direction in refining my work with teachers. Each week, I recorded activities I performed which were related to CCSS implementation, what I learned as a result of my actions, and reflections on what I would do next.

Background and Professional Role

Since this is a study of my own practice as a staff developer and instructional leader, it is important to first describe my current professional role and responsibilities. In my role as a literacy coach, I designed and provided professional development (PD) in essential reading components, instructional assessments, differentiated instruction, intensive intervention, and action research/inquiry. I also assisted ELA and reading teachers in evaluating and improving instructional processes, assessments, data-driven analysis, and decision making, providing daily support to them through instructional coaching, co-teaching, and mentoring. Currently serving as an instructional staff developer assigned to 13 high schools, I continue to support ELA and reading teachers, as well as site-based literacy coaches, through job-embedded PD via intensive coaching cycles as needed, data analysis support, and school-based and district-wide professional learning opportunities. However, in this current role, I have additional leadership responsibilities

as part of the district instructional support team, which include observing classroom practice and progress in the implementation of the CCSS in a majority of the district's high schools, noticing trends in the use of supplemental materials, observing instruction in close analytical reading of complex text, looking for the use of literacy intervention strategies and programs, and monitoring student engagement.

Two of the high schools to which I am currently assigned do not have a site-based literacy coach; therefore, I am responsible for providing an even greater level of instructional support to the ELA and reading teachers in these schools. The focus of my work in these two high schools is aligned to implementation of a blended curriculum during the 2013-2014 school year, CCSS and supplemental Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). In addition, the job-embedded PD I am responsible for providing deals with text complexity, aligning teaching to the standards, and instructional methods necessary for student success with the standards, such as using complex text paired with rich and rigorous performance tasks.

The school district delineates the purpose of this support as facilitation of collegial knowledge-building conversations with teachers and administrators, job-embedded coaching and mentoring of teachers, active involvement in professional learning communities (PLCs), and encouraging teachers to gain knowledge of their instructional practice through inquiry and action research (PCSB, 2013).

The coaching model our district promotes is one which can be viewed as a continuum covering and intersecting with explicit instructional modeling in the classroom to teacher self-selected inquiry. This particular model of coaching considers collegial conversations with instructional staff and administrators, as well as the reflective responses we have to our own job-related activities. In other words, our district's expectation of literacy coaches is to be open to a

variety of responsibilities, build trust with our teachers, and operate in a continuum of professional learning (interactive to intra-active). Specific coaching responsibilities could be described as any of the following: facilitate training sessions to improve instructional practice, deliver an exemplar lesson, co-teach with a host teacher to improve teaching and learning, deliberate, observe, and debrief with a teacher in order to improve teaching practice, facilitate a study group, professional learning community (PLC), or literacy leadership team, and facilitate lesson study or action research (Puig & Froelich, 2011).

I believe the most effective element in improving the achievement level of our students is a highly-qualified and well-trained teacher. High-quality PD and strategic instructional support for educators to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Common Core is vital as we continue to pursue academic excellence and teacher proficiency. In addition, the plan to implement the CCSS is useless if no one participates; when teachers are knowledgeable about the reasons for the more rigorous standards, realize the expectations involved in teaching to the standards, and are well-trained in using specific instructional strategies to present complex texts, they take more ownership of the reform process. Teachers need to engage in collaboration with their peers, discuss common issues of concern about the standards, and share complex text lesson plan ideas and instructional strategies (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). But, teachers need instructional leadership to guide them in acquiring the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively infuse the CCSS into their instruction (Dozier, 2007).

CCSS Expectations for Teachers

The CCSS expect ELA teachers to introduce a greater amount of informational text into their instruction, such as fiction, poetry, drama, essays, speeches, biographies, and other seminal documents. These passages should compel students to pay careful attention to information contained in the text, as well as read them multiple times to gain a deeper understanding of the

author's purpose and craft in writing them. To achieve college and career readiness, high school graduates must be able to engage with a variety of inter-related literary works (fiction and non-fiction) (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012). However, many secondary ELA teachers are not yet proficient in incorporating close-reading strategies into their lessons and need additional instructional support from literacy coaches, staff developers, and other instructional leaders.

The CCSS for literacy emphasize that students gather evidence, knowledge, and insight from the texts they read and necessitate text dependent analysis. Therefore, instruction which presents complex text should incorporate an appropriate number of text-dependent questions, which require students to document answers using evidence from the text being read. Text-dependent questions do not expect students to have a great deal of any specific background knowledge or experiences related to the text. Rather, successfully answering text-dependent questions means students will have to grapple with the text and spend additional time re-reading the text to thoroughly comprehend the author's purpose and meaning behind writing the passage. This is a significant shift in instruction for many ELA teachers and presents a challenge to instructional leaders supporting these teachers in making changes in their teaching practices.

Overview of Research Design

Research Questions

The main research question which guided my study is: In what ways can I, as an instructional staff developer, provide effective instructional leadership to secondary English teachers as they implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? Two sub-questions further directed my study:

- How can I combine the instructional leadership vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and provide effective support for teachers?
- What instructional leadership strategies support teachers in effectively implementing the CCSS?

Data Sources

Data collected during this study consisted of semi-structure interviews (recorded audio and verbatim transcripts) and my reflective journal.

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour with district personnel regarding instructional support in the implementation of the CCSS: the Executive Director of High School Education, two high school principals in the schools where I work, and three ELA teachers who were involved in collaborative planning sessions of a close analytic reading of complex text.

The semi-structured interview with the Executive Director of High School Education, who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Common Core in the district's high schools, addressed issues regarding district CCSS implementation in order to ascertain the perception of qualities, skills, and abilities necessary for an instructional leader at the secondary level. Specific areas of questioning, incorporating flexibility for the use of probing questions, included the director's administrative background, knowledge of the CCSS, an ideal educational setting and culture, and her perception of the role of an instructional leader. Interview questions are provided in Appendix B.

When conducting the semi-structured interview with the two principals, I asked questions regarding their administrative background, vision regarding the role of an instructional leader in supporting CCSS implementation, and challenges and supports related to CCSS implementation. Interview questions with principals are included in Appendix C.

The semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants addressed their vision of instructional leadership, views of how the blending of NGSSS and CCSS impacts lesson planning and instructional practice, how CCSS will roll out, and what a leader can do to help or

support instructional practice and the implementation of CCSS. Teacher participant interview questions are provided in Appendix D.

Personal journal. Throughout the research process, I also reflected on my perceptions of an instructional leader and the changes (if any) in that perception through a structured journal with weekly responses reflecting on my instructional leadership growth, challenges, and future plans for action. Researcher reflections/journals detailed personal thoughts and insights regarding instructional leadership: my struggles and successes with instructional leadership during the fall semester, reflections about how I might change the focus of my support to teachers from reading intervention program manager to instructional leader in the implementation of CCSS. Weekly prompts included: (a) What did I do related to CCSS implementation?, (b) What did I learn as a result of my actions?, and (c) What will I do next?

Study Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in my school district, a large educational system located in the southeastern part of the United States. All participants in this study are employees of my school district.

Participant selection. I selected the principals of the two largest high schools in the district to participate in my study. These two principals are highly respected in our district and have been extremely helpful to me in gaining instructional leadership experience by providing guidance and opportunities to lead.

Principal Jennifer Allen leads one of the largest high schools in the district and oversees three onsite academic programs: International Baccalaureate (IB), Center for Wellness and Medical Professions (CWMP), and university preparatory. She previously served as an assistant principal for curriculum (APC) at an inner-city high school and at her current suburban high school.

Principal Wendy Jones is a newly-appointed principal at another of the district's largest high schools and is also a former teacher, school social worker, and APC at the same school to which she was appointed as principal.

In addition, I selected three teacher participants for the study who had already completed district-provided training in an overview of the CCSS, designing close analytical reading of complex texts lessons, and writing relevant text-dependent questions. Each teacher was involved in collegial discussions and collaborative lesson-planning with other district teachers in the same content area and, during the 2012-2013 school year, engaged in discussion platforms developed around implementation of the Common Core. Also, each teacher was currently teaching at one of the two high schools at which I had additional instructional support responsibilities. In addition, each teacher participant was open and receptive to making the instructional shifts necessary in effectively implementing the CCSS in their individual classroom.

Allison Brown teaches at Principal Jones's school. She participates in a collaborative learning group with other ninth grade English teachers in shared lesson planning. Ms. Brown teaches English I and Intensive Reading I and is in her fourth year of teaching.

Brianna Miller is in her second year of teaching and is also assigned to Principal Jones's school. She, too, participates in the collaborative lesson planning group with Ms. Brown. Ms. Miller teaches English I and Semantics-Logic Honors.

Chloe Smith is an instructor at Principal Allen's school and teaches English I and Intensive Reading in the CWMP program. She is a former literacy coach and in her eighth year of teaching.

I purposefully selected to interview the district leader in charge of CCSS implementation in high schools. Director Susan Wright is a former high school teacher and APC and is also a

National Board Certified Science Teacher and former Performance for All Kids (PEAK) consultant. She has extensive experience in facilitating PD for teachers and administrators.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Researcher Role**</p>

As part of my job and a fundamental part of the research process, I provided support to ELA teachers in the implementation of the CCSS through a collaborative lesson-planning cycle conducted with three teachers. This process included the following components: an initial meeting to determine Common Core support priorities, co-planning sessions with each teacher, presentation of the collaboratively-planned lesson, and a debriefing session to make lesson modifications as needed and conduct a formative analysis of Common Core instructional elements. The stages in the cycle are outlined in Appendix A.

These are activities done in the course of my job; but since my study focused on my own practice, and not a change in teacher instructional practice, data collection around this work with teachers was recorded in the form of journal reflections. During this planning cycle I recorded my personal thoughts and reflective notes regarding the planning session, the model lesson, and debriefing, with an emphasis on what I did, what went well, and next action steps. These journal entries enabled me to analyze the support I provided to teachers on a daily basis, reflect on that assistance as it related to building capacity in teachers in the Common Core implementation process, and to plan or modify my next action steps with the teachers. In other words, I was able to analyze data during the collection process. According to Creswell (2007), data collection, data analysis, and report writing are interrelated and frequently take place concurrently during the research project.

Data Collection and Analysis

I used a qualitative data collection and analysis process for this research study. After obtaining research study approvals from both the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my district, I then contacted each participant and asked them to participate in my study. I obtained a completed IRB informed consent from each participant and then scheduled the interviews at times which were convenient to the participants and recorded the interviews. These interviews were later transcribed by a professional, which I then cleaned up. I also listened to the interviews multiple times.

Throughout the interview process with each participant, I followed Creswell's (2012) steps for interviewing as it related to my topic of research, implementation of the CCSS, and instructional leadership support.

Huberman and Miles (1994) state data analysis is not a singular, pre-packaged approach which works the same for every research project, but that it is unique to every researcher and customized for every study. Creswell (2012) describes qualitative data analysis as a spiral process in which the researcher moves in analytic circles instead of a fixed linear direction. Data management is the first loop in the spiral and is the step where researchers organize their collected data. The next loop in the spiral is reading and memoing, the step in which the researcher tries to get an overall sense of the whole before breaking it into parts. The next step in the spiral process is describing, classifying, and interpreting. This is the stage when data are disaggregated and reduced into themes. The last phase of the spiral is representing and visualizing the data, packaging what the researcher discovered into text, tables, or figures.

I used this spiral data analysis process for all data collected during the research project, in an on-going process throughout the study. Data were analyzed, allowing thoughts, concepts, and elements of categorization to become apparent. I analyzed my different data through comparing

60

and contrasting participant responses and encoded themes. My personal journal reflections served a vital role in the simultaneous data collection and analysis process. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggest linking data collection and analysis from the onset of the study.

The different types of data necessitated electronic organizing and filing, for the most part. After the interviews were transcribed and the electronic reflective journal was downloaded into Microsoft Word®, I conducted a primary coding of the collected data using descriptive and holistic codes and assigned labels to designate broad topics of various sections of the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I began with a short list of codes extracted from my research questions; however, other codes emerged during the analysis process and were included in the coding process. The purpose for my research affected my analysis process because it required my looking closely at participant responses and making sure I captured all their thoughts. After I concluded the primary coding phase of data analysis, I merged all codes and their source (specific interview or reflection journal) into a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet. This step of the data analysis process afforded me the opportunity to easily sort the data into areas of commonality. Data analysis, to me, is looking at all the pieces of the research puzzle and trying to put them together in a meaningful way. We engage in data analysis because we have a concern about something or we want to confirm a theory we have.

Then, in an effort to uncover patterns, I conducted a second cycle of coding, which Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) describe as explanatory, in order to identify themes, patterns, and explanations. I further summarized the codes into smaller analytic units through a third cycle of coding, which provided a more concrete outline or map of the research findings as they related to the original research questions. The ability to sort the primary codes (and source), secondary codes, and third-round codes facilitated effective analysis. If I had questions about the primary

code, I was able to easily refer back to the original data source. I used a Microsoft Excel®

spreadsheet to facilitate sorting and in-depth analysis of the codes. Pivot tables within this

program enabled me to aggregate the codes and determine patterns of frequency and similarity

among the various codes.

For example, the following primary codes collapsed into the theme of teacher practices

during the second round of coding:

- Analyzing data

- Analyzing student work

- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID®) instructional strategies

- Best instructional practice

- Collaboration

- Collaborative discussions

- Collaborative planning

- Collaborative structures

- Collaborative student work

- Common planning

- Giving students answers

- Gradual Release of Responsibility model

- Passive student activities

- Using collaborative structures

During the third round of coding, the theme of teacher practices developed into part of a main

category I labeled as instructional staff developer activities, which linked to a finding reported in

Chapter Four related to targeted support for teachers.

Timeline for Research/Inquiry Process

The research was conducted and data for the study were collected during the first

semester of the 2013-2014 school year. Data were collected as follows:

Research Step	Data Collected	Timeframe
Collaborative close-reading lesson planning, delivery, and debriefing cycle	• Personal reflections	September-October 2013
Semi-structured interviews	• Interview recordings • Interview transcripts	November-December 2013
Personal journal	• Personal reflections	September-December 2013

Table 3-1. Research timeline

Data were analyzed beginning in December 2013 and completed in March 2014.

Positionality Statement

I served as a high school literacy coach for three years and am now in my second year as

an instructional staff developer. Currently assigned to 13 different high schools, I differentiate

instructional support for these schools. My role consists of management of secondary reading

intervention programs and PD for reading intervention teachers, fidelity checks and ongoing

support for reading intervention teachers, job-embedded PD through intensive coaching cycles

with struggling or new reading intervention teachers (as needed), reading data analysis support

for administrators, literacy coaches, and teachers, and district-wide PD for reading intervention

teachers. In my role as an instructional staff developer, I have worked with teachers who are

resistant to change and unwilling to adopt new instructional practices. In addition, I have

observed these teachers and tried to share meaningful feedback with them which would enhance

their teaching. In addition, I have worked with teachers who were frustrated about the constantly

changing policies and procedures regarding classroom instruction. However, in this study I set

aside any preconceived ideas or prejudices about the willingness of teachers to receive

instructional support, the inability of some teachers to make the instructional shifts necessitated through Common Core implementation, and the frustrations of other teachers who appear overwhelmed and disheartened by constantly changing educational policy.

Furthermore, I have completed a Master's degree program in Educational Leadership and acquired an extensive amount of background knowledge and observed many different administrators at varying levels of instructional leadership abilities. Serving in 13 different high schools provides me with a more global perspective on instructional leadership roles and responsibilities. As an instructional staff developer/leader and aspiring administrator, I understand the sense of urgency in implementing the CCSS and helping teachers to make the instructional shifts necessary to infuse the standards into their instruction. I also understand the importance of instructional leaders focusing on building teacher capacity and not just evaluating individual instructional processes, while building a culture conducive to professional learning and growth.

However, I endeavored to set aside any preconceived ideas or beliefs about my own instructional leadership abilities, especially as they relate to implementation of the Common Core. My goal for this research project was to discover how I can be a more effective instructional leader to teachers in the implementation of the CCSS. One of the goals I have as an instructional staff developer is to build capacity in the teachers with whom I work and empower them to be catalysts of instructional reflection and change. During my practitioner research project, I encouraged teachers to reflect on their instruction and analyze student data to guide their instructional decisions.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In this qualitative research study, I endeavored to reach a deeper level of understanding about my role as an instructional leader. I was deeply immersed in this inquiry, having spent the past four years growing and developing as an instructional leader. I was not looking for a predetermined right or wrong answer to the research question which guided my study: In what ways can I, as an instructional staff developer, provide effective instructional leadership to secondary English teachers as they implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? The sub-questions enabled me to clearly focus on my development as an instructional leader:

- How can I combine the instructional leadership vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and provide effective support for teachers?
- What instructional leadership strategies support teachers in effectively implementing the CCSS?

In an attempt to answer these research questions and wonderings, I strengthened the credibility of my research using the following strategies:

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation. I have established relationships and built trust with the participants. In addition, I researched a topic which was both salient and relevant for teachers, staff developers, literacy coaches, and instructional leaders. Because assisting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS is a routine part of my job, I am constantly involved in collegial discussion, professional learning opportunities, and support sessions regarding the Common Core.

Triangulation of information. I made use of several different sources of information to substantiate my findings and shed light on any specific themes or perspectives which emerged.

Clarifying researcher bias. From the beginning of the research project, I endeavored to make it explicitly clear to the reader my position and any biases or assumptions which might impact the study.

Peer review or debriefing. I asked one of my colleagues and cohort study partner to serve as a peer reviewer who asked open questions about my research methods, data analysis process, and interpretations.

Rich, thick description. I attempted to provide a clear and delineated description of the research process, including participants and setting, in order for readers to easily make decisions regarding transferability of the study (Creswell, 2012).

After I concluded my data analysis, I read through the transcripts an additional time to ensure I had gleaned all pertinent thoughts and ideas from the interviews.

In the next chapter, I will present the findings of my practitioner research which explored how I can become a more effective instructional leader supporting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

As an instructional staff developer who is responsible for supporting English language arts (ELA) teachers in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I wanted to explore how I could provide instructional leadership support to these teachers during this curriculum and assessment transition and also grow in my pedagogical knowledge of effective instructional leadership practices.

This is an extremely stressful time for classroom teachers, instructional staff developers, content area curriculum specialists, and site-based instructional leaders as our district moves toward full implementation of the Common Core. Over the past couple of years and looking ahead to full implementation during the upcoming school year, district directives regarding the new standards have changed, communication regarding specifics of implementation has been revised, and district policies and procedures impacting teachers and instructional practice have been reworked. It has been a challenge for me to provide appropriate and timely support to these ELA teachers who are on the frontlines of the CCSS implementation, and to clearly communicate the district and school vision regarding infusion and implementation of the new standards into instruction.

Therefore, my study focused on those ways in which I, as an instructional staff developer, could best support ELA teachers in making the necessary shifts in instruction to effectively implement the CCSS and provide scaffolded assistance to students. Specifically, I wanted to analyze the instructional support I provided to teachers related to the Common Core, the realities of working within the instructional vision of district and school-based leadership, and skills and strategies which were needed for me to provide more effective assistance to teachers and bridge

the needs and wants of teachers with the instructional vision of district and school leadership. I

spent time with teachers and instructional leaders talking about their perceptions and thoughts

regarding the implementation of the CCSS, best teaching practices, and shifts in instruction

necessitated through implementation of the Common Core.

In this chapter, I will discuss results of interviews with ELA teachers I support who are

currently transitioning to the CCSS, their principals who provide instructional leadership during

the change, and the Executive Director of High School Education who helps implement our

school district's vision as it relates to high school instruction and the CCSS. In addition, I will

examine my personal reflections on instructional leadership related to Common Core and my

own instructional leadership skills and abilities noted during the research process. In addition, I

will present an analysis of the following research question which guided my study: In what ways

can I, as an instructional staff developer, provide effective instructional leadership to secondary

English teachers as they implement the CCSS? I will also present an examination of the

following two sub-questions:

- How can I combine the instructional leadership vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and provide effective support for teachers?
- What instructional leadership strategies support teachers in effectively implementing the CCSS?

Overview of Findings and Organization of the Chapter

As I analyzed the data from my study, it became clear to me that my role as an

instructional staff developer supporting ELA teachers in the implementation of the CCSS was an

extremely complicated and multi-faceted leadership responsibility. On one hand, the teachers

with whom I worked expressed specific concerns about infusing the new standards into their

instruction and the changes they were required to make in aligning their instruction to the new

standards. On the other hand, district and school-based leadership conveyed certain expectations

about how the new standards were to be implemented, including subject-area priorities, instructional scaffolding for students, and training expectations for teachers. As a district instructional staff developer charged with the responsibility of supporting ELA teachers in adopting the CCSS, I had to find a balance between what teachers needed and wanted with regard to making the instructional shifts required in infusing the more rigorous standards into their teaching, and the vision and expectations of district and school leadership regarding those changes in instructional practice and full implementation of the Common Core in the classroom.

This concept of considering the needs and wants of teachers within the expectations of district and school leadership began to emerge as a balance, with teacher-related ideas on one side, instructional leadership concepts on the other side, and me in the middle functioning as the fulcrum, acting on the pulls from both sides to keep the CCSS implementation balanced and appropriate (See Figure 4-1). If teachers needed or requested a particular type of support, I had to consider whether or not that assistance was in alignment with what district and school-based leadership expected and wanted. Furthermore, if district and school-based leadership asked me to provide specific Common Core instructional support to teachers, I had to determine the most appropriate way to present that assistance to teachers and have them clearly understand leadership expectations and willingly receive the support in a joint effort to improve instructional practice and enhance student learning.

In this chapter I present my findings in three sections laid out conceptually like the balance in Figure 4-1. The first section outlines what I learned about what teachers want and need (teacher vision of leadership, focused support for gaps in teacher knowledge and skills, collaboration opportunities, and clear communication). The second section lays out what I learned from administrators (differing views of leadership, professional development (PD) for
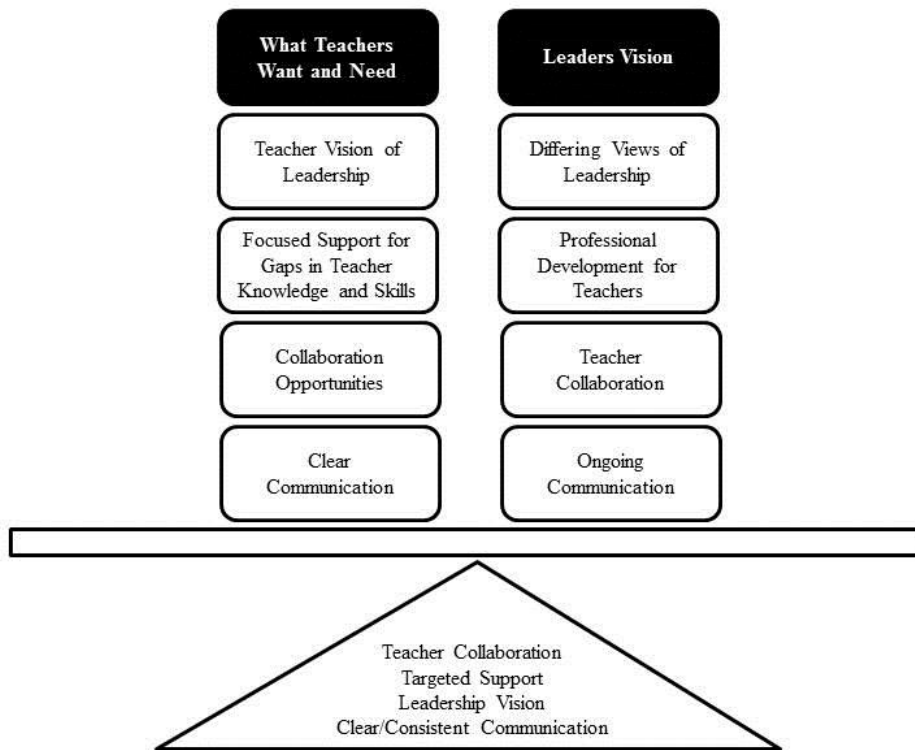
Figure 4-1. Balancing teacher needs and wants with leaders vision

teachers, teacher collaboration, and ongoing communication). The final section of this chapter

outlines the challenges I faced in navigating or balancing teacher needs and wants while

fulfilling the vision of school and district leaders with regard to the implementation of the CCSS.

I learned some of the tensions were easier than others (teacher collaboration and targeted

support), and some were more challenging because the participants needed different things

(leadership vision and clear/consistent communication).

What Teachers Want and Need

Curriculum-based reform in schools can only be as effective as the teachers who must implement it on a daily basis. Therefore, my study begins with a careful analysis of the perspective of teachers. My district job was to provide support for teachers as they implemented the Common Core in their secondary ELA classrooms. I kept a journal of my reflections as I worked with them and I also interviewed teachers to understand their perspectives. Four themes emerged which helped me better understand how to support them: teacher vision of leadership, focused support for gaps in teacher knowledge and skills, collaboration opportunities, and clear communication.

Teacher Vision of Leadership

To better understand how to help teachers implement change, I needed to know what they expected from an instructional leader who was coming in to support them. Since I was based at the district but assigned to their school, I did not know how my support would be received. What I learned is their view of leadership was based largely on their immediate classroom needs. Ms. Brown felt an instructional leader should be a teacher's advocate, always on the side of teachers, and help them make a smooth transition to the Common Core. "I would envision them [instructional staff developer/leader] coming up with sample lessons…and thoroughly showing us exactly what they want us to do and then helping us feel comfortable implementing it [these lessons] in the classroom and making us feel comfortable to come to them" (A. Brown, Interview). Ms. Miller had a similar viewpoint to that of Ms. Brown, stating "sometimes you need someone who can just sift through it all [instructional strategies] and find the best possible way to teach something" (B. Miller, Interview). Along those same lines, Ms. Smith noted instructional leaders should "provide us [teachers] with lots of resources and materials and come down here and model some of the lessons for us, so we will feel comfortable using them" (C.

Smith, Interview). Basically, the perception teachers had of my role as an instructional leader was to meet their individual and professional needs at a specific classroom level.

Each perceived need mentioned by these three teachers dealt with their own instructional practice or classroom-level support. When I asked the three teachers to describe those qualities and attributes they believed an instructional leader should possess, they mentioned characteristics which would benefit teachers, including the following: innovative (finding effective instructional practices), service-oriented (helping teachers with routine tasks), resourceful (finding appropriate materials for teachers), and knowledgeable about the Common Core (knowing how to support teachers in implementing the new standards).

Focused Support for Gaps in Teacher Knowledge and Skills

Despite numerous CCSS trainings at the district and state level over the past several years, the teachers continued to have gaps in their knowledge and skills and recognized they needed support in filling those gaps. Those gaps included engaging and motivating learners in interacting with the more complex texts and engaging in more rigorous instructional activities, creating text-dependent questions and culminating writing assignments, and incorporating relevant complex texts in lesson plans. In this section I will first outline the gaps in teacher knowledge and skills, followed by specific focused support to address these gaps.

Engaging and motivating learners. Teachers know the first step in reaching a learner is to engage the learner (Eamon, 2005). The teachers in my study all mentioned this struggle as they moved to Common Core. In the interviews I conducted with these teachers, I discovered they all felt they needed support related to the motivation and engagement of all learners. For example, in her interview, Ms. Brown noted it was difficult to engage or hook students on reading many of the complex text passages used in CCSS lessons unless they built some type of background knowledge which would interest the student. She was also concerned about apparent

conflicting messages regarding the amount of background knowledge teachers should present to their students in the Common Core lessons. "We could give them some idea of what they're going to read or else I just don't feel like they would be interested at all in what we're doing. I think hooks are definitely beneficial to students" (A. Brown, interview). Ms. Miller viewed student engagement and motivation as a challenge as well and wished her students would come into class eager to learn and experience new literature. Ms. Miller felt she needed instructional support from someone "who can find really cool things we can use in our classroom which our students would love" (B. Miller, interview). As these teachers expressed, they wanted focused support in how to motivate and engage their learners in this new style of instruction before they could move on to more complicated instructional concepts.

Creating text-dependent questions and culminating writing assignments. Beyond simply engaging their learners, the teachers realized they needed additional assistance in creating suitable text-dependent questions, which are queries which focus on (a) words, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as larger ideas, themes, or events, (b) difficult portions of text in order to enhance reading proficiency, or (c) include prompts for writing and discussion questions. In addition, these teachers found it challenging to create the culminating writing assignments which were required at the end of Common Core close reading lessons. For example, Ms. Brown described this perceived lack of training in the interview I conducted with her. "The one problem I'm having is it's hard for me to come up with the questions to go along with the complex text and I don't know what higher-order questions are good enough for them" (A. Brown, Interview) These teachers realized they needed additional training in creating appropriate text-dependent questions and culminating writing assignments, essential in effective close reading lesson plans.

Incorporating relevant complex texts in lesson plans. Use of complex texts is a hallmark of Common Core instruction, and teachers recognized they needed a great deal of support in this area as well. They mentioned the trainings incorporated good examples of complex text, which were appropriately paired with regard to common themes and concepts. However, these teachers preferred to use complex informational texts more closely associated with the literary texts they were currently using for instruction in their classrooms and wanted additional training on how to choose and pair appropriate complex text with this literature. With regard to the disconnect between the passages used in the Common Core trainings and the literature they were using in class, Ms. Smith noted the following, "They [the passages] were not related to what we teach. We were required to use other materials which didn't relate to what we're teaching, and infuse them in our curriculum, which doesn't make sense" (C. Smith, Interview). The teachers felt the trainings would have been more helpful if the texts had been selected from textbooks or materials they routinely used in class.

Focused support to address the gaps. The ELA teachers have students in their classes who are classified as lower academic achievers, and they realize full implementation of the CCSS presents many challenges. In their opinion, instruction needs to be scaffolded in order for their lower-level students to think critically and master the text-dependent questions and culminating writing tasks associated with the more rigorous Common Core lessons they are introducing. These three teachers understand shifts in instruction must take place as they strive to build knowledge through more content-rich nonfiction, require students to ground their reading, writing, and speaking assignments using evidence from literary and informational text, and engage students in regular practice with complex text and its academic language. These three teachers also shared specific types of support important to them, including having Common Core

exemplar lessons modeled by staff developers, preparing or co-planning appropriate CCSS lessons, and locating complex text resources and developing rigorous instructional activities around those texts.

The complex instructional shifts in the Common Core require new ways of teaching, and teachers identified modeling as one strategy which would support them in making the shifts. For example, Ms. Miller stated "modeling and providing a lot of examples are going to be the most important things which support teachers" (B. Miller, Interview). These teachers also noted that just as students need modeling of instructional activities when they engage with new knowledge, so teachers must have effective Common Core instructional strategies demonstrated for them prior to trying them out on their own. The teachers needed and wanted additional instructional modeling and Common Core exemplar lessons in order to obtain a comfort level in teaching close reading lessons. For example, Ms. Brown saw instructional modeling as an opportunity to "see what kind of probing questions we could use, what other examples we could be doing in the classroom" (A. Brown, interview). Asking higher-level, text-dependent questions was an instructional strategy teachers needed to master.

In addition to support in modeling Common Core exemplar lessons, the three teachers I interviewed realized they also needed support in preparing appropriate lesson plans addressing the CCSS. To help these teachers develop rigorous and engaging lessons, I developed CCSS lesson plan templates, which incorporated text-dependent questions and culminating writing assessments from the ongoing Common Core tasks teachers were required to infuse into their instruction. These templates provided the teachers with several optional lesson hooks they could use to engage their students, as well as student collaborative structures. I also built flexibility into the lesson plan templates and encouraged the teachers to personalize the lessons. The three

teachers appreciated having the front-loaded lesson plan templates prepared for them, because it provided an easily integrated way for them to infuse new instructional strategies into their teaching. For example, Ms. Brown found the template to be helpful. "The thing [template] you brought in was amazing because we didn't have to use every single thing. We could use whatever hook we wanted. There was just a lot to pick from" (A. Brown, Interview). The teachers, already stressed with the task of teaching blended standards, did not feel they had enough time to plan effective close reading lessons.

Additionally, the three teachers realized they needed assistance with the time-consuming process of finding complex text and developing rigorous instructional activities. These teachers felt they did not have time for lesson plan research, whether it involved incorporating additional information texts with existing literature being studied or creating completely different lesson plans around other passages. They were concerned about the lack of time in preparing adequate Common Core close reading lessons as well as their increased work load in teaching blended standards this year, Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) and the CCSS. Not only were teachers responsible for introducing students to the Common Core, they had to also prepare students for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). For example, with regard to the Common Core, Ms. Miller stated, "I understand we want to get away from FCAT and that this test is not helpful. We're so pressed for time that I think it's a disservice to our students" (B. Miller, Interview). These teachers also felt overwhelmed at times as they were required to change existing lesson plans and develop new ones. Ms. Smith realized how time-consuming the Common Core lesson planning process was and noted:

> It [the Common Core lesson-planning process] requires lots of planning. It requires finding lots of resources; lots of non-fiction pieces which would parallel with the fiction pieces, and work in the questioning, and train my students to focus on the standards and the standard wording. (C. Smith, Interview)

The teachers wanted to be able to plan, find complex text resources, and help their students engage with the more rigorous instructional activities; however, they were overwhelmed at the prospect of doing so without support.

Collaboration Opportunities

As teachers struggled to change their practice to align with Common Core, they identified collaboration with peers to be one way to support each other and learn with and from each other. As an instructional leader, they expected my help in setting up opportunities to collaborate. In my work with ELA teachers in our district, they have expressed the desire to collaborate with other teachers in planning and designing close reading lessons. In addition to support in the instructional modeling of close reading lessons and preparation of original Common Core lessons, the teachers also felt it was beneficial to collaborate with other teachers in designing Common Core lessons and that this process enabled them to become more comfortable infusing the new standards into their instruction. Two of these teachers, Ms. Brown and Ms. Miller, regularly met together for the purpose of planning lessons, designing instructional activities, and creating common assessments for their ninth grade English classes. They felt this co-planning effort helped them make better use of their time and more efficient appropriation of their instructional resources. In fact, Ms. Smith viewed opportunities for teachers to collaborate as a means of support in creating text-dependent questions and designing culminating writing assignments.

> I think if teachers from different schools get together and focus on text dependent
> questions at some point, related to the materials which we are using, and having
> somebody check over these, that will make more sense to us because it would be
> applicable. (C. Smith, Interview)

These teachers expressed a desire to continue working together in collaborative, grade-level Common Core lesson planning sessions.

Clear Communication

As teachers adjusted their daily classroom instruction to fit within Common Core, they recognized the messages they were getting about Common Core were not always consistent. As such, they talked about the need for clear communication from administration about the expectations for CCSS implementation. The three teachers felt they did not totally understand the messages the district sent regarding implementation of the Common Core, nor did they feel they were given timely updates regarding which students should be assessed using the new standards, the specific trainings teachers were to attend, and how much of their instruction should be aligned to the Common Core during this transitional year in which teachers were using the NGSSS and the CCSS. The delivery of the CCSS exemplar lessons changed dramatically from last year to this school year, and the current process initially confused and frustrated these teachers. For example, Ms. Brown wanted the district to be more proactive in communicating with teachers and in planning a relevant curriculum and stated:

> Nobody has a real straight answer on what we should be doing, I guess, on some of the things like our testing next year, our testing this year… I feel like whenever they're making a decision, they should try to inform us on what they're doing, because I feel like we don't know everything that's going on and maybe we should. (A. Brown, Interview)

I realized, through the teacher interviews I conducted and also my personal reflections on working with ELA teachers, there was still a lot of anxiety and confusion about the expectations and specifics of implementing the CCSS in our district. Teachers were at varying levels of understanding regarding implementation of the Common Core, how much additional district CCSS training they were required to attend, and which of their students would be assessed on the new standards.

What District and School Leaders Envision

The research I conducted also provided a great deal of understanding in the area of the instructional vision of district and school leaders as it related to the implementation of the CCSS and instructional support provided to teachers. The site-based administrators I interviewed were introduced to the Common Core a year ago and attended trainings for instructional leaders regarding their implementation in the classroom. They, too, felt challenged and slightly overwhelmed at the prospect of leading their schools in making widespread reform in instructional practice. These administrators realized the need to share specifics of the CCSS implementation in a relevant and meaningful way with their teachers. "We need to present the information to the staff so they can see how the Common Core is applied in their subject areas" (J. Allen, Interview). In addition, these administrators were apprised of our district's expectations regarding blended (NGSSS and CCSS) instruction during the current school year and full implementation the next school year. Themes related to district and principal leadership included differing views of leadership, PD for teachers, teacher collaboration, and ongoing communication.

Differing Views of Leadership

The site-based and district-level administrators had somewhat different views of shared instructional leadership, which made balancing their needs a bit challenging at times since the district administrator is my direct supervisor, but I have to work daily in the schools run by the principals. The district and school leadership vision seemed to align with regard to the importance of a staff developer knowing the school and its instructional needs, including strengths and weaknesses of the staff. Additionally, all of the administrators firmly believed the principal should be the chief instructional leader of the school. However, district and school administrators had a slightly different viewpoint on building capacity and sharing leadership with

others. In this section, I will discuss elements of instructional leadership leaders viewed as important.

Shared leadership. School-based instructional leaders were open to the idea of an instructional leadership team, in which the principal builds leadership capacity in other staff members and delegates certain responsibilities to these aspiring leaders. In fact, the site-based administrators who participated in my study, Principals Allen and Jones, described how they used this model and shared leadership responsibilities with other administrators, instructional staff developers, and teacher leaders in their schools. These principals were inclined to develop instructional leadership skills in staff developers and teachers, because these were the individuals with whom they interacted on a regular basis and were more familiar with school-based instructional needs and leadership opportunities. In addition, Ms. Allen mentioned the shortage of school-based finances and staffing as a motivating factor in developing various team members to provide instructional leadership and support to teachers. She built capacity in the staff she had. "I definitely think that all the help anybody can get is always welcome" (J. Allen, Interview).

In sharing instructional leadership responsibilities with staff developers, the principals also felt that building relationships with teachers was essential in working with teachers and supporting them to make the instructional shifts necessitated through implementation of the Common Core. Principal Allen noted these relationships take time to build, especially when staff developers are not on campus full-time. Therefore, she felt the principal could help nurture relationships between staff developers and teachers by openly supporting the work of instructional staff developers. Ms. Allen mentioned she has asked me to offer various PD to her staff, work with new English and reading teachers, and provide recommendations regarding teaching assignments. Through her visible support of my role as an instructional staff developer

and leader, Ms. Allen fostered relationships between her staff and me. In fact, she has ensured that my work with teachers is not viewed as evaluative, but supportive.

> The administrator, the principal of the school has to help build that relationship, so they are not necessarily saying, "I'm not here to evaluate you, but I'm definitely here to help you, so you can do better." (J. Allen, Interview)

Although Director Wright was supportive of building leadership capacity in teachers, instructional coaches, and teams of teachers and coaches, she had a different perception of shared instructional leadership, stating the professional growth of instructional leadership team members is dependent on the principal's leadership vision and their tendency to build capacity in others. She realized that some educators, whether they were teachers, literacy coaches, or staff developers, were given instructional leadership status because of their skills and effectiveness. However, Director Wright noted these empowered educators "absolutely can only go so far unless there is a leader who's paving the way for them to and being right there for them to complete the work." She further stated, "As the leader goes, the school goes. You simply cannot ever afford for a school leader to say, 'I'm giving this up to this great group of teachers here, they're doing this for us.' That's never going to work" (S. Wright, Interview). Director Wright also stated she was trying to build capacity in principals and assistant principals as instructional leaders, as opposed to staff developers and teachers. This hierarchical approach in building leadership capacity produced challenges in aligning instructional support to teachers with the vision of leadership.

Knowing staff strengths and weaknesses. The two principals also shared with me the importance of instructional leaders knowing their teachers' strengths and weaknesses, especially as it relates to them teaching courses in which they will be most effective. "Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and putting them in classes where they can be successful, is key as an instructional leader" (J. Allen, Interview). Both principals, in sharing instructional leadership

with me over the past few years and during this study, have asked my advice regarding teaching

assignments for English and reading teachers and consider this a responsibility of an

instructional leader. Ms. Allen further states,

> Everything plays into the bigger picture, and that bigger picture is, are we
> providing the curriculum, are we providing the course work, are we putting the
> right teachers in front of the kids, so teachers can be as successful as possible in the
> classroom. (J. Allen, Interview)

The principals believed the most important element in enhancing student learning was an

effective teacher teaching a course in which he or she can make the most impact.

After working with a teacher who was involuntarily transferred to one of the schools to

which I was assigned and given a teaching assignment with which she had no previous

experience, I realized, along with Principals Allen and Jones, exactly how important it was to

have teachers appropriately placed. I also understood teacher instructional assignments were

going to be even more important as our district moves to full implementation of the Common

Core. Just because a teacher is certified to teach in a particular content area, it doesn't mean he or

she will be effective in that area. In my journal, I noted our district needs to provide more

support to local schools in placing the right teachers, and school administrators need to assign

teachers courses in which they will be most effective (Journal, September 23, 2013).

Director Wright also believes in the importance of an instructional staff developer

knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the staff, as well as the support certain staff members

may need in becoming a more effective teacher in the implementation of the Common Core.

"What I am hoping is that we is set up lots and lots of lifelines for people for wherever they are

in implementing the Common Core" (S. Wright, Interview). She believes this targeted support

comes about through knowing the school, instructional staff, learning culture, and the staff's

propensity to embrace change.

Professional Development for Teachers

In order for me to more clearly understand the vision of district and site-based leaders with regard to PD opportunities for their teachers, I needed to know what elements of training were important to them to successfully facilitate the training and instructional support. These opportunities included proper alignment with the School Improvement Plan (SIP), the instructional staff developer serving as a content expert, locating appropriate curriculum and resources for teachers, and meeting teachers at their point of need in the Common Core implementation process.

Alignment of professional development with school improvement plan. PD opportunities for the teachers in our district need to be ongoing and aligned to the SIP, which is a detailed plan for achieving school-based learning goals. It is a living document and constantly changing as instructional needs (student and teacher) evolve. The principals also felt it was important for staff developers who would aspire to be instructional leaders at their schools to understand the instructional needs of their school and be able to address the particular areas where support is required, including curricula, teachers, and students. These principals noted the importance of instructional leaders to personally attend Common Core trainings, share the significance of participation in CCSS trainings, and offer relevant PD to their teachers. They also felt it was vital for staff developers to help teachers understand the importance of ongoing PD, which would help them better meet the needs of their students, and align those opportunities for professional learning to their school's SIP.

In working with these two principals during this study, I offered (at their request) literacy professional learning opportunities in variety of formats. They also shared with me topics which their particular teachers wanted in the PD sessions they were offered. In the interview I conducted with Principal Jones, she stated she wanted her teachers to guide the areas of training

and to participate in PD which enabled them to fully understand their SIP. She believed so

strongly in the SIP as a way to enhance teacher effectiveness and increase student achievement

she incorporated SIP training for all of her teachers.

> We wanted our staff to know our School Improvement Plan back and forth because
> it's not just a compliance document, it's a living document and it's our school's
> goals. I wanted them to know about our students, what our students struggle with,
> what learning gains they have, where our focus is so our staff is aware of that and
> that's through the School Improvement Plan. (W. Jones, Interview)

The principals trusted me to facilitate relevant and practical professional learning opportunities

for their staff.

In support of this concept of the SIP as a living document, each principal expressed their

belief that the instructional staff developer must know her school's SIP, her staff, and how best

to support teachers in making the necessary shifts in instruction in the CCSS. In fact, Principal

Jones stated, "Knowing the school, knowing the school's population, knowing my teachers,

knowing their strengths, knowing their challenges, advocating for them, supporting them [is

important]" (W. Jones, Interview) The principals wanted instructional support for their teachers

from a staff developer who was well-acquainted with their school, plan for instructional

improvement, and staff.

Serving as a content expert. The principals also felt it was important for an instructional

staff developer to be able to serve as a content expert, especially in designing and facilitating

appropriate and relevant PD opportunities for their staff. They felt a positive personality in a staff

developer was important; but if that staff developer didn't have the solid content knowledge

base, she would be ineffective and the training would be considered by the instructional staff as a

waste of their time. In fact, Ms. Jones stated the following with regard to the instructional staff

developer, "If you don't have the knowledge base, you're dead in the water" (W. Jones,

Interview) The principals relied on me as a Common Core expert and trusted me to design and facilitate the right professional learning opportunities for their staff.

Locating proper curriculum and instructional resources. Another factor which Principals Allen and Jones noted as important in focusing support for their teachers was ensuring their teachers had the proper curricula and instructional resources to use. These principals understood how time-consuming it was to locate appropriate complex texts and design accompanying rigorous instructional activities. Therefore, they supported the use of Common Core lesson plan templates and complex text resource compilations with their teachers. Principal Allen felt this was necessary to increase teacher effectiveness, "to be able to get them [teachers] the resources they need to be successful [is vital]" (J. Allen, Interview). These principals felt the right teaching tools would enable teachers to prepare suitable CCSS lessons and instructional activities on their own.

To adequately address the instructional needs of these teachers and continue to build instructional capacity in them, Director Wright mentioned that it is important to support teachers and provide lifelines to them wherever they are in the Common Core implementation process.

> Without saying, "I told you so" and without saying, "You should have done this last year, you should have, could have, would have." Just saying, "Okay, this is where you are now and this is the plan I have and you and I are going to get together to get you where we need you to be." (S. Wright, Interview)

The administrators realized teachers were at varying levels of Common Core implementation and would need individualized instructional support during the upcoming school year.

Teacher Collaboration

The administrators stated they understood teacher networking and collaboration were vital to the effective implementation of the CCSS. They all felt professional learning communities (PLCs) and Literacy Leadership Teams (LLTs) were a viable means for teacher

collaboration, teacher collaboration was part of a healthy school environment, and teacher collaboration helped build instructional capacity.

In serving as an instructional leader at their schools, both of the principals felt the strengthening of PLCs and LLTs in their schools was vital. These collaborative learning groups, according to Principals Allen and Jones, served an important role in securing stakeholder buy-in for the school's instructional goals, because they allowed more teachers to increase their professional knowledge regarding effective instructional practices and provided an opportunity for the staff developer to function as an instructional leader. For example, Principal Allen used her LLT, which was a cross-section of the faculty and secured member representative from all content areas, to help the entire staff understand the instructional shifts required through the CCSS. "When they [the LLT] would bring the information back from the literacy platforms, that information would be shared by somebody from their department and someone in their subject area, so it would be received better" (J. Allen, Interview). The principals encouraged participation in collaborative learning groups.

Director Wright, the district administrator I interviewed, also believed in the importance of teacher collaboration as part of a healthy school environment. She envisioned teacher collaboration taking place on a regular basis in a positive school culture, whether these collaborative discussions took place in common planning sessions, PLCs, lesson study groups, or teacher collegial discussions. She stated the school structure should promote teacher collaboration, "where the structure allows for people interacting with each other and being able to support each other and doing this work" (S. Wright, Interview). She also mentioned the importance of teacher collaboration in building capacity in teachers and shared teachers appreciated the opportunity to network with other teachers. "Teachers appreciate more than

anything networking and collaborations" (S. Wright, Interview). Director Wright encouraged district instructional support personnel and principals to promote teacher involvement in collaborative learning groups.

Ongoing Communication

The principals wanted me to keep them in the loop on district initiatives and plans regarding Common Core implementation. They believed an instructional staff developer needed to be in constant communication with the principal regarding implementation of the Common Core, as well as any additional directives or policy changes from the district regarding instructional shifts or the new standards.

Director Wright noted a challenge in conveying CCSS implementation, in that ELA teachers had been involved in the district's Common Core training opportunities since their inception and that the message had changed during that time. She also mentioned how important it was for instructional leaders to communicate as clearly as possible the vision of the district concerning the implementation of the CCSS, while operating in a positive school culture and enlisting the help of instructional staff developers through shared leadership. The bottom line for instructional leaders, in her opinion, was keeping student learning and achievement as the top priority in administrative decisions, as well as effective instructional practices for teachers. "You can't write policy which makes these things happen…You've got relationships. You've got shared leadership. You have your empowered people. You filter all of your decisions through…What's best for students? What's best for teaching?" (S. Wright, Interview). The ongoing and consistent flow of information regarding Common Core implementation was important to district leadership.

Principal Allen felt the delivery of information to teachers could be more effective if the instructional staff developer was embedded as part of the administrative team, "They need to

know how all the pieces come together and how everything affects each other" (J. Allen, Interview). Through spending time in their schools, I realized principals were doing the best they could regarding implementation of the Common Core; but, because of additional administrative duties, they did not always have the time to adequately communicate to teachers the changes in district policy and guidelines regarding the alignment of classroom instruction to the CCSS. As I reflected on this communication challenge in my journal, I noted it was important to "share Common Core implementation progress and district expectations with principals on a regular basis, outlining specific ways in which I could provide instructional leadership support to them and to their teachers" (Journal, October 21, 2013). Communication proved to be an extremely important element in the Common Core implementation process.

Navigating the Balance

In the first two sections, I outlined teacher needs and wants with regard to instructional support in fully implementing the CCSS into their instruction, as well as the vision of district and site-based administrators in adopting the new standards. As previously noted, it was my job to navigate between the two areas and ensure a balance between teacher needs and wants and the vision of leadership. Therefore, I was constantly working to fulfill the instructional vision of district and site-based administrators while still providing individualized and timely support to teachers. Because of a perceived "us and them" mentality, many teachers feel uncomfortable when administrators visit their classrooms as if they were there to catch them using ineffective teaching strategies. Teachers are guarded in their discussions with administrators and rarely engage in open collegial discussions about how to improve instruction or appropriately meet the needs of their students. On the other hand, administrators tend to become easily frustrated with teachers who do not readily get on board with new district directives or site-based instructional goals. Some areas of support were easier to navigate, such as teacher collaboration, because of

the similarities which existed between teacher desires for peer collaboration and networking and the value administrators placed on teacher collaboration.

Targeted support was another area which was rather easy to navigate between the needs and wants of teachers and the vision of leaders. The teachers clearly expressed their desire for additional training and support in specific areas, such as the time-consuming process of planning appropriate CCSS lesson plans, infusing appropriate complex text into their lessons, and designing rigorous instructional activities. Because of the ongoing CCSS trainings they were receiving and the regular classroom walkthroughs and observations they conducted, the principals also realized the need for focused support for teachers in these areas as well.

However, because of the various sources sharing CCSS information and the different recipients and channels of communication, it was somewhat more challenging to provide teachers and principals with a clear and consistent message about the implementation status of the Common Core. Certain factors impacted my efforts in sharing this information, including the need to differentiate messages for teachers at varying levels of understanding and implementation of the CCSS, as well as timely delivery of messages dealing with policy changes and procedural updates. It was also a bit more challenging to navigate the area of instructional leadership viewpoint because of the "us and them" perception previously described. Teachers' views of instructional leadership were different than that of the administrators. In addition, relationship building between administrators and teachers is not a major focus in many schools.

This balancing of teacher needs and wants with the vision of district and school leadership illustrated my role as an instructional staff developer, constantly prioritizing my work with teachers and balancing my time and communication between teachers and administrators. Four themes developed, which provided insight into ways in which I could provide more

effective support to teachers and administrators: teacher collaboration, targeted support, leadership vision, and clear and consistent communication. Although these are the same general themes discussed in the previous two sections, in this section I will discuss my role in navigating the balance. I have ordered them from easiest to most challenging to navigate

Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration and networking was an area of Common Core instructional support which was rather easy for me to navigate, because both teachers and administrators viewed teacher collaboration as important. Each group wanted me to facilitate collaborative learning groups and other professional learning opportunities, which would provide teachers a chance to co-plan and network with other teachers.

Collaborative learning groups. Collaborative learning groups, such as PLCs, ongoing Common Core teacher trainings, and cooperative lesson planning sessions are excellent ways for teachers to collaborate. District and school leaders believed the collegial collaboration engendered in a positive learning culture was important. The teachers also felt networking was important and wanted to co-plan Common Core lessons with other teachers. "Teachers want to collaborate with other teachers in planning Common Core lessons, finding complex texts which correlate with their grade level curriculum, and sharing ideas about integrating close reading lessons into their instruction. (Journal, October 28, 2013). Principal Jones illustrated how important a culture of learning was in promoting growth in instructional leaders by encouraging collaboration in all content areas.

> We're doing okay in Science and Social Studies as a school, partially because we do have strong staff all over. But that staff works together very well, goes to trainings together, and takes what they've done at trainings and brings it back [to the rest of the department]. (W. Jones, Interview)

The principals encouraged teachers to work together in collaborative learning groups, PLCs, or cooperative planning sessions.

Principal Allen mentioned the importance of the LLT in delivering the CCSS discussion platforms, which provided an overview of the Common Core, a study of close reading lessons, guidance in choosing and pairing appropriate complex text, information on how to write text-dependent questions, and assistance in designing rigorous culminating writing assessments. These discussion platforms also afforded staff members the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers from their specific content area and examine how implementation of the CCSS was going to impact instruction. She also noted the transition to the Common Core was still a work in progress. "I think our literacy team on campus here has done a good job with the literacy platforms, and bringing them to the teachers. I think we're constantly growing and learning, so I think it's in progress" (J. Allen, Interview) Principal Allen supported the LLT and encouraged cross-curricular participation on the team, as well as in PLCs, in an effort to ensure more widespread implementation of the Common Core.

In fact, during the course of this study I designed additional CCSS material to be used in PLCs at Ms. Allen's school. The topics I planned for six modules included close reading, lesson hooks, student engagement, selection and pairing of complex text, vocabulary instruction, creating text-dependent questions, and designing culminating writing assignments. I also met with a PLC of English teachers who work with lower-achieving students to help them learn how to find complex text resources to accompany various pieces of literature they were planning to use in their instruction.

Targeted Support

Another area which was easy for me to balance teacher needs and wants with the vision of administrators was targeted support for teachers. I realized targeted or focused support was

91

necessary to address the gaps which existed in teacher knowledge and skills regarding the CCSS

and the instructional shifts necessary to implement the new standards. For example, I addressed

the time constraints involved in planning appropriate CCSS lessons by creating a lesson plan

template for teachers to use, which infused appropriate complex text and incorporated rigorous

instructional activities. I also learned from my work with the teachers they would like additional

training in writing text-dependent questions and designing rigorous culminating writing tasks. So

I decided to offer these trainings and mentioned this in my journal. "I will infuse the writing of

text-dependent questions into future PD opportunities for teachers and provide samples for them

to use." (Journal, September 16, 2013). I targeted my instructional support to teachers in areas

which would help increase their knowledge of the CCSS and enhance their skill in designing

text-dependent questions and culminating writing assignments.

Ongoing training. All three administrators spoke of the importance of the ongoing

training teachers were receiving with specially designed Common Core exemplar lessons. They

felt it was important for teachers to see the practical application of CCSS instruction in their

particular content area and to work with other teachers in the district in designing and delivering

the Common Core lessons. These Common Core PD sessions gave me additional opportunities

to support teachers through collegial discussions at the trainings and facilitating follow-up

teacher collaboration and networking opportunities. Teachers also saw the importance of

continued Common Core training and support. Therefore, it was easy for me to facilitate

additional PD sessions and Common Core instructional tools. For instance, I prepared a

districtwide training lesson planning guide for middle school and high school ELA and reading

departments, which provided them the opportunity to collaborate and practice writing text-

dependent questions and culminating writing tasks (Journal, October 21, 2013). I also decided it

would be beneficial to continue to compile complex text and text-dependent resources for teachers. "I will continue to research CCSS resources, focusing on complex text materials. In addition, I will try to assemble a condensed, easily understood guide for creating text-dependent questions and designing culminating writing assignments" (Journal, October 21, 2013). Both administrators and teachers welcomed my support in facilitating additional Common Core training sessions.

CCSS lesson plan templates. Having prepared CCSS exemplar lessons for the teachers, I understood how time-consuming the process was to prepare close reading lessons, which are at the heart of the new Common Core literacy standards. The teachers felt they did not have enough time to adequately prepare close reading lesson plans and to research and find the complex text resources to use in those lessons (Journal, November 11, 2013). I also realized teachers needed additional instructional modeling and district-prepared exemplar lessons to attain a greater comfort level in teaching close reading Common Core lessons. Therefore, I created lesson plan templates for the district-prepared CCSS exemplar lessons. These templates proved to be an important tool in building capacity in teachers to effectively implement the CCSS exemplar lessons and incorporated the text-dependent questions, complex texts, and culminating writing assignments used in the district CCSS training. I frontloaded introductory material in the templates to build appropriate background knowledge with students, such as lesson hooks, enduring understandings, and vocabulary instruction routines. The vocabulary instruction routines considered academic vocabulary instruction, as well as content-specific vocabulary instruction. For instance, teachers were able to choose both types of vocabulary words to teach explicitly through the various complex texts. I encouraged teachers to repeat instruction of academic language vocabulary in order for their students to master the meanings of these words

which they would encounter again in other texts. However, I considered teacher choice and flexibility (Journal, October 14, 2013). Teachers appreciated having the front-loaded lesson plan templates prepared for them, because it provided an easy way for them to infuse new instructional strategies into their teaching. Principals supported the development of these templates and encouraged teachers to use them.

Infusing complex text and developing appropriate instructional activities. Also, many teachers still did not fully understand how to choose appropriate grade-level complex text or how to design rigorous instructional activities around that text. Because the teachers expressed concern about how to choose complex text to accompany the literature they were currently using in class, I researched and paired various pieces of literature with complex text passages for each level of secondary English classes. In addition, I noted themes and readability levels of these texts, which provided additional information to teachers on the appropriateness of texts they had used in the past and would be using in future lessons.

In addition, teachers did not feel they had the time to research and find appropriate complex text to be used in their instruction. Nor had they been trained in how to appropriately determine and locate complex text using the three determining factors: quantitative (readability and grade-level appropriateness), qualitative (content analysis and levels of meaning), and reader and task (reader experiences and motivation). Therefore, I decided to assist teachers in locating and pairing appropriate informational texts (Journal, September 2, 2013). I shared various rubrics with the teachers, which would help them evaluate the texts they used in class. These rubrics addressed levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, knowledge demands: life experiences, knowledge demands: cultural and literary, and knowledge demands: content and discipline knowledge. The research I conducted in locating and pairing the complex

texts enabled me to give teachers more time to become familiar with the texts and to incorporate them into their close reading lesson plans.

I also decided I would continue to provide suggestions for complex text resources for teachers through email communication and the facilitation of additional PD opportunities (Journal, September 16, 2013). I discovered it was beneficial for me to do some of the initial Common Core lesson plan research, because teachers appreciated the support and were more inclined to expand and use the lessons.

Leadership Vision

Some areas of support were a bit more challenging to navigate between teacher wants and needs and leadership vision. One of those areas was leadership vision. Administrators had one perception of instructional leadership, and teachers had a different view of instructional leadership and support. The administrators had specific viewpoints about instructional leadership and how I could help support teachers in the implementation of the CCSS, including shared leadership, spending time on campus, building instructional leadership capacity, a positive school culture, and modeling professional learning.

Shared leadership. Both of the principals were willing to share instructional leadership responsibilities with me and often did so. Principals Allen and Jones believed the principal was the primary instructional leader in a school, but they also felt they must share this leadership with other staff members and build capacity at all levels: other administrators, instructional staff developers, and teachers. For example, Ms. Allen stated, "You also try to help build leadership capacity for the people who possibly don't have those strengths. You help put them in positions and team them with people, so they're constantly learning and building" (J. Allen, Interview). Ms. Jones is also willing to share instructional leadership responsibilities with staff developers

who have gained the respect of the staff and demonstrated they care enough about the school, staff, and students to learn about them.

> Knowing what is specific for that school will help you gain the respect and trust of the staff. She [the instructional staff developer] actually bothered to learn or he actually bothered to learn about us, what our students are like and what our needs are before they walked in the door. I think that's pretty important. (W. Jones, Interview)

These principals were very supportive of my work with teachers and encouraged me to assume more leadership responsibilities at their schools.

Spending time on campus. The principals also shared it was important, in sharing instructional leadership responsibilities, for staff developers to spend as much time as possible on campus in order to build professional relationships with staff, to better understand the instructional needs of the staff, and to provide more timely support to teachers who are in the midst of Common Core implementation. In their opinion, additional time on campus would help the staff developer to be more effective as an instructional leader. To illustrate this viewpoint, Ms. Jones stated, "The time to prepare, come to the school, follow up on what the school needs, doing all that [is important]. Not just, 'I'm going to go through these ten topic items with you and I'll see you two weeks from Thursday'" (W. Jones, Interview). I tried to spend time on a regular basis on their campuses in order to build effective relationships with staff and provide more consistent support.

Building instructional leadership capacity. Director Wright, too, saw the importance of building leadership capacity in other staff members. However, the process she used to build capacity was slightly different than that of the principals, who interacted with instructional staff developers on a regular basis. She envisioned leadership capacity being built in a more structured and hierarchical manner. She worked regularly with principals and attempted to build instructional leadership abilities in this group. In addition, she mentioned the district mentoring

program, which pairs sitting assistant principals with principals who are strong instructional

leaders. These assistant principals actually spend time on campus shadowing principals, and the

principals are able to share insight into their thinking about instructional leadership issues.

Furthermore, Director Wright recognized the district's apparent lack of depth in developing

instructional leaders from the ranks of teachers and staff developers.

> We're willing to allow people to become assistant principals who really may not
> yet have an idea of how to be an instructional leader. We are not necessarily
> building capacity at all the levels we need to be building capacity in. It seems to me
> we have attacked one level of building capacity. We know assistant principals
> become principals. Who become assistant principals? Teachers and staff developers
> become assistant principals. How do we go down into a lower, deeper level to then
> build that, too? I think we need to do more of that. (S. Wright, Interview)

This slightly different perspective on instructional leadership impacted my support of ELA

teachers in the implementation of the Common Core, in that I had more freedom at the school

level to design strategic PD and insist on teachers making the instructional shifts necessary than I

did at the district level. In fact, the principals often asked me to work with specific teachers and

make sure they were using the appropriate curriculum and infusing effective teaching practices.

However, functioning at the district level and communicating new directives and implementing

revised processes required me to move within more structured channels in a structured hierarchy,
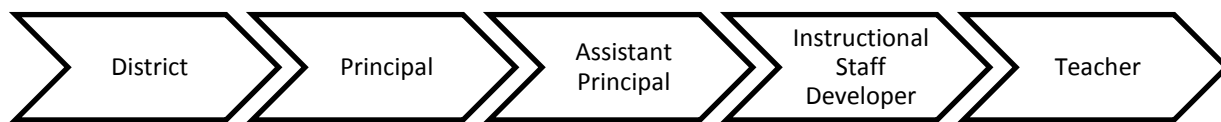
as illustrated in Figure 4-2.

Figure 4-2. Structured channel of communication

Positive school culture. A positive school culture is necessary for any type of

educational reform to take place, including the implementation of the CCSS (Doll, 2010). Both

principals, as well as the district administrator, recognized the importance of building a positive

school culture. They shared it was vital in helping to develop other instructional leaders in the

school and should be a consideration when staff developers come on campus to work with

various teachers. In fact, Director Wright defined strong instructional leaders as those who create

a positive culture and guard it against anything which would degrade it.

> An instructional leader who takes ownership…works very, very hard to create that culture, guards it, is very vigilant about guarding it, and immediately addresses things which work against the culture…I am talking about a very great and strong leader…who builds those leadership skills in everybody. (S. Wright, Interview)

This culture of learning was evident in staff and student learning opportunities, as well as in the

shared leadership opportunities available to me. Both Principal Allen and Principal Jones gave

me increasing leadership responsibilities during this study, such as facilitating staff PD and

including me as a member of the school-based leadership team. As a result, the instructional

support they wanted me to provide was much broader than which the district expected me to

provide, which was limited to focused support in implementing the CCSS.

Modeling professional learning. Another factor I realized was important in a positive

school culture and promoted growth as an instructional leader was that of the principal modeling

participation in professional learning opportunities. Principal Allen modeled personal

participation in PD and encouraged me to facilitate various training sessions for her staff.

> I would say I model professional learning through our faculty meetings. I feel I try to make them informative…I model by attending professional development myself, and bringing back that information to them and sharing the importance of why I go to monthly meetings with the superintendent, why I have my monthly level meetings (J. Allen, Interview).

She stated she felt modeling was key in getting staff buy-in for any professional learning

opportunities offered on campus.

The teacher view of instructional leadership was slightly more individualized and consisted primarily of classroom-level and personal instructional support. However, addressing their basic Common Core teaching needs gave me an opportunity to grow as an instructional leader through building capacity in teachers by encouraging them to tackle the close reading lessons on their own (with feedback support from me) and to have a more global perspective on instructional leadership and support.

Clear and Consistent Communication

One of the most challenging areas I had to navigate between teacher needs and wants and the vision of leaders was that of communication. I realized communication between the district and the school regarding the CCSS must be clear and consistent and tried to regularly communicate with district personnel, principals, and teachers regarding various aspects of the CCSS implementation process. Communication was part of my job as a district instructional staff developer in supporting ELA teachers at two high schools which had no embedded literacy coach. This communication differed among the recipients: district, principals, and teachers.

- District – Communication originated with the district and moved to various recipients, who ultimately conveyed messages to teachers.
- Principals – Communication originated with principals but could also be conveyed by me, as the principal's extension of leadership and as an expert in the area of Common Core implementation. These messages were filtered through the local school context (SIP and school-specific needs).
- Teachers – Teachers received messages from many different sources and sometimes struggled with the application and relevance of that message in their own specific context.

I served as a filter for all of the information which was shared with the various recipients. In essence, I created an additional line of communication, in which the principal and I collaborated on how to most effectively communicate the district message to teachers.

In working with the teachers, I realized the process for delivering the CCSS exemplar lessons was different from last year's process. Therefore, clearer communication was needed if the district wanted more widespread participation and less resistance from teachers in implementing the lessons. These teachers needed additional clarification on the revised process. I reflected on this concept in my personal journal. "Getting instructional staff buy-in (literacy coaches and teachers) is a tedious process which requires consistent and clear communication, sometimes repeating the same message." The principals were instrumental in facilitating clear communication with the teachers. Even though I often had to repeat the message to teachers, they eventually began to understand the district vision and gain a greater comfort level in the Common Core implementation process.

In light of the uncertainties regarding expectations and specifics of implementing the Common Core, I decided to continue to increase my content knowledge regarding the new standards and our district's direction in implementing them. This helped me facilitate clearer communication. "I will continue to stay abreast of current and state and district expectations regarding implementation of the CCSS" (Journal, September 30, 2013).I also incorporated this into my next steps, concentrating on the importance of clear and consistent communication while promoting a positive message about the district's Common Core implementation plan. "I will continue to consistently communicate with teachers about district expectations and current trends in the implementation of the CCSS" (Journal, October 21, 2013). The teachers appreciated having consistent communication regarding district directives and expectations, and the principals trusted me to keep them in the loop on Common Core implementation progress.

The navigation between the two areas of teacher wants and needs and leadership vision was sometimes challenging. However, for the most part, I was able to move back and forth

between the two areas because all of the participants agreed student needs should be the number one priority. For example, Principal Allen stated, "What's best for students--that's what we are here for. We have to meet their needs" (J. Allen, Interview). Ms. Smith noted she needed "to know her students and their needs, their points of strength and points of weakness" (C. Smith, Interview). In addition, Director Wright mentioned "you filter all of your decisions through what's best for students" (S. Wright, Interview). In spite of any challenges in navigating the areas of teacher needs and wants and leadership vision, the overall focus on student learning helped me to find the right balance.

In the next chapter, I will discuss implications of this study for my role as an aspiring instructional leader, for school principals and instructional leaders who might benefit from increased knowledge in the area of building leadership capacity in others and sharing leadership responsibilities, and for district administrators who design instructional leadership entry programs.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

Through this study I wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership changes I had to make as I transitioned from the role of a staff developer to that of an instructional leader who works as a member of the school leadership team in effecting a change in teaching practice and implementing a school-wide instructional improvement plan. The main research question which guided the study is: In what ways can I, as an instructional staff developer, provide effective instructional leadership to secondary English teachers as they implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? I also sought to examine how I could combine the instructional leadership vision from district and school leaders to refine my role and provide appropriate support for teachers, as well as which instructional leadership strategies would most effectively support teachers in implementing the CCSS.

My goal in conducting this practitioner research project was to examine effective leadership skills and apply them in my current role as a staff developer and instructional leader while serving as a member of a school-based instructional leadership team responsible for supporting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS. I wanted to be able to increase my knowledge of instructional leadership strategies and enhance my support to teachers as our district moves toward full implementation of the Common Core.

All participants in the study were employees of my school district and included the following: a central office curriculum administrator who oversees Common Core implementation in the high schools in our district, two principals of the largest high schools in our district, and three English language arts (ELA) teachers from these two high schools. The three teachers who participated in the study have completed multiple district-provided trainings regarding implementation of the CCSS.

In my role as a staff developer and a central element in the research process, I provided instructional support to ELA teachers in implementing the Common Core through collaborative lesson-planning, lesson presentation, and observation and feedback sessions. These were activities accomplished as part of my job; but since my study concentrated on my own practice, and not a change in teacher instructional practice, data collection around this work with teachers was recorded in the form of a personal journal used to record instructional support activities and reflections on my work with these ELA teachers implementing the CCSS into their teaching. I also collected data in the form of a semi-structured interview with each of the participants listed above.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted over the course of one semester and, therefore, provided information for a limited amount of time. Additionally, participation in the study was limited to three teachers, two principals, and one district administrator. Both of the principals of these high-performing schools in the northern and more affluent part of our district were appointed to their positions within the last five years. The teachers with whom I have worked for several years, both as a literacy coach and staff developer, were openly receptive to my support as an instructional staff developer. Since the geographic and demographic alignment of the schools in our district finds more high-performing and less racially-diverse schools in the northern part of our district, a broader cross-section of schools and teachers in our district could have yielded a wider range of information on principal views of shared leadership and teacher concerns in implementing the Common Core.

In addition, many of the responses from the teachers I interviewed regarding their thoughts on instructional leadership and the types of support an instructional leader should provide to them seemed to be based solely on their individual needs and perceptions. Responses

103

included ideas such as modeling lessons, co-planning, and providing lesson plan templates, exemplar lessons, and complex text resources. If I had asked additional probing questions guiding teachers to a broader view of instructional leadership, perhaps I would have received less self-interested responses from the teachers who participated in my study.

<div align="center">

Relationship to Prior Research

</div>

The literature I used to frame my study concentrated on Common Core implementation, successful literacy instruction and the instructional shifts required to effectively implement the CCSS, and the concept of shared instructional leadership in helping teachers make the necessary changes in instructional practice.

Implementation of the CCSS

Barnes and Slate (2013) stated that educators cannot prepare students to be ready for college and/or careers using the same instructional strategies and practices for each student. They felt instructional leaders must consider the needs of students with particular academic challenges: English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, gifted students, and students entering school with inadequate exposure to books and rich learning experiences. Zygouris-Coe (2012) also believed an extra effort will need to be made for students with disabilities if these students are to engage with the more rigorous instructional activities associated with the CCSS. Through my research, I discovered that the teachers I interviewed concurred with this idea and felt students who struggle academically will need scaffolded instruction. For example, Ms. Miller stated,

> I do foresee challenges along the way, because we're really working with students
> who have not done anything like this [Common Core work]. Trying to get them to
> the level where they can do this on their own or to even accept it or to be open to it,
> I think is [going to be] difficult. (B. Miller, Interview)

The teachers felt instruction needs to be scaffolded or differentiated in order for lower-achieving students to be able to comprehend the meanings in the complex text they read and to adequately answer text-dependent questions and complete culminating writing assignments.

Another issue complicating the effective implementation of the CCSS, which Armstrong (2013) noted, is that of adequate teacher planning and preparation time. In Armstrong's opinion, teachers will need a sufficient amount of time to collaborate with their peers and participate in collegial learning groups, including professional learning communities (PLCs), lesson study cycles, and collaborative lesson planning sessions. Ms. Brown felt pushed for time as they were expected to infuse close reading lessons as part of the CCSS implementation and felt it would take up all of her lesson preparation time to make sure she was appropriately teaching to the Common Core standards in the manner the district wanted her to this year (A. Brown, Interview). The teachers needed additional time for planning the close reading lessons, text-dependent questions, and culminating writing assignments.

In addition, all of the participants in my study agreed that teacher collaboration was vital in the effective implementation of the CCSS and making the necessary instructional shifts. For example, Director Wright believed there were many paths to effective teacher collaboration. "All of those things [lesson study, common planning, PLC work] can actually get you to improved lessons and analyzing student work" (S. Wright, Interview). Ms. Brown felt it was easier to work with other teachers who taught the same type classes as she did so they could come up with ideas which could eventually be shared in each other's classes (A. Brown, Interview). Teachers wanted to collaborate with other teachers in planning Common Core lessons, finding complex texts which correlate with their grade level curriculum, and sharing ideas about integrating close reading lessons into their instruction.

Zygouris-Coe (2012) also noted it would be vital to develop appropriate professional learning opportunities for teachers regarding Common Core implementation. In addition, Jenkins and Agamba (2013) believed teachers must thoroughly understand the CCSS if they are to effectively infuse the new standards into their instruction. Ms. Miller, one of the teachers who participated in my study, believed teachers "were going to need to get proper training to help our students to rise to the level of being able to read complex text, being able to associate various texts from cross curriculum" (B. Miller, Interview).

Director Wright believed additional training and differentiated professional learning opportunities were going to be necessary as the district moves forward in full implementation of the CCCSS. "We want to make sure we as a curriculum instruction team have all those lifelines available to teachers wherever they are" (S. Wright, Interview). Even though the teachers had attended multiple training sessions, they still felt they needed additional modeling of Common Core exemplar lessons and further training in how to appropriately determine and locate complex text resources using the three determining factors: quantitative, qualitative, and reader and task.

Shifts in Literacy Instruction Required in the CCSS

The New York State Department of Education (2012) listed several instructional shifts, which would be necessary as teachers implement the Common Core in their classrooms, including increasing literacy knowledge in the various content areas, requiring students to base their answers on textual evidence, incorporating increasingly complex texts, and helping students to build an appropriate academic vocabulary. Student Achievement Partners (2013) outlined similar instructional shifts such as building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts, reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, and regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary.

I discovered through my research that the aforementioned instructional shifts were necessary to help teachers effectively infuse the Common Core into their lessons. The teachers who participated in my study continued to struggle with the infusion of complex text into their curriculum and the incorporation of text-dependent questions. Their instruction needed to be scaffolded in order for lower-level students to be able to comprehend the meanings in the complex text they read and to adequately answer text-dependent questions. The teachers were overwhelmed at the prospect of having to make the shifts in instruction necessary for implementation of the CCSS: balancing informational and literary text, building knowledge in the disciplines, staircase of complexity, text-based answers, writing from sources, and teaching academic vocabulary. I reflected on this instructional shift challenge in my personal journal.

> I will infuse the writing of text-dependent questions into future professional development opportunities for teachers and provide samples for them to use. In addition, I will continue to encourage teachers to attend the professional learning opportunities provided by the district in close reading of text, unpacking the Common Core, and understanding the shifts in instruction necessitated by implementation of the CCSS. (Journal, September 16, 2013)

The instructional shifts necessitated in implementation of the Common Core are rather significant and not easily adopted by most teachers. I needed to continue to learn more about the CCSS so that I could provide additional support to the teachers in making these instructional shifts necessary in delivering the close reading lessons to address the new standards.

Instructional Leadership Theory

According to various researchers, shared instructional leadership is an effective strategy which improves teaching practices through collaboration between administrators and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment matters and enhances student learning (Abbott & McKnight, 2010; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990; Knapp et al, 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart, 1993; Marks and Printy, 2003). Other researchers promoted the use of an

instructional leadership team to help the principal maximize his or her instructional leadership impact on teaching practices and help establish a positive culture of learning in their school through collegial discussions and collaboration (DuFour, 2002; Dumay, 2009; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Kelly, 2010; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989).

In my research study, the value of shared leadership was confirmed. In fact, Director Wright described the leadership development program our district uses (building capacity in current principals and assistant principals as instructional leaders), but she also noted the district must do more to develop future instructional leaders (those who would become assistant principals). "We are not necessarily building capacity at all the levels we need to be building capacity in" (S. Wright, Interview). Principal Allen supported the concept of shared leadership and felt instructional staff developers should be part of the administrative team. "They [instructional staff developers] should be embedded into the administrative team so they hear about what the issues are, hear about what's going on, in order for them to be effective" (J. Allen, Interview). Both principals provided me, as the instructional staff developer, many different instructional leadership opportunities, such as advising them on teaching assignments, course offerings, and guidance in implementing a school-based literacy improvement plan.

The literature did not mention, however, the transitional process of moving from the role of staff developer to instructional leader and the skills and strategies necessary for aspiring leaders to effectively make this transition. Nor did the literature address the lines of communication which were necessary to adequately communicate district vision to site-based administrators and teachers in a clear and consistent manner. In addition, the literature and research I reviewed did not comment on the tensions which resulted for a staff developer who

108

had to balance the vision of instructional leaders (district and site-based) with the needs and wants of teachers assigned the task of implementing the Common Core into their instruction.

School Change Theory

My role, as noted previously, was a complicated one in navigating between the needs and wants of teachers and the vision of leadership. This navigation, illustrated as a balance, relates to Fullan's (2007) theory of instructional leadership and change. Teachers deal with multidimensional diversity, excess paperwork, and continuous reform and changes to instructional practice. Administrators, on the other hand, face the challenges of being responsive to staff needs, implementing district directives, facilitating greater student achievement, and exhibiting the traits of an instructional leader. If change is implemented in a top-down method, teachers may not readily accept the reform efforts and may withhold commitment to change. If change is implemented in a solely bottom-up approach, it may not be successful without common instructional vision. The most successful approach to implementing change is that of a combined top-down and bottom-up plan, in which collaboration between teachers and administrators takes place prior to, during, and after implementation of the reform. Although the new standards had to be implemented, it was extremely important for me to listen to the concerns of teachers and clearly communicate to school administrators the realistic challenges and concerns facing teachers if effective implementation of the CCSS was to be achieved.

<div align="center">

Implications of Research

</div>

This study has significant implications for my personal practice as a staff developer and aspiring instructional leader, district leaders who develop systems to build leadership capacity at various levels, and principals who would want to maximize the extent of their instructional leadership.

Personal Practice

As an instructional staff developer, this study provided insight for me on how I could become an effective instructional leader while still providing support to teachers in this role. The teachers, although they had participated in a great deal of Common Core training and had close reading exemplar lessons modeled for them in their classrooms, were still concerned with rudimentary instructional tasks and preparatory teaching activities such as locating complex text resources and planning close reading lessons, even though they had a detailed lesson planning template with which to work. One way in which I, and others in the same role, can become a more effective instructional staff developer is to build capacity in teachers and help them to become more self-sufficient in implementing the CCCSS.

Another implication for my personal practice is that I can grow and develop as an instructional leader if I continue to align myself with principals who are open to the concept of shared leadership. The two principals who participated in my study were extremely supportive of my work with teachers and demonstrated their support by giving me additional leadership responsibilities such as advising them on teacher placement and course offerings, facilitating school-wide professional learning opportunities, and including me as a member of the school-based leadership team.

In addition, my research provided me with another implication for my practice in the area of communication. Typical channels of communication in our district can be described as follows:

District → Principal → Teacher

District → Instructional Staff Developer → Teacher

District → Teacher

An interesting result of this study is that my role regarding Common Core related communication has become that of a filter, working with the principal to clarify and simplify district messages before being delivered to teachers. It was also important to share teacher concerns with administrators in an effort to respond to and accommodate their needs and convey ideas for more effective implementation of the new standards and increased student engagement with the more rigorous work. Principals wanted to know how they could better support teachers, either by providing better access to Common Core materials, facilitating additional professional learning opportunities at the school, or giving teachers time to collaborate with one another on planning close reading lessons. In essence, I created a new pathway for communication at the school level, which gave me an opportunity to communicate teacher concerns to principals; however, this did not occur at the District level.
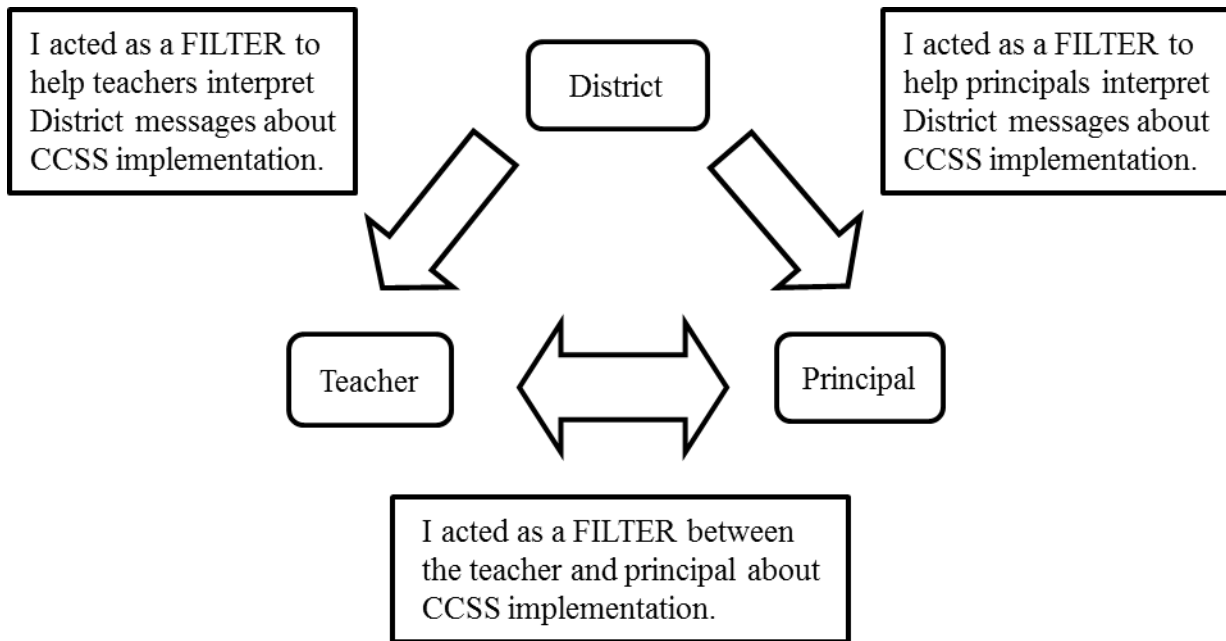
I acted as a FILTER to help teachers interpret District messages about CCSS implementation.

District

I acted as a FILTER to help principals interpret District messages about CCSS implementation.

Teacher

Principal

I acted as a FILTER between the teacher and principal about CCSS implementation.

Figure 5-1. New pathway for communication

Therefore, it will be important for me to thoroughly understand the District's vision regarding CCSS implementation while still building relationships with principals in an effort to find

practical applications for teachers. This process will ensure more effective and widespread implementation of the new standards, as well as produce consistent and clear communication between the district and schools.

District Leaders

My research also has implications for our district as they develop instructional leadership programs and attempt to build leadership capacity at all levels. As Director Wright noted, our district has programs to develop assistant principals and principals as instructional leaders. However, we do not have sufficient programs in place to develop instructional staff developers as assistant principals or to prepare classroom teachers to become teacher leaders who facilitate collaborative learning groups and serve as instructional experts. Perhaps if our district implemented a leadership team concept, more instructional leaders could be developed at all levels: classroom, school, and district.

Another implication of this research for district leaders is in the need to provide additional instructional support for high-performing schools with principals who believe in the shared instructional leadership concept. The high-performing schools in our district, as evidenced through this study, receive the least amount of onsite instructional support. However, if the district were to allocate a full-time instructional staff developer to these schools for the purpose of building instructional capacity and developing teacher leaders, the schools could become laboratory learning environments focused on enhancing instructional practice and improving student learning. Teachers and administrators from around the district could observe shared leadership in action and view exemplary instruction taking place.

Exploring the communication loop process, which involves multi-directional communication between administration and teachers, is another implication for our district. District administration has demonstrated a willingness to conduct focus groups to discuss various

issues such as changes in instructional practice, increasing the effectiveness of instruction, and enhancing student achievement efforts. Teachers can share valuable insight into challenges and successful practices in effective implementation of the CCSS. In addition, teachers can be included on curriculum writing and textbook adoption committees, which will give them a greater voice and vital role in helping to effectively implement the new standards.

Principals

An implication of my research for principals is that shared leadership and using the instructional leadership team concept has the potential to maximize their leadership impact and help promote a collegial learning environment in their schools. By clearly communicating their instructional vision to members of a site-based team and sharing leadership responsibilities with them, principals can extend their instructional leadership through team members and provide appropriate support to teachers in the effective implementation of the Common Core.

University Instructional Leadership Programs

Considering that the concept of an instructional leadership team is a relatively new approach, another implication of my research is that those university educational leadership programs which do not already incorporate courses on collaborative or shared leadership could do so. This additional coursework would provide these particular educational leadership programs with more relevant learning opportunities for students and enable them to more effectively support principals in fulfilling their instructional vision.

Future Research

Because communication seemed to be critical in the implementation of Common Core in this study, additional research should be conducted on communication loops and their role in successfully implementing educational reform and improving relationships between administrators and teachers. As implied in school change literature, top down change (such as the

113

implementation of the Common Core) should be accompanied by simultaneous bottom up actions and pressure. Therefore, communication loops, as opposed to linear lines of communication, serve a vital part in the change process.

Additional research on collaborative leadership teams should also be conducted. Collaborative instructional leadership teams, in which each member of the team shares responsibilities, have the potential to maximize the instructional leadership impact of administrators, produce more effective instruction, and enhance student achievement. Potential members of the instructional leadership team include site-based administrators, instructional staff developers and coaches, teacher leaders, and other instructional personnel who support student achievement efforts.

Summary

As an instructional staff developer who works with ELA and reading teachers in infusing effective teaching practices into their instruction, facilitates professional learning opportunities for the district, and is responsible for supporting the instructional needs and managing classroom resources for the reading program in 13 high schools, I am cognizant of the need for additional training for teachers as our district moves toward full implementation of the CCSS. I regularly facilitate PD sessions, and the teachers who participate in these sessions have shared their appreciation for well-organized trainings, relevant and timely opportunities to use the material from the sessions in their instruction, sessions which focus on specific curricular content and provide opportunities for collaboration with their peers, and follow-up support in their individual schools.

I am also aware of the need for shared leadership responsibilities if schools are to successfully move forward in the full implementation of the CCSS. On their own, school administrators cannot provide the instructional leadership necessary to adequately support

teachers in the Common Core implementation process. An instructional leadership team, comprised of the principal, assistant principals, staff developers, and teacher leaders, is necessary to fulfill the district's instructional vision in teaching to the new standards and in implementing a school-wide improvement plan. Therefore, my goal in conducting this study was to research and improve my pedagogical knowledge of literacy content and effective instructional leadership skills. I also wanted to reflect on how I could be a more effective member of a school-based instructional leadership team responsible for supporting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS. By studying my own practice as a staff developer and aspiring instructional leader and by examining my district's implementation of the Common Core, I believe the results will increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

APPENDIX A
OUTLINE OF COLLABORATIVE LESSON PLANNING CYCLE

Rubin (2009) states a person becomes a collaborative leader upon accepting responsibility for assembling a group of stakeholders to reach a shared goal. A collaborative leader uses behavior, communication, and organizational resources to affect the perspective, beliefs, and behaviors of others, and relationship management is the most basic task of a collaborative leader. In fact, Rubin (2009) uses the term collaborative leadership interchangeably with that of building and maintaining relationships. A collaborative instructional leader will build meaningful relationships with teachers in order to effect educational reform and positively impact instructional practice. This is especially true as teachers begin to experience the instructional shifts necessary to effectively implement the CCSS: (a) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction, (b) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and information, and (c) regular practice with complex text and its academic language (engageNY.org, 2012). Teachers will more readily embrace these instructional shifts if they are supported by a caring and collaborative instructional leader who provides them with the tools and encouragement necessary to infuse these changes into their teaching. The effective instructional leader will influence teachers toward successful implementation of the CCSS and increasing knowledge of their teaching practice and enhancing student achievement (Printy, Marks, & Bowers, 2009).

Keeping in mind the importance of collaboration, the first step in researching the support I need to provide ELA teachers in the implementation of the CCSS is a collaborative planning session to determine Common Core support priorities. During this initial planning session, I will share instructional strategies and content pedagogy with the teacher, as necessary. We will then discuss Common Core instruction responsibilities, which will need to be accomplished prior to

the close-reading lesson planning session. These next steps could be reading over the standards, locating course-specific complex text resources, reviewing CCSS exemplar lessons, or studying the guidelines for creating text-dependent questions and rigorous culminating tasks.

Close-Reading Lesson Planning Session

The next stage in the collaborative lesson-planning cycle is a session to design instruction around a close analytic reading of a piece of complex text and create text-dependent questions to accompany the text. I will work with teacher participants, who are already familiar with the lesson-planning process, for approximately 2-3 hours during using district-provided resources and adhering to the following planning procedure used by the district:

1. Select a shorter specific passage from an appropriately rigorous piece of grade-level text with which students must engage.

2. Select an accompanying multimedia piece which will initially involve students.

3. Determine core understandings and key ideas of the passage.

4. Identify Tier 2 (General Academic Vocabulary) words in the passage.

5. Identify Tier 3 (Discipline Specific) words in the passage.

6. Create 2-3 text-dependent questions, which will require students to gather evidence from the passage to answer appropriately.

7. Align text-dependent questions to specific CCSS.

8. Create a culminating writing task, which will provide students an opportunity to write in response to the test after close study.

Classroom Presentation of Close-Reading Lesson

The next step in the research process will be presenting the collaboratively-planned close reading lesson, with accompanying text-dependent questions and the culminating writing task.

This classroom instruction, which will last approximately 1-2 class periods, will provide data on the confidence level of the teacher in making the instructional shifts necessary in effectively implementing the CCSS, as well as vital information on the success of the close-reading lesson itself.

Immediately after delivery of the lesson and in preparation for the debriefing session, I will record personal reflections on the lesson, including notes on its design and apparent effectiveness, student responses and perceived understanding of lesson concepts, and possible instructional modifications.

Debriefing Session

After the classroom observation of the teacher delivering the collaboratively-planned close analytic reading lesson, I will conduct a debriefing session with each of the teacher participants. These sessions will last approximately 30 minutes and will include a discussion of specific Common Core instructional components used during the lesson. The following questions will guide the debriefing session:

1. How did the close-reading lesson go today?

2. Do you feel the lesson objectives were successfully achieved? Why/why not? What data supports your answer?

3. What do you feel worked well and what would you revise if you were to teach this lesson again to the same class?

4. Do you feel the text was appropriately complex for the students? Were students able to provide textual evidence in answering the questions? What data supports your answer?

5. As you reflect on this close analytic reading lesson, what insights can you provide on the implementation of CCSS?

6. What do you want to continue to work on?

7. What supports do you need to continue to improve as we roll out CCSS?

8. What else can I do to support you as you do this?

9. Is anyone else supporting you? Who? What are they doing to help?

10. What shall we do next to support you?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR DISTRICT LEADER

1. Please describe your educational experience--How long were you a teacher? How long have you been an administrator?

2. What challenges do you see related to the blending of the NGSSS and the CSSS, followed by full implementation of the CCSS and their routine infusion into classroom instruction by secondary teachers

   a. …for site-based instructional staff developers/leaders?

   b. …for teachers?

3. How is the district addressing those challenges in its strategic support

   a. …for site-based instructional staff developers/leaders?

   b. …for teachers?

4. Describe the educational setting and culture in which professional growth for instructional staff can most effectively take place.

5. What types of professional learning experiences do you consider important for staff to effectively implement the CCSS? Why?

6. What do you consider to be an instructional leader's role in effecting educational reform?

7. What types of support do you think the school district needs to provide to site-based instructional staff developers in order for them to be effective instructional leaders?

8. What qualities and skills should instructional leaders have in order to best support teachers in implementing CCSS?

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPALS

1. Please describe your educational experience. How long were you a teacher? How long

   have you been an administrator?

2. Do you anticipate (or have you experienced) any challenges related to the blending of the

   NGSSS and the CCSS, followed by full implementation of the Common Core State

   Standards?

3. Have you experienced any challenges in supporting teachers in the instructional shifts

   related to CCSS? If so, please describe them.

4. What is your vision for instructional leadership related to CCSS implementation?

   a. In what ways does your vision include an instructional leadership team (vs. one

      central leader)?

5. What types of support do you need to have from the school district to effectively

   implement the CCSS with the assistance of an instructional staff developer?

6. What qualities and skills do you need to see in the instructional staff developer assigned

   to your school?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

1. Please describe your teaching experience. How did you arrive at your present teaching

    assignment? Number of years as a teacher? Various teaching assignments?

2. Describe where your school is in relation to CCSS roll out.

3. Describe where you are, personally, in relation to CCSS roll out.

4. What is the role of an instructional leadership team in helping you implement CCSS?

    a. Specifically, what should an instructional staff developer do to help you

        implement CCSS?

5. Describe your personal experience with district instructional support and implementation

    of the CCSS.

6. What is your vision of instructional leadership? What essential skills, abilities and

    attitudes does an instructional leader need to be successful supporting teachers?

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Instructional Leadership to Enhance Implementation of Common Core State Standards in Secondary English

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to more thoroughly understand the shifts necessary as I transition from the role of reading coach to that of instructional staff developer/leader. In light of the current emphasis on implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I will be gathering input, through interviews with district personnel who are responsible for planning the implementation of CCSS, secondary principals who have been recommended as strong instructional leaders, and English teachers who will be participating in exemplar CCSS lessons to provide a deeper understanding of how I can be a more supportive instructional leader in effectively implementing CCSS in the high schools where I operate as an instructional staff developer.

What you will be asked to do in this study: If you elect to participate in this study, you will participate in one 45 minute interview describing your perception of the qualities, skills, and abilities necessary for an instructional leader at the secondary level, deliver a CCSS exemplar lesson, and participate in a 30-minute debriefing/follow-up interview after delivery of the lesson. Only the researcher will have access to interview recordings.

Time required: Participation in this study will require approximately 2½ hours of your time: fifteen minutes to review this letter and study parameters, one 45-minute interview, 1 hour of class time in delivering a CCSS exemplar lesson, and a 30-minute debriefing/follow-up interview after the lesson.

Risks and Benefits: There are no direct benefits or risks for you to participate in this study.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym during the interview process. The list connecting your name to the pseudonym will be kept in a locked file in the P.I.'s office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and there is no compensation to you for participating in this study.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have any questions about the study:
_____,
or my academic advisor, Dr. Alyson Adams, adamsa@coe.ufl.edu, College of Education, G-315 Norman Hall, P.O. Box 117052, Gainesville, FL, 32611, 352.273.4107.

Whom to contact about rights as a research participant in the study:
IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611; phone 352.392.0433

Agreement:
I have read the procedure described above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. I have received a copy of the informed consent document.

Participant: _____   Date:_____
Principal Investigator: _____   Date:_____

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abbott, C. J. & McKnight, K. (2010). Developing instructional leadership through collaborative learning. *Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 7*(2), 20-26.

Ackerman, R. & MacKenzie, S.V. (2006). Uncovering teacher leadership. *Educational Leadership, 63*(8), 66-70.

ACT, Inc. (2011). *The condition of college & career readiness*. Retrieved from www.act.org/readiness/2011.

Armstrong, A. (2013). Making time for Common Core implementation. *The Learning System, 8*(3), 6-7.

ASCD PDOnline. (2013). *Leadership: Implementing the Common Core State Standards*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Barnes, W. & Slate, J. R. (2013). College readiness is not one-size-fits-all. *Current Issues in Education, 16*(1), 1-13.

Barry, A. (2002). Reading strategies teachers say they use. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 46*(2), 132-141.

Barth, R. S. (2002). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 6-11.

Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. (2004). *Reading next-A Vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York.* New York: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Blase, J., & Blase J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 130-141.

Brown, S. & Kappes, L. (2012). Implementing the Common Core State Standards: A primer on close reading of text. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute Education & Society Program.

Campbell, D. (Ed.) (2012). *2012-2013 Secondary coaching model*. Largo, FL: PCSB, Secondary Reading and Language Arts Department.

Cantrell, S. C. & Hughes, H. K. (2008). Teacher efficacy and content literacy implementation: An exploration of the effects of extended professional development with coaching. *Journal of Literacy Research, 40*(1), 95-127.

Carlisle, J. F. & Rice, M. S. (2002). *Improving reading comprehension: Research-based principles and practices.* Timonium, MD: York Press.

Celikten, M. (2001). The instructional leadership tasks of high school assistant principals. *Journal of Educational Administration, 39*(1), 67-76.

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. L. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Coleman, D. & Pimentel, S. (2012). Revised publishers' criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and literacy, grades 3–12. Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

College readiness and the impact of course rigor. (2005). In *2005 ACT national profile report.* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/news/data/05/pdf/three.pdf.

Common Core State Standards. (2012). Washington, DC: Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Doll, B. (2010). Positive school climate. *Principal Leadership, 11*(4), 12-16.

Dozier, T. K. (2007). Turning good teachers into great leaders. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 54-58.

Drew, S. V. (2012). Open up the ceiling on the Common Core State Standards: Preparing students for 21st century literacy now. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 56*(4), 321–330.

DuFour, R. (2002). The learning-centered principal. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 12-15.

Dumay, X. (2009). Origins and consequences of schools' organizational structure for student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45*(4), 523-555.

Eamon, M. K. (2005). Social-demographic, school, neighborhood, and parenting influences on the academic achievement of Latino young adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34*(2), 163-174.

Eiler, L. H. & D'Amico, M. (2012). Essential leadership elements in implementing Common Core State Standards. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 78*(4), 46-50.

engageNY.org. (2012). *Pedagogical shifts demanded by the Common Core State Standards*. Albany, NY: New York Department of Education.

Fenton, B. (2009). New leaders for new schools: Forming aligned instructional leadership teams. *ASCD Express, 5*(4).

Fitzpatrick, C. & Solochek, J. S. (2013, June 7). Education commissioner calls flat FCAT scores "unacceptable." *Tampa Bay Times*. Retrieved from http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/students-in-pinellas-and-hillsborough-largely-below-state-average-on-fcat/2125381.

Florida Department of Education. (2013). *Revisions to school grades rule*. Department of Accountability, Research, and Measurement. Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/arm/rsg.asp.

Florida Department of Education. (2011). *College readiness: Postsecondary education readiness test (P.E.R.T.) overview and course advisement*.

Fullan, M. G. (2006). Change Theory: A force for school improvement. *Centre for Strategic Education, Series Paper 157*, 1-14.

Fullan, M. G. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. G. & Knight, J. (2011). Coaches as system leaders. *Educational Leadership, 69*(2), 50-53.

Ginsberg, M. B. & Murphy, D. (2002). How walkthroughs open doors. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 34-36.

Gonzales, L., Gunderson, J., & Wold, M. (2013). Linking Common Core and expanded learning. *Leadership, 42*(3), 18-22.

Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff development and the process of teacher change. *Educational Researcher, 15*(5), 5-12.

Hall, L. A. *(2005).* Teachers and content area reading: Attitudes, beliefs, and change. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21, 403–414.*

Hall, L. A., Burns, L. D., & Edwards, E. C. (2011). *Empowering struggling readers: Practices for the middle grades*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Heck, R., Larson, T. J., & Marcoulides, G. A. (1990). Instructional leadership and school achievement: Validation of a causal model. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 26*(2), 94-125.

Honig, M. I. (2012). District central office leadership as teaching: How central office administrators support principals' development as instructional leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(4), 733-774.

Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (1994). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 428-444). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jenkins, S. & Agamba, J. J. (2013). The missing link in the CCSS initiative: Professional development for implementation. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 17*(2), 69-80.

Kelley, C. (2010). *Advancing student learning through distributed instructional leadership: A toolkit for high school leadership teams.* Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

King, D. (2002). The changing shape of leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 61-63.

Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., Ford, B., Markholt, A., McLaughlin, M. W., Milliken, M., & Talbert, J. E. (2003). *Leading for learning sourcebook*. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Kohm, B. & Nance, B. (2009). Creating collaborative structures. *Educational Leadership, 67*(2), 67-72.

Kolosey, C. (2011). *Reading high school placement frequently asked questions*. Largo, FL: PCSB, Secondary Reading and Language Arts Department.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Doherty, M. L. (1989). Integration of climate and leadership: Examination of a neglected issue. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *74*, 546-553.

Krell, D. E. & Dana, N. F. (2012). Facilitating action research: A study of coaches, their experiences, and their reflections on leading teachers in the process of practitioner inquiry. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(5), 827-844.

Lawrence, S.A., Rabinowitz, R., & Perna, H. (2009). Reading instruction in secondary English language arts classrooms. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 48*(1), 39-64.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., Silins, H., & Dart, B. (1993). Using the appraisal of school leaders as an instrument for school restructuring. *Peabody Journal of Education, 68*(2), 85-109.

Lewis, C. C. & Hurd, J. (2011). *Lesson study step by step: How teacher learning communities improve instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lovett, G. E. (2013). Reading preparation of secondary ELA teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 57*(1), 1-11.

Marks, H. M. & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39, 370-397.

Marrongelle, K., Sztajn, P., & Smith, M. (2013). Scaling up professional development in an era of Common State Standards. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*(3), 202-211.

Maxfield, C. R. & Flumerfelt, S. (2009). The empowering principal: Leadership behaviors needed by effective principals as identified by emerging leaders and principals. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership, 2*(2), 39-48.

Mendez-Morse, S. (1991). The principal's role in the instructional process: Implications for at-risk students. *Issues about Change, 1*(2), 1-5.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (2013). *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The role of the secondary school leader*. Seattle, WA: Achieve, Inc.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Ness, M.K. (2009). Reading comprehension strategies in secondary content area classrooms: Teacher use of and attitudes towards reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Horizons*, *49*(2), 143–166.

New York State Department of Education. (2012). Pedagogical shifts demanded by the Common Core State Standards. Retrieved from http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/common-core-shifts.pdf.

Ohler, J. (2013). The uncommon core. *Educational Leadership, 70*(5), 42-46.

Orgill, M. (2007). Situated cognition. In G. M. Bodner & M. Orgill (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks for research in chemistry/science education* (pp. 187–203). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

PCSB (2013). *Instructional support model*. Largo, FL: PCSB, Department of High School Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

Porter, A., McMaken, J., Hwang, J., & Yang, R. (2011). Common Core Standards: The new U.S. intended curriculum. *Educational Researcher, 40*(3), 103-116.

Printy, S. M., Marks, H. M., & Bowers, A. J. (2009). Integrated leadership: How principals and teachers share transformational and instructional influence. *Journal of School Leadership, 19*(5), 504-532.

Putnam, S. M., Smith, L. L., & Cassady, J. C. (2009). Promoting change through professional development: The place of teacher intentionality in reading instruction. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 48*, 207-220.

Rentner, D. S. & Kober, N. (2012). Inadequate funding may complicate CCSS implementation. *Reading Today, 29*(6), 34.

Riddile, M. (2012). The CCSS and schoolwide instructional changes. *Principal Leadership, 12*(9), 88-90.

Robelen, E. W. (2013). Year 3 of implementing the Common Core State Standards: An overview of states' progress and challenges. *Education Week, 33*(1), 5.

Rubin, Hank. (2009). *Collaborative leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Santamaria, L. J. & Santamaria, A. P. (2012). *Applied critical leadership in education: Choosing change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shanahan, C. (2004). Teaching science through literacy. In T. Jetton & J. Dole (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 75–93). New York: The Guilford Press.

Silva, D. Y., Gimbert, B., & Nolan, J. F. (2000). Sliding the doors: Locking and unlocking the possibilities for teacher leadership. *Teachers College Record, 102*(4), 779-804.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2007). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 36*(1), 3-34.

Student Achievement Partners. (2013). *Common Core instructional shifts for English language arts/literacy*. Retrieved from http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Shifts%202%20 pager_091313.pdf.

Sturtevant, E., Duling, V., & Hall, R. (2001). "I've run a 4,000 person organization—and it's not nearly this intense": A three year case study of content literacy in high school mathematics. In E. Moje & D. O'Brien (Eds.), *Constructions of literacy: Studies of teaching and learning in and out of secondary schools* (pp. 77–103). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P., & May, H. (2010). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(1), 31-56.

Torres, M., Waddell, L., O'Connor, J., & Gonzalez, S. (2012). *13th grade: How Florida schools are failing to prepare graduates for college*. Tampa, FL: State Impact Florida.

Vacca, R. (2002). Making a difference in adolescents' school lives: Visible and invisible aspects of content area reading. In A. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed., pp. 184–204). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Vernon-Dotson, L.J., Belcastro, K., Crivelli, J., Lesako, K., Rodrigues, R., Shoats, S., & Trainor, L. (2009). Commitment of leadership teams: A district-wide initiative driven by teacher leaders. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership, 1*(1), 24-38.

Vogt, M. E., and B. A. Shearer. 2007. *Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world*. 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson.

Whitaker, B. (1997). Instructional leadership and principal visibility. *The Clearinghouse, 70*(3), 155-156.

Zygouris-Coe, V. I. (2012). Disciplinary literacy and the Common Core State Standards. *Top Language Disorders, 32*(1), 35-50.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen's major was curriculum and instruction. Prior to enrolling in the doctoral program, she focused on secondary literacy, graduating with a Master of Education degree. Karen majored in elementary and secondary literacy. She earned her doctoral degree in August of 2014.