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A Professional Learning Community Approach to Improving English/Language Arts Instructional Planning

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A Professional Learning Community Approach to

Improving English/Language Arts Instructional Planning

by

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Abstract

Simply defined, effective English Language Arts (ELA) instruction is cohesive, integrated, and requires students to think deeply. Creating such instruction is difficult, however, because of insufficient training in instructional planning and the numerous types of curricula teachers must navigate that may not align well. Therefore, new secondary ELA teachers could benefit from high quality professional development focused on effective ELA planning practices. In this case study, a group of five secondary ELA teachers from different schools worked together with an expert facilitator to test the effectiveness of a professional learning community (PLC) model of professional development, a form that demonstrated promise for effective professional development. Using qualitative methods, this study determined (a) the instructional planning needs of new ELA teachers (b) how the PLC impacted teachers' planning for cohesive, integrated, and deeply thoughtful instruction, and (c) what strengths and weaknesses existed in the design of this online training environment. Findings suggest that teachers have instructional planning needs across the domains of cohesion, integration, and content depth that teachers can improve within a PLC of this kind. Teachers most often improved in their understanding of between unit cohesion as well as wherever they had preintervention interests. However, the teachers' growth was limited, overall, suggesting training of this kind should occur over longer than five weeks and/or with a different disbursement of the content. Implications include that even when preservice and in-service supports exist to assist new teachers with instructional planning, teachers will likely need professional development for instructional planning because of the highly contextualized and nuanced nature of the topics studied. In addition, PLCs seem to offer a viable way to offer assistance to new ELA teachers in improving their instructional planning. However, the limited nature of available research using this professional development

model suggests that continued research should occur. This study's strengths and weaknesses in

content and design may help others to fill in some of the gaps of PLC design options in future

iterations of instructional planning PLCs that use technology-based platforms for collaboration.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Nation's Report Card* from 2015 reported 66% of students in grade 8 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016a) and 63% of students in Grade 12 (NCES, 2016b) read below the *proficient* level as evaluated on the National Association of Educational Progress tests. Similarly, 74% of eighth grade student writing and 73% of twelfth grade student writing (NCES, 2012) fell below the proficient level on the most recent writing assessments. In addition, 49% of the 42,754 high school students surveyed on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement reported being bored everyday with lack of interest (81%) and relevance (42%) of the material under study as the most cited reasons (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). In the same study, only approximately one-third of students believed that schooling strongly impacted their reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. Such statistics, though not the exclusive domain of secondary English/Language Arts (ELA) courses, are disheartening and suggest ELA teachers could perform better in educating, motivating, and engaging secondary students. One reason students may perform non-optimally and/or have negative attitudes is likely secondary ELA teachers' lack of skill with planning deeply engaging and meaningful ELA instruction that fosters student achievement.

Therefore, it is through changing teachers' planning practices that students' performance can improve. As a result, the aim of this study is to examine ELA teachers' instructional planning practices, particularly new ELA teachers, and how to most effectively impact their planning practices. In the rest of this chapter, I first discuss what effective ELA instructional planning looks like. I also present what little we know about new ELA teachers' planning practices and the deficiencies with ELA teacher planning that exist. Then I examine the many reasons for deficiencies with teachers' planning practices including the current, negative state of

much of professional development. Finally, I discuss professional learning communities, an enhanced professional development approach, as an effective avenue for improving new ELA teachers' instructional planning practices should instructional planning needs exist.

Effective ELA Instructional Planning

Effective instructional planning for secondary ELA instruction, grades 7-12, includes teachers making decisions about the curriculum, such as what ELA concepts and skills they will teach, as well as how to structure those concepts and skills (Kelly, 2006). Glatthorn (2000) argued that the curriculum should attend to a small number of essential skills and concepts within a subject. Kelly (2006) also suggested teachers should consider the goals and objectives for the instruction, along with their evaluation practices, as they select *what* they will teach in their curriculum. In doing so, teachers may include considerations to what Glatthorn (2000) terms the *written*, *recommended*, and *supported* curricula. The *written* curricula are often guidelines prepared by national, state, and local (school district) organizations, while professional organizations suggest curricula referred to as the *recommended* curriculum. The *supported* curriculum consists of any software, textbooks and any other materials that provide/present content and skills. With all of these different curricula to navigate, new teachers, in particular, would likely benefit from additional support in how the curricula should work together when planning effective instruction.

It is within the *structure*, or the organization and presentation of the selected content and skills, that the depth of students' learning becomes visible. Glatthorn (2000) suggested curriculum designers, in this case teachers, organize the essential skills, concepts, and objectives within a multi-year, integrated sequence that addresses connections among courses rather than focusing on designing a curriculum just for a single course. He also recommended the

curriculum focus on "problem-solving units" (p. 11) and address not just academic knowledge, but also how that knowledge works when applied in practical ways. Glatthorn's recommendations mirror Bruner's (1960) seminal theory of the *spiral curriculum*. Bruner's approach proposed a curriculum that isolates the "key structures" of a discipline, as well as argues for the need for students to engage in "experiences" within those key structures that deepen over time, rather than simply repeating them the same way multiple times. Dewey (1897) suggested literature experiences, specifically, should connect to practical, life experiences.

Following the formation of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911, people with expertise in teaching English, such as Hosic (1917), Hatfield (1935), and Moffett (1968a), developed curricula that prescribed and sequenced both content and skills necessary for secondary ELA students to aid teachers in their decision-making. But teachers still had a role in planning instruction despite the prescriptions for both content/skills and sequencing. For example, even if a teacher subscribed to the basic contents of any of the curricula, all encouraged flexibility in their designs so teachers could adapt the models to their individual contexts' needs and resources. Decades later, national legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002), prompted the development of standards as a way to assist ELA teachers country-wide with their curriculum decisions. The forces of legislation have continued today through the creation and wide adoption of Common Core ELA skills-based standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2010). These standards prescribe a *piece* of a curriculum, Glatthorn's (2002) written curricula, but the remaining responsibility for ELA curriculum development still falls to teachers and districts. In fact, the CCSSI (n.d.) declared that Common Core standards are *not* a curriculum, indicating an awareness of the comprehensive nature of curriculum defined by Kelly (2006) above and the role of teachers in designing it.

Since even mandated curriculum guidelines do not seemingly provide ELA teachers with everything they need to plan effective instruction, it appears ELA teachers must know what recommended practices are in the discipline for what content and skills they should teach and how they should teach them to assist them in using curriculum guidelines effectively. This study focuses on three aspects of effective curriculum development, namely cohesion, integration, and content depth based on the recommendations of ELA experts and pedagogical theorists discussed in detail below.

For the purposes of this study, one element of effective ELA planning, *cohesion,* can appear in the connections between lessons which form units, and the connections between units that unify content across an entire course (Smagorinsky, 2008). For cohesion between lessons and units, Applebee (1996) argued for a curricular conversations approach whereby ELA teachers define overarching concepts that reflect "high quality" content similar to the content depth element of planning mentioned above. Then, once teachers have defined those concepts, teachers attend to the relatedness of those concepts as they have students explore different key ideas of the concepts across various units. For example, students could study different characteristics of female authors across various units, where all those units are then unified around that broader topic of isolating the writing of females as uniquely different from male authors. Rosenblatt (1995) and disciplinary literacy theorists (Petrosky, McConachie, & Mihalakis, 2010; Rainey & Moje, 2012) argued that students should synthesize various texts they read, another opportunity for developing cohesion between lessons and units. A common example would be ELA units focused on themes. Students could examine similarities in love themes across different texts within a singular unit on love themes.

The second element of effective ELA planning, *integration*, refers, in part, to what ELA teachers teach and how those items should blend together. English educators[1], like Applebee (1996) and Langer (2001), have argued English teachers should integrate the main components of the ELA discipline (writing, reading/literature, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, and listening) within their instruction. Such educators assert that teachers should explicitly instruct students on the relatedness of the parts, not teach those parts independently from one another in separate courses or units. For example, traditionally, secondary ELA teachers teach research skills development through a singular unit of writing instruction, separate from literature, grammar, and the like, that culminated in the writing of "the research paper" (Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2015). But in a recent special issue of *English Journal* on "rethinking research," English experts argued for teaching research skills development differently. For example, teachers could connect research skills to reading instruction (Turner & Hicks, 2015) or literature instruction through literary criticism essays (Dagrosa-Harris, 2015). Teachers may also integrate research use into forms other than the academic essay, such as within the writing of news columns (Shafer, 2015). Additionally, Coombs and Bellingham (2015) suggested students use their fiction reading as some of their research and not have limitations to just non-fiction texts. The basis to the integration of the ELA parts is to have students recognize how all aspects of the discipline naturally work together. Brown, Collins, and Duguid's (1989) argument for contextualized learning —learning that mirrors how skills appear in real life—provides additional support for employing integrated learning experiences.

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[1] To clarify any potential confusion, in this paper I use English when referring to the university setting as is commonly accepted (e.g. English methods, English educators) and ELA to refer to the secondary context where both English and Language Arts teachers exist.

The third consideration for ELA planning under study relates to ELA *content depth*, or the deepening of "key structures" Bruner (1960) recommended. In other words, once teachers have decided upon the key structures that bear repeating, they should design ELA instruction in a way that induces critical thinking, as opposed to mere coverage or recitation of declarative knowledge, information related to facts, rules, and the like. For example, recommended practices in writing instruction for content depth could include encouraging students' decision-making processes as supported by specialists who endorse teaching writing as a cognitive process, not just the creation of a finished product (for example, see Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hillocks, 2009). Such process approaches value the non-linear thinking and reflection effective writers often engage in when drafting compositions. Process approaches to writing instruction contrast with practices found in traditional grammar instruction that emphasize declarative knowledge, such as reciting grammatical terminology and rules of the language, that research studies have consistently found do little to improve students' writing (Smith, Cheville, & Hillocks, 2006; Weaver, 1979). Additionally, if students are deeply engaged in the research process, today's digital age requires a thoughtful evaluation of web-based research. For example, Johnson (2012) discussed confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance, as necessary to address for thoughtful digital information consumption. Confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance, concepts from cognitive psychology that explain general impediments to reasoning and judgment, may result in students using sources that lack credibility if students do not receive instruction on reasoning and judgment with digital sources. Students must wade through online information with increased care, given that anyone can be an author of a digital source, whether or not he or she is credible.

Literature study and discussion practices should also attend to content depth over mere fact recitation. Rosenblatt (1995) argued that literature study must go beyond simply skills and facts because literary texts are art. She contended the "imaginary situations" (p. 37) of literary characters allow readers to emotionally connect and develop relationships in ways that facts of informational texts do not. In discussions of literature, Williamson (2013) distinguished between discussions that bring out new interpretations of texts, the kind that gets at deep knowledge, rather than question-answer regurgitations of facts. Similarly, Langer (1992) cautioned teachers about how they word questions that allow for inference and other kinds of thoughtful responses. She indicated that true/false items, for example, though they may appear to address thinking beyond mere factual recall, ultimately counteract the development of thoughtful response. She argued students' thinking is not clearly visible from simply noting "T" for true or "F for false.

In summary, even among these recommended practices for planning ELA instruction, there are a myriad of ways to select what to teach, create coherent lessons/units, decide how to integrate the ELA components, and design activities that encourage depth of content knowledge. In fact, Kelly (2006) argued the importance of teachers' "personal and professional autonomy" (p. 70) in curriculum planning because of the needs of their specific teaching contexts. Therefore, an obvious follow-up question is: What evidence currently exists to show how ELA teacher planning aligns to recommended practices in some way?

Evidence of Teacher Planning

Little rigorous empirical research on ELA teacher planning exists, in general. Empirical research also does not seem to exist on the cohesion of ELA teachers' instruction. Despite anecdotal evidence showing some ELA teachers create cohesive plans, the preponderance of evidence suggests deficiencies exist. Smagorinsky (2008) provided exemplars of cohesive units

preservice teachers designed that corresponded to his textbook, but the teachers were likely

highly scaffolded under the tutelage of the author/instructor since the unit plans were course

assignments. It is unclear how in-service teachers would plan under conditions without such

scaffolding. *English Journal,* NCTE's primary resource for secondary ELA teacher practice,

provides little insight given the journal does not mention cohesion much. Individual teachers

describe their successful attempts at using text sets of various genres, for example, to design

thematic units (George, 2001; Moss, 2011). These anecdotal commentaries of thematic units

suggest teachers required secondary students to synthesize various texts and connect them to one

central theme, as an element of cohesion explained above, but it is not always clear how exactly

students made the connections. Also, it is unclear if there are any bigger concepts, such as

Applebee's (1996) "curricular conversations," that extend beyond the singular units the authors

discuss.

Once again, anecdotal evidence seems to dominate the available research on teachers'

integration of ELA components within their instruction. Some ELA educators reported their

students use grammar as a tool for comprehension within literature study or as a part of

analyzing writing style within writing/literature instruction, thus integrating grammar instruction

in multiple places in the ELA curriculum (Lindblom, 2011; Weaver, 1979). Though in other

instances, integration seems absent. For example, some researchers found teachers use

decontextualized grammar exercises (Hillocks, 2011; Smagorinsky, Wilson, & Moore, 2011),

despite research findings that militate against these very practices (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, &

Shoer, 1963; Smith et al., 2006). Additionally, Graves (2007) claimed that vocabulary programs

should be "multifaceted and long-term" (p. 14), but secondary ELA educators report practices

that are little more than descriptions of discrete recommended classroom activities, such as word

walls and worksheets on word roots (Kail, 2008; Larson, Dixon, & Townsend, 2013), without a focus on the "long-term" aspects of such a program. That is, their practices fail to address what a comprehensive vocabulary program should look like when integrated into the rest of the secondary ELA curriculum.

In terms of ELA teachers' content depth, the final component of instructional planning under study, what has been quantified empirically seems less than desirable. For example, within writing instruction, it seems ELA teachers do not attend to planning for content depth very often. Applebee and Langer (2011) observed 260 English, math, science, and social studies classrooms, at the middle and high school levels, from five different states, chosen for their students' writing successes. They found that English teachers only required students to write approximately one paper of three pages or more in length during a nine-week grading term. Additionally, only 8.8% of observed middle school ELA class time and 12.3% of observed high school ELA class time included the writing of a paragraph or more. The researchers argued that this amount of writing does not provide students with "opportunities to use composing as a way to think through the issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues" (p.16). Similarly, despite the contentions and findings on the weaknesses of the "five-paragraph essay" as a principal form of writing pedagogy that limits students' content (Argys, 2008; Hillocks, 2009; Wesley, 2000), a Google search I performed returned over eight million hits for the phrase, seemingly documenting its widespread popularity in classroom practice. This may confirm Hillocks' (2006) finding that many teachers reported using the form, despite ELA research findings to suggest the poor quality of writing that may result from its use. These researchers' conclusions suggest a mismatch

between teacher practice and research findings about the importance of planning activities that allow students to engage deeply with ELA content within writing instruction.

Writing instruction is not the only place where content depth appears to be lacking. In fact, Hillocks (2011) argued that secondary English teachers planned instruction that actually countered what research studies suggest might be more effective. After observations of 30 classrooms in three states, Hillocks found teachers spent more time lecturing on grammar terminology, literature, and vocabulary than requiring discussion that research studies suggest might be more effective. Smagorinsky and colleagues' (2011) case study corroborated Hillocks' findings when revealing the teacher's use of a parts of speech worksheet to teach grammar.

New teachers are a particularly important population because their first years in the classroom are laying the foundation for future habits of planning content with depth. Based on their work with/as new teachers, Scherff, Rush, Olsen, and Nemeth (2013) seem to suggest Rosenblatt's (1995) concern that ELA teachers often reduce literature to mere acts of comprehension has currency. They argued that preservice English teachers, specifically, need assistance in teaching literature with depth as opposed to merely covering the literacy skills standards guidelines of the Common Core recommend (CCSSI, 2010). White (2015) claimed that some standards-aligned teaching materials teachers use encourage instruction that lacks depth in their pedagogical approach (Coleman, 2011) and remove the need for students to make personal connections to texts that Rosenblatt (1995) argued are necessary for depth in literature instruction. Given the reliance on curriculum materials that Grossman and Thompson (2008) found new teachers exhibit, Scherff, Rush, Olsen, and Nemeth's (2013) concerns for new teachers in the area of planning for content depth seems further supported.

So though there is some encouraging practice across the three areas of ELA instructional planning under study, much seems sub-par. Additionally, there is a dearth of rigorous empirical research. Therefore, it appears the field would benefit from increased knowledge about teacher planning in the dimensions of cohesion, integration, and content depth, a research aim of this study.

Potential Reasons for Planning Deficiencies

Preservice teacher training programs have many responsibilities in preparing teachers for what they must know and be able to do to be effective ELA instructors, one potential reason for ELA teachers' lack of adherence to optimal planning practices (Hillocks, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015a), traditional college/university-based teacher-preparation programs typically require training in subject-matter knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, discipline-specific pedagogical knowledge, what Shulman (1986) termed *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK), coupled with field or clinical experiences. By requiring teachers to acquire content-area degrees and pass corresponding licensing tests in the content area, such as Praxis II tests, in order to be classified as "highly qualified," the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002) has seemingly promoted content knowledge over pedagogical content knowledge, the likely source of ELA curriculum planning materials. An analysis of the Praxis series, specifically, supports that conjecture. The current English content knowledge Praxis II tests devote the majority of test items to reading/literature, and do not address pedagogical content knowledge (Educational Testing Service, 2015a; 2015b).

How English *methods* courses, those courses that address the pedagogical content-knowledge component of the ELA teacher's training, address planning concerns is a bit unclear. Large-scale research on English methods courses is limited. One frequently cited study is

Smagorinsky and Whiting's (1995) analysis of 79 English methods courses' syllabi from across the country. Though they found that some universities required multiple courses related to the teaching of English, allowing the teaching of writing, young adult literature, and the like to be addressed in separate courses, rather than all in a single methods course, often those single focus courses avoided pedagogy and the confluence of ELA components. Instead, they served as writing workshops for preservice teachers or surveys of young adult literature titles that might be relevant to the preservice teachers' future students. Therefore, within the syllabi of 79 methods courses they studied that included attention to pedagogical activities, Smagorinsky and Whiting found only some courses required a field experience component (32%), while the majority included short planning exercises, like lessons and mini-lessons (70%), or reflective activities (72%). But it is unclear if these planning exercises address integration of ELA components, content cohesion, or depth, even if the findings of this dated study accurately reflect the current status of methods courses.

Some English educators argue that methods courses must provide greater content depth themselves if teachers are to fully grasp the recommended practices addressed above (Hillocks, 2011; Williamson, 2013). For example, if there is little, improper, or no guidance on how to incorporate ELA standards documents in preservice training, it could encourage beginning ELA teachers to choose the often skills-based standards guidelines they might be mandated to use in some way as a basis for their planning, such as the Common Core (CCSSI, 2010) and/or the recommendations of NCTE (NCTE & International Reading Association [IRA], 1996). Though new ELA teachers may have good intentions of attempting to create lessons that meet the required standards, their good intentions could result in reducing ELA instruction to only what can be easily measured with objective assessments, as they, too, are often skill-based.

Smagorinsky, Rhym, and Moore (2013) have argued that preservice teachers should study curriculum documents and pedagogical materials to better understand the underlying philosophies of the documents and the impacts they have on teaching and learning. Such knowledge could improve beginning teachers' abilities to use these materials in pedagogically sound ways.

However, another great concern exists with assuming preservice training will align with future in-service teacher practice, even if preservice teachers received adequate training in instructional planning. Lortie (1975) referenced "apprenticeship of observation," where past experiences lead teachers to negate the training they received in their preparation programs. For example, whether or not new ELA teachers had training on planning that aligned to recommended practices, they may struggle to adopt pedagogy endorsed by research studies because they simply have not spent as much time engaging with and learning those behaviors. Instead, they may adopt more familiar practices, those they experienced as students, which might also be potentially undesirable. Since students do not often see the thinking processes teachers engage in as they determine what happens in the classroom, the effects of "apprenticeship of observation" suggests new ELA teachers may leave planning behaviors largely unconsidered. Such a notion seems further supported by what Whitney, Olan, and Fredricksen (2013) argued are new teachers' desires for activities they can use in the classroom over understanding the theoretical reasons intended to guide instructional decisions.

Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia's (1999) application of *activity theory* to teacher development could provide another explanation for less-than-desirable current teacher outcomes related to planning whether or not preservice teachers encountered desirable depth with preservice PCK training (Shulman, 1986). According to the definition of activity theory, the

authors claimed that within every setting of preparation, such as the secondary classroom, the university classroom, and the like, there are specific goals for education/training that may conflict with one another. Conflict could impede preservice teachers' translation of university-based instructional recommendations into their classroom teaching. For example, the ELA preservice teacher may take a university-level grammar course that teaches grammatical terms. Instructors of such a course likely intend to separate aspects of ELA rather than integrate them, allowing a future ELA expert to gain the depth required for mastery. Separating grammar instruction, if implemented into secondary instruction as isolated grammar units, would seem to contradict the integrated pedagogy endorsed for the goal of helping secondary students communicate effectively, if newly trained teachers do not realize that differing goals for learning dictate the curriculum choices in the different settings.

Similarly, school districts may place pressure on practicing teachers, especially by tying district/school-level funding, and, in some cases, individual teacher pay to students' standardized test results (Max et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). Such pressures may contribute to preservice ELA teachers perceiving themselves as forced in field experiences to abandon practices related to deep and meaningful instructional planning to accommodate the needs of their in-service mentor teachers. This example demonstrates how the limitations of in-service teaching could trump preservice preparation for PCK even if teachers received what Shulman (1986) wanted.

Additionally, newly employed ELA teachers may adopt a coverage approach as a result of districts' test emphases and required curriculum materials. Grossman and Thompson (2008) found beginning ELA teachers used curriculum materials as their primary support. If the materials available to them merely cover content, rather than address content deeply or show

them how to plan integrated and cohesive lessons/units, beginning ELA teachers' classroom practice could mirror the textbooks' less-than-desirable contents. Grossman and Thompson analyzed the Jane Schaffer multi-paragraph essay unit as an example of textbook content that addressed writing in a less-than-desirable way. New teachers' uncritical adoption of textbook materials is a form of enculturation where teachers acquire practices that seem important to school districts' goals, which may oppose the recommendations of their training.

Other small case studies have examined new teachers' enculturation to existing practices of teaching writing and grammar (see Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Smagorinsky et al., 2011) and concluded that the pressures of other teachers/district personnel can also influence what even well-trained new ELA teachers do in the classroom once they are employed. This phenomenon occurs, according to activity theory, when the demands of the in-service environment conflict with practices preservice preparation espoused. In-service training may ameliorate these effects, but only if the goals of the training align teachers'/districts' felt needs with what studies recommend. Without effective in-service training, however, reductionist practices established by the new teacher could continue throughout a career, lending support to Grossman and Thompson's (2008) contention that ELA teachers should receive training where they critique curriculum materials and adapt them as teachers gain experience.

In-service Training/Professional Development

While the majority of new teachers reported struggling with general issues like classroom management, parent interaction, isolation, and student motivation (He & Cooper, 2011; Ingersoll, 2012), ELA teachers also face specific, content-related issues. For example, McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca's (2005) three-year study of a small sample of beginning and veteran teachers revealed that new ELA teachers had misperceptions of the ELA teacher's workload and

failed to anticipate the resulting fatigue they would experience. Additionally, though perhaps expected, the researchers found these new teachers lacked the pedagogical and content-area confidence of their veteran counterparts. Bentley, Morway and Short (2013) suggested some new ELA teachers' concerns might be highly contextualized to specific teaching assignments and preparation experiences, indicating research likely has not yet addressed all the potential concerns of beginning ELA teachers.

Fortunately, once employed, most new ELA teachers receive some form of professional development (PD) intended to help them transition into all the responsibilities of the ELA teacher. Goldrick's (2016) review of state policies of teacher induction revealed that 29 states require some form of post-hire mentoring or induction. States' induction policies are not all the same, however. For example, 15 states support teachers in their first and second years of teaching, nine support teachers beyond their second year, and only 17 states provided funding specifically for induction programs. Furthermore, it is unclear how specific districts choose to meet state regulations. Yet, the presence of legislation indicates at least 29 states seem to recognize the importance of new teacher PD. It is unclear whether the other 21 states provide formal induction support. Therefore, it is possible a large percentage of new ELA teachers receive no formal induction support.

In order to get a better idea of what might be happening in induction and mentoring programs, or what should be happening, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) reviewed 15 empirical studies on the effects of induction programs. Of the studies they reviewed, only five measured impacts of induction on teacher practices. The focus of those five emphasized improving elements of general classroom and instructional management, more than content-specific curriculum planning practices. The authors noted the varied designs and populations of the

induction programs in the studies they reviewed, the different measurements for "good teaching" and the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory findings of a couple studies. Therefore, though they concluded any kind of induction appeared to help teachers improve in relation to the general classroom practices mentioned above, what precisely caused the changes is not entirely clear.

Nor is it clear exactly how much current induction programs assist new ELA teachers' content-related teaching practices. Lindblom's (2013) issue of *English Journal,* dedicated to mentoring and teacher development, used anecdotal evidence to identify mentoring practices endorsed as improving ELA teachers' content knowledge. Examples of practices with which individuals reported success included mentoring groups and university–teacher partnerships centered on developing ELA content. However, typical PD offerings are usually ineffective and disconnected from actual classroom practice (Glazerman et al., 2010; Strauss, 2014; The New Teacher Project, 2015). Recognizing the limitations of typical PD, Dunst and Trivette (2009) provide a research-based approach, called Participatory Adult Learning Strategy (PALS), to improve the state of PD. In PALS, adult learners receive feedback before, during, and after applying their training to their classroom practice. This requirement, among the many others in the PALS approach to effective PD, supports McCann's (2013) claim that districts should not seek a one-size-fits-all approach to mentoring, as is often adopted by districts. Though such programs may save districts money or time, McCann argued such programs do not help teachers improve. Collectively, the recommendations cited above seem to suggest that training contextualized within classroom practice and easily modified to ELA teachers' individual needs has the greatest promise to offer new English teachers opportunities for improvement in their teaching.

Professional learning communities (PLCs), or groups of teachers working together to improve their practices, offer a plausible design for such training. PLCs, in a basic sense, allow for collaboration among novice and expert teachers, typically within the same building, to help improve the learning of their (collective) students within a safe and trusting environment (Borko, 2004). The concept has theoretical support in situated learning theories (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which emphasize the importance of learning in authentic settings, as well as sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) that emphasizes social interaction around meaning-centered activities. Newmann (1996) articulated five characteristics of optimally functioning PLCs: (a) shared values and norms, (b) a focus on student learning, (c) reflective dialogue (d) publicizing teaching practices, and (e) collaboration. When PLCs do not operate effectively, however, teachers express dissatisfaction (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; DuFour & Reeves, 2015).

The ineffective PLCs may have lacked necessary guidance and leadership (DuFour & Reeves, 2015) that a PLC design which includes a facilitator with expertise in empirical pedagogical practices, such as university faculty or a research consultant, could provide to a group of novice ELA teachers. The aim of the current study is to "better" PLCs in this way. Leadership from a content-specific expert is likely superior to possible administrator leadership who may lack the appropriate content-base to effectively support teacher development or cause teachers to feel insecure because of the administrator's authority over them. In fact, Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) suggested teachers in the PLC "seek external perspectives from other constituents (e.g. families, citizens, educators working outside [their] immediate environment, educational research, sociological research)" (p. 89) to improve the quality of the training. Inclusion of a university faculty member would heed this suggestion. Though not empirically

tested, Coffey's (2012) university-classroom teacher collaboration for PD further supports the effectiveness of such collaborations. Additionally, she suggested English educators experiment with collaborations of various designs to build up the research base of possible ways to create the desired individualized PD and community that could nurture novice teachers' development of their curricular approaches.

The Purpose and Design of This Study

To the best of my knowledge, no empirical research to date has examined typical beginning secondary ELA teacher curriculum planning practices. As such, the first aim of the study is to determine beginning ELA teachers' baseline with planning secondary ELA instruction that maintains cohesion across lessons and units, integrates all ELA components, and requires students to deeply engage with ELA content, including any needs they may articulate related to curriculum planning. Secondarily, the study aims to analyze the effectiveness of a researcher-facilitated professional learning community designed to improve new secondary ELA teachers' planning. The study focuses on new secondary ELA teachers as a way to address any needs teachers may have resulting from the complexities, and often difficulties, of transitioning from preservice student to classroom teacher mentioned above. In addition, the study assists with content-based support that district provided mentoring and induction programs may have lacked. For the purposes of this study, the *new teacher* is defined as one who has completed at least one year of teaching but not exceeding six years in any one state, matching the maximum years allowed on the initial, provisional teacher certification in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2015).

This study explored how six new secondary ELA teachers plan instruction, along with their perceived needs, planning-based or otherwise. The study sought to assist new ELA teachers

in better aligning their planning to recommended practices in ways that work for their individual teaching contexts and align with their personal and district goals for instruction. In doing so, the PLC adhered to professional learning community tenants (Hord, 1997a, 2004; Newmann, 1996). Three research questions guide this study:

1. What instructional planning needs exist for new in-service secondary ELA teachers?

2. In what ways, if any, does the PD intervention improve new secondary ELA teachers' knowledge about how to plan (a) more cohesive, (b) integrated and (c) deeply thought provoking instruction?

3. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility and satisfaction with the PD intervention?

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This review of the literature includes three major parts. First, I focus on four types of mandated "Everyman" curricula that should act merely as starting points for instructional planning, not the whole of it. I detail the curricula's limitations in their reduction of content, skills, and pedagogical prescriptions intended for *all* students as evidence of the curricula's use in instructional planning as mere starting points. Then I present a variety of concerns related to aligning the various curricula described before the second section, which provides specific details of how ELA recommended practices for instructional planning isolate pedagogy related to planning for cohesion (connections)*,* integration (blending all aspects of ELA discipline), and content depth (thoughtful content instruction versus content coverage) that are necessary additions to instructional planning as they are not often found in the other curricula mandates. Attention to these three instructional planning concepts allows teachers to create instruction that positions the ideals for Everyman into their actual classrooms, in meaningful ways, which directly impacts the successful acquisition of those ideals along with any others teachers have. Their use could also prevent students from experiencing instruction of the meaningless and useless sort referenced in the comments of the disaffected youth described in Chapter 1. The final section of the literature review discusses how PD, in the form of a professional learning community, may provide inroads to improving ELA teachers' planning practices with cohesion, integration, and content depth.

Everyman's ELA Curricula

Glatthorn (2000) claimed seven different types of curricula exist—*recommended, written, taught, supported, assessed, learned*, and *hidden*. He also argued that only when they are aligned have teachers created effective instruction. In the following section, four of those seven

curricula, the *recommended, written, supported,* and *assessed,* appear in detail because they all include materials intended to guide teachers' instructional planning, whereas the other three do not.

In some ways, the four curricula addressed in this section are the curricula of "Everyman." The character, Everyman, from the medieval morality play with the same title, represented all of humankind (*Everyman*, 1495/1997). Like Everyman, these curricula are the generic, the ordinary, the ideals intended to address universal student needs. These curricula present *all* teachers with guidelines and/or mandates for *all* students without consideration to individual teachers' or students' needs.

The first section of the Everyman curricula described below contrasts the historical recommendations for content, skills, and pedagogy of the recommended curricula of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) with the current guidelines, showing decreasing specificity over time. The following section presents a high-stakes and potentially confounding piece to the ELA instructional planning process with the written curricular mandates for secondary ELA content and skills, and the corresponding assessed curricula. Then, a section on supported curricula appears to demonstrate where ELA teachers gain a narrower view of ELA content and skills as they plan, along with the -- often poor -- pedagogical assistance found in those classroom resources. Though teachers might not recognize these four pieces as separate curricula, most teachers would know to consult these separate pieces when planning their curricula to help them isolate some of what they must organize in a coherent, integrated, and deeply thoughtful way. They also understand they should align the pieces for effective instruction as Glatthorn (2000) recommended. Therefore, a final paragraph on alignment options

exists to detail potential dilemmas facing ELA teachers when they attempt to plan pedagogically sound instruction that aligns these curricula before implementing any instruction.

Recommended curricula. Upon its creation in 1911, NCTE prescribed the recommended curricula, that of "scholars and professional organizations" (Glatthorn, 2000, p. 83), specific to ELA instruction. Curriculum theorists (Barrow, 1984; Kelly, 2006) argued the importance of tying specific educational and instructional goals to the content, skills, and pedagogy of a curriculum. Therefore, clear instructional and educational goals directly impact how teachers chose to address coherence, integration, and depth within their instructional planning. But Barrow (1984) claimed these goals are too often only implied or even completely unacknowledged in curriculum proposals. Yet historically, NCTE endorsed three major ELA curricula specific to secondary ELA instruction, which detailed content and skills prescriptions tied to specific educational/instructional goals (Hatfield, 1935; Hosic, 1917; Moffett, 1968a). Within those prescriptions and corresponding pedagogical recommendations, teachers still had flexibility to modify instruction as they planned for the needs of their specific students and settings. The following paragraphs examine each of these curricula in detail to compare and contrast strengths and weaknesses of the content, skills, and pedagogical recommendations of the historical curricula with NCTE's current approach. It appears that changes made to simplify the recommendations may negatively impact ELA teachers' instructional planning practices.

Historical NCTE curricular recommendations. One of the earliest attempts at defining content and skills in literature and composition NCTE commissioned was the curriculum Hosic (1917) proposed for Grades 7 through 12. This curriculum did include some attention to pedagogy that aligned to cohesion, integration, and depth. For composition instruction, he described aims, or educational goals, for each grade as well as the instructional outcomes he

expected from students. He also mentioned students' skills building upon each other from year to year. How that was to happen was not always clear, however. For composition content and skills, Hosic prescribed items such as "occupations" and "sentence-sense" in Grade 7, along with writing forms, such as "narratives" (p.6). For literature study, he suggested a wealth of literary works for each grade teachers might use as a focus on content. He also prescribed a few skills students should develop related to literature, including memorizing passages. Hosic also addressed pedagogy. For example, he provided teachers with options for how to group the literature he suggested they teach, an element of cohesion. However, Hosic maintained the separation of the teaching of writing from the teaching of literature, a carry over from higher education practices at the time, going against the idea of integration. Applebee (1974) claimed this choice countered NCTE's desires to remove higher education influences on secondary curriculum. Yet even if NCTE research had not completely made it into his curriculum, Hosic provided teachers with a fairly comprehensive curriculum, which respected teacher flexibility in deciding what about each literary piece they might teach.

Eighteen years later, a similar aid for ELA teachers' instructional planning appeared when NCTE published a curriculum Hatfield (1935) wrote that delineated a scope and sequence of ELA content and skills for both elementary and secondary grades. He, like Hosic (1917), included a rationale for his inclusions and omissions as well as educational goals in the opening narrative of his curriculum. For secondary students, he recommended an exhaustive list of topics for literature study addressing the development of students' understanding of life. His primary objective was students developing appreciation of different genres of literature, of importance to Hosic, as well. Also, Hatfield emphasized specific writing skills development more than

literature and prescribed specific forms, such as writing letters, with specific skills students should develop articulated within those forms.

What changed in NCTE's recommendations from Hosic to Hatfield included what appears to be a greater emphasis on the differences among learners and the ways teachers may need to modify their instruction accordingly, which seem specifically related to content depth. For example, Hatfield provided prescriptions for "corrective" teaching related to grammar and speech. He also emphasized reading skills development in a section apart from literature, which addressed differences among specific content and skills demands of fiction verses non-fiction texts. He also included some attention to research skills in the form of note taking for reporting purposes. These differences in Hatfield's work are likely a response to societal changes. The educational system of the 1930s included a more diverse student body from decreased segregation that resulted from the Great Depression (The 1930s: Education: Overview, 2001).

Perhaps the starkest contrast with Hosic is that Hatfield's design did not allocate content and skills to specific grades within the scope and sequence of the secondary curriculum increasing the instructional planning burden on teachers. The way Hatfield collapsed all his units for secondary students under a singular categorical heading of Grades 7 through 12 showed NCTE endorsing a more fluid approach to prescribing content and skills than the grade-specific breakdowns of Hosic's approach. This lack of specific sequence forces teachers to plan carefully so as to not create a repetition of content and skills within and across grades, as teachers chose which topics to address from year to year. Applebee (1996) further argued that Hatfield's selected topics, also known as "experiences," were vague and could appear in any discipline. For example, one of Hatfield's (1935) prescriptions asked students "to enjoy adventures which are more interesting because their backgrounds are so different from our own environment" (p.44).

This example could be relevant to social studies, for instance, in the form of a non-fiction biography of someone's life. It does not appear that Hatfield's intent was interdisciplinary integration, which is why this comment was a critique of his curriculum rather than an accolade. Therefore, it appears that this round of NCTE-endorsed curriculum not only presented teachers with greater flexibility, but also lacked specificity that could burden teachers' planning more than past recommendations.

Thirty-three years later, James Moffett, who NCTE refers to as "a great champion of the voices of K-12 teachers" in their description of the award carrying his namesake (NCTE, 2016b), created a curriculum for Grades K through 13. His curriculum improved upon his predecessors by supporting an integrated pedagogy that blended reading and writing experiences within each unit of instruction not seen in the prior curricula (1968a). Moffett also highlighted small group work methodologies and discussion as integral practices within each unit. Similar to Hatfield (1935), he prescribed content for learning experiences under categorical headings, Grades 7-9 and Grades 10-13, with no specific content provided within individual grades. As a result, Moffett's proposed curriculum also shared the sequencing weaknesses of Hatfield's earlier curriculum because Moffett intended teachers adapt his design to their own contexts. Though Moffett (1968a) claimed providing specific content and skills for each grade out of context would be "absurd" (p.6), unlike Hatfield, he did at times provide samples of students' work with corresponding grade levels as examples of his curricular suggestions. This addition of work samples may have helped teachers make his curricular abstractions more concrete than Hatfield's design. Additionally, Moffett discussed possibilities and potential problems related to students conducting research with sources, moving beyond the mere reporting skills of Hatfield's curriculum.

But it appears in this iteration of a recommended, comprehensive curriculum, less would actually have been more. Moffett (1968b) described his curriculum's theoretical backing in great detail, and, in 1973, he created instructional materials to help teachers implement his ideas. Those materials included films, activity cards, board games and 172 independent reading books (Moffett, 1973). In later years, Moffett (1988) admitted that his attempt to fight against standardization in teaching resulted in an overly cumbersome number of instructional materials, which cost him potential adopters. Though he had much to offer teachers in their instructional planning, his vision of education simply did not match with societal desires.

Current NCTE curricular recommendations. By the final edition of Moffett's curriculum (Moffett & Wagner, 1991), American education was deeply entrenched in standardization, a climate that still exists today. This change in society is likely why NCTE no longer endorsed comprehensive curricula after Moffett. The cultural shift toward standardizing student expectations began with the "Back-to Basics" movement of the mid-late 1970s, which Spalding, Koshnick, and Myers (2012) claimed initiated the decline of Moffett's student-centered principles in teacher planning. The "Back-to-Basics" movement, a national response to reports of students' supposed academic failings, led to debate over government-supported, national ELA curriculum attempts, explained below, which take the form of academic standards today. The English/literacy research experts, NCTE, voiced their expertise in the debate by developing 12 content standards for secondary ELA instruction, reaffirmed in 2012, which they claimed provided clear and concise expectations for all students that reflected changes in society, such as research skills, but still allowed teachers flexibility in planning curriculum that met the needs of their individual students (NCTE & IRA, 1996). In other words, these standards reflect what "Everyman" should encounter, though teachers are free to decide how to approach them in

instructional planning and may, therefore, add to the expectations of the standards. This shift to standards over the former comprehensive curricula that detailed planning practices related to content, skills, and pedagogy has resulted in curricular recommendations that share little with the curricula from earlier NCTE-endorsed proposals and leaves ELA teachers with much less guidance for their instructional planning than might be necessary.

In fact, Glatthorn (2000) claimed people have frequently criticized NCTE's standards for their vagueness and attention to process, which ultimately limits their usefulness in instructional planning. For example, the standards prescribe students read a wide variety of texts, but only a few genres are listed as examples and no sample texts are provided. Additionally, the standards indicated that students should read for enjoyment, as well as to learn facts and understand the world around them. Those are valid purposes, similar to previous NCTE recommendations, but what exactly students should learn is unclear without examples of what the professional organization deems important. In addition, the standards continued to emphasize the importance of language skill development and oral language use, and provided extensive narrative on the educational goals of the standards within the rationale for the standards and detailed explanations of what each sentence-long standard intends. But only isolated examples of the standards in action exist to help make them concrete with otherwise very vague standards. These isolated examples, different from Moffett's (1968a) prescriptions accompanied by frequent examples, seem to warrant criticism about the usefulness of these standards for teacher planning. One positive, notable difference reflecting the changed times is a greater emphasis on technology and research skills. But without any idea of how to break down the myriad research skills and ways technology could assist in the processes, the recommendations have limited use for planning.

Perhaps the starkest, and most problematic differences for instructional planning from past curricula are related to pedagogy and the intended use of the curricular recommendations. There is virtually no attention to cohesion, integration, or depth because pedagogical recommendations are entirely absent from the NCTE standards apart from the isolated classroom examples. This change is likely related to NCTE's clear statement that the standards "are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction" but should "encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school" (NCTE & IRA, 1996, p. 3). Such changes, however, require teachers to consult additional materials for planning purposes, perhaps more so than with NCTE's earlier curriculum proposals that somewhat addressed pedagogy. And if teachers do not seek out these additional resources, they could forfeit curricular cohesion, integration, and content depth. NCTE publishes many journals and position statements where teachers could find a variety of information to fill in the missing pieces, if they have the time and inclination to wade through all the resources.

Despite the availability of various curricula at different time points in history, it is also difficult to know the degree to which teachers used the various curricula and/or how they influenced teachers' practices. ELA teachers' adoption of these NCTE standards as curricular guides is especially unclear when compared to Hatfield's and Moffett's publications. Though possession alone does not necessarily correlate to any, or frequent, classroom use, Hook (1979) noted that Hatfield's work sold 25,000 copies and remained in print into the 1960s. Such facts suggest it was quite popular when first published and may have had continuing impact over the years. Moffett's curriculum appears to have been quite popular as well. Besides the four different editions of his curriculum, Spalding and colleagues (2012) claimed *English Journal* publications

reflected aspects of Moffett's work into the 2000s. In contrast, NCTE currently provides their standards for free, online. Though that method of transmission allows for easy access, it is more difficult to know who possesses the curricula, let alone the teachers' adoption of that free resource in classroom practice. Therefore, the vague prescriptions teachers receive through the current NCTE standards when compared to the recommended curricula from NCTE's past, coupled with the limited ability to evaluate the impact these standards have on ELA teachers' classroom practices, makes it difficult to know what exactly teachers are doing with these resources, if anything at all. Instead, teachers may rely more on other curricula. In fact, NCTE claimed their current guidelines should complement other guidelines, such as state and local prescriptions (NCTE & IRA, 1996), or elements of the written curricula described below. NCTE seems to acknowledge the influence of current government authority to which their earlier curriculum proposals lacked attention.

Written and assessed curricula. Though it is unclear whether or not ELA teachers plan their instruction intentionally using NCTE standards, the pressures associated with the written curriculum, which includes national, state, and locally produced guidelines, may have great import to instructional planning, in part, because of the co-existence of standardized test measurements of student performance to government-based guidelines, examples of the assessed curriculum (Glatthorn, 2000). These tests ideally align to classroom instruction when teachers plan instruction according to the guidelines of the written curriculum. Not all assessed curricula necessarily comes from tests created by government agencies, but when government assessments do exist, the tests are standardized and evaluate each student's performance in a uniform fashion just like the unifying standards they derive from, further supporting the "Everyman" concept focused on treating students exactly the same. The following section describes the historical and

current influence federal and state governments have on instructional planning. The final forms of standardized curricula this section addresses are the local curriculum of school districts and the supported curriculum or the materials teachers are expected to use with each student as part of their local written curriculum (Glatthorn, 2000).

    National and state written curricula. Government influence on education is not new. The Committee of Ten (Mackenzie, 1894) started the idea of a standardized American high school curriculum. But the pressures associated with accountability and the assessed curricula were not present then as they are now. Attention to the nation's literacy increased in the 1950s with the publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955) which included reading practices endorsed by the U.S. government to aid American students who seemingly required remediation in reading more than their foreign counterparts. Government influence has only escalated since, with the Back-to-Basics movement mentioned earlier and publications like *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which catalogued supposed American academic failings. As a result, debates about a national curriculum occurred. For example, Hirsch (1987) proposed a list of topics for American cultural literacy that became part of national debate about a standardized curriculum. He claimed his list included what literate Americans should know, but Krystal (1999) argued Hirsch's view was inaccurate to what literate Americans should know or actually knew. Hirsch then developed the Core Knowledge Foundation, which brought his philosophy into 1000 schools in over 47 states (Kahlenberg, 2009). But it is with the national legislation of NCLB (2002) that a standardized, national curriculum became more of a reality en mass. In fact, Kahlenberg (2009) claimed Hirsch (1987, 2009), though controversial in some circles, is similar in ideal to the written curriculum of the Common Core State Standards

Initiative (CCSSI; 2010) that most of today's ELA teachers encounter when trying to plan their curricula.

The Common Core is not, however, a national curriculum. Eight states and one U.S. territory have not adopted the Common Core standards (CCSSI, 2016b). So for those few states not adopting the Common Core, teachers would encounter other state-based written curricula for what secondary ELA teachers should teach in their public schools (see, for example, Virginia Board of Education, 2010). In theory, these states could all define different content and skill requirements for secondary ELA instruction. Since the majority of states has adopted the Common Core, however, it is easiest to focus on what content and skill expectations exist in those documents, and the corresponding assessed curricula designed for those standards, as a major set of curricular materials for most teachers, though they are only part of the written curricula ELA teachers plan with when designing their curricula.

The Common Core standards for secondary ELA (CCSSI, 2010), defined as Grades 6 through 12, focuses primarily on students' reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening skills development. Similar to the NCTE standards, the Common Core does not prescribe a list of required texts teachers should use. What they do claim as critical content for all students is "classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare" (CCSSI, 2016a). In terms of the content of student writing, the standards focus on form by prescribing genres—persuasive, narrative, and informative writing, as well as fiction and literary non-fiction (CCSSI, 2010).

Unsurprisingly, there is also much flexibility for individual teachers to determine how these loose prescriptions fit in with the varied district curricula (described in the following section), another type of written curricula, teachers are likely to face. Also, the Common Core

guidelines do not assist teachers in planning for different learners, other than grade-specific designations, nor do they provide much specific guidance on how to plan instruction generally. In terms of pedagogical hints, the standards emphasize vocabulary development, including the nuances of word uses in different contexts. The implication is that when teaching words, planning for singular definitions and singular contexts would be incorrect. They also expect ELA teachers to increase the complexity of the texts students experience over time, but how teachers should do this is unclear, which could present an issue with teachers planning cohesively. The standards also address pedagogy when they endorse integrating the language elements, claiming the isolation of language skills occurred in the standards because of how integral such skills are to reading, writing, and speaking/listening. Specific recommendations for how to accomplish this task do not exist in the standards, however.

If teachers try to plan their instruction based on the assessed curricula that correspond to the Common Core standards, as likely occurs due to the pressures explained above, teachers may find themselves attempting to follow a moving target in their instructional planning. Herman and Linn (2014) discussed two popular tests aligned to the Common Core, those developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). But with the landscape of testing is changing because of a lack of consensus on what test is the best, most efficient assessment, with the SAT and ACT now potential options for districts (Madda, 2016). The replacement of NCLB (2002) with the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) also allows states and school districts to determine how they test and what emphasis they place on tests (Palochko, 2016). Therefore, teachers should not focus on specific tests in their planning. Instead, it would appear teachers may benefit from additional guidance in instructional planning on how to incorporate whatever the current

high-stakes measure is into their planning in ways rather than place them front and center to the instructional planning process to account for the politically charged and expensive moving targets "Everyman" tests are.

In addition, standardized measures that disregard student difference are is in direct conflict with NCTE statements about reading and writing assessments, which promoted ongoing, differentiated assessments (NCTE & IRA, 2009). It is possible for teachers to use a variety of ongoing assessments in their daily instruction to align with NCTE standards and assessment procedures in addition to these standardized assessments. However, the current societal emphasis on standardized test measures associated with the prominence of the written curriculum of the Common Core (CCSSI, 2010), and the potential consequences for teachers' pay (Max, et al., 2014) and federal funding tied to results of students' test scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b) may create conflicts for teachers when trying to decide how to plan with the different curricular expectations teachers face. Those conflicts may strengthen if the NCTE recommendations are not clearly aligned to government-based guidelines and the accountability measures tied to them, especially when coupled with the potential utility concerns of NCTE's standards mentioned above.

Local written curricula. As ELA teachers plan instruction, they also may consult the written curricula of their local school districts. But it becomes difficult to know exactly what teachers might face in specific school districts given that there are approximately 13,500 public school districts across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2015c). In addition, these curricula likely vary widely from district to district as local curriculum is tied to the needs of specific communities, or the Everyman needs of all students within a specific community. Some differences among communities are reflected in exemplars of ELA district curricula

included in publications intending to guide districts' creation of their curricula (see Springer & NCTE Committee to Evaluate Curriculum Guidelines and Competency Requirements, 1981; Tchudi, 1991). Consistency does exist across ELA district curriculum, however, in the supported curriculum examined below, and is therefore, the most useful way to approach what local school districts provide that further impacts ELA teacher planning.

   Supported curricula. What Glatthorn (2000) designated its own curriculum type, the supported curriculum of school districts, is the set of textbooks and other resources available to teachers for use with students. These materials are the resources of Everyman; all students receive them and are expected to read them, such as the required novels for a specific ELA course. Applebee (1989) surveyed department chairs in 488 secondary schools to uncover what book-length works secondary students were reading. He replicated Anderson (1964) to see what changes may or may not have occurred over time. Applebee found that titles varied widely for Grades 7 and 8 but that 50% or more of the public schools surveyed shared at least one title in common in Grades 9 through 12. The samples from Catholic and independent schools often included the same titles as the public schools but with less frequency than the public schools. In terms of trends over time, Applebee noted that some authors, such as Shakespeare, have been consistently popular, but that the specific titles required have changed over time. Additionally, he found the number of book-length works required has increased since 1964 resulting in some additional titles, such as young adult literature selections of *The Pigman* and *The Outsiders.* Therefore, though today districts likely require many of the same canonical authors as they have for decades, this information alone does not assist teachers in their planning of *how* to teach those literary works.

Similarly, ELA teachers often use literature anthologies as part of their supported curricula, but those works, unlike novels, often include pedagogical suggestions. Applebee (1991) analyzed seven popular anthology series for seventh through twelfth grades, 42 textbooks total, and explored the literary works and activities within them. He found that suggested activities varied widely, but some common literature selections existed across the different anthologies. Additionally, Applebee (1991) compared his findings with those of Lynch and Evans (1963) to analyze changes in anthologies over time. Applebee found some changes occurred in which texts were present based on a shift away from contemporary authors in favor of more canonical works. But he also found that the genres of literature present stayed relatively consistent. So though current anthology series may be quite similar, their title selections may vary somewhat from what was found in Applebee's now dated study. But it is also important to recognize that just because an anthology contains a certain work does not mean a teacher will teach it since anthologies may contain more selections than one can teach in a year. Therefore, teachers likely have additional decision making as they plan their curriculum, perhaps specified by the district curricula, as to which titles they teach and which they exclude.

Regardless of the titles present in the anthologies or the titles teachers select to teach, a curricular concern exists with these supported curriculum materials related to how they assist ELA teachers in teaching the texts. Applebee (1991) found the majority of activities required mere fact recall and did not promote depth in students' thinking. This finding is comparable to what Lynch and Evans (1963) reported. Applebee (1991) evaluated this finding as shocking because the ELA field at the time had moved away from supporting the New Critical tradition of earlier decades. Others expressed similar concerns with shallow coverage of material and/or unsound curriculum practices appearing in literature anthologies (see, Boynton, 1989; Guth,

1989). More recent support comes from Grossman and Thompson's (2008) findings, which detailed an example of writing instruction found in supported curricula but not grounded in ELA recommended practices for content depth. Yet research studies also indicated teachers use these curricular materials heavily (Applebee, 1990; Grossman & Thompson, 2008). Therefore, it is possible that the limited help ELA teachers might receive with their instructional planning could actually hinder its effectiveness.

   Aligning curricula. In aligning these Everyman written and recommended standards, a goal of effective instructional planning mentioned earlier, help for teachers is limited. NCTE (2013) provided few resources for secondary teachers on places where the two sets of curriculum guidelines overlap, such as text complexity and working with nonfiction texts. These resources reflect the only evidence of any "how to" information related to planning that aligns the different standards guidelines of written and recommended curricula in practical ways. The resources are limited and they provide examples of specific classrooms, such as how one teacher addressed text complexity with the specific district curricula of her school. There is some mention of questions teachers should consider depending on the variety of contexts secondary ELA teachers across the country might find themselves in with the varying district curricula or specific supported curricula of a given school. But then individual teachers must figure out how their texts might address text complexity, what they should do if texts do not naturally do that, and how they align the rest of the standards content and skills prescriptions into their instruction. Therefore, even if the NCTE resource on text complexity helps secondary ELA teachers to scaffold their instruction with that aspect of the Common Core, how literary devices and other elements of the Common Core should be addressed are left unattended as is any idea of a decision-making process teachers might engage in to help them make decisions on their own, as

the resources that NCTE (2013) does provide in some way for two pieces, text complexity and connections with the world.

Perhaps the most troubling alignment-related issue, Hodge and Benko (2014) found discrepancies between instructional practices in popular PD materials for teaching with the written curriculum of the ELA Common Core from ELA researchers and the instructional practices of publications from leading Common Core authors who lack such ELA expertise, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel. Hodge and Benko argued that teachers must understand the difference between recommendations that are based on research versus those that are not. But the question becomes, who is there to help teachers understand what they are reading as they plan and align the written curricula to their instruction effectively? Effectively aligning the Everyman curricula of the Common Core with NCTE recommendations and district curricula and materials is likely something specific ELA PD workshops and the like must resolve to improve ELA teacher instructional planning.

It is likely that one correct way to make these alignment decisions does not exist because in education in real life, as opposed to a medieval allegory about the pathway to heaven, human differences seem to matter, those of the teachers and students, as evidenced by research on instruction at the micro-level, instructional activities, where ELA experts have argued certain "best practices" do not seem effective for all teachers and students (see, for examples, Delpit, 2006; Smagorinsky, 2009). Therefore it is no surprise that the same would hold true at the macro-level of instructional planning shown by support from curriculum experts such as Kelly (2006) and Barrow (1984) who agreed with Common Core (2016a) on the importance of teachers in the design of instruction because of the potentially unique educational and instructional goals of each teacher. The Everyman expectations of recommended, written,

assessed, and supported curricula may be important to unifying content and skills students encounter in a country that closely monitors students' educational progress. But in this Everyman perception, the curricula present merely a minimum of expectation, a reduction of what teachers might teach to simply what is supposedly common for all.

Beyond the Everyman Curriculum: ELA Teacher Thinking

Though we do not know much about how preservice teachers are prepared to plan instruction, preservice training seems to lack the requisite depth that nuanced processes like instructional planning would require (Hillocks, 2011; Williamson, 2013). This potential issue, coupled with activity theory that suggests teachers' practices are influenced by many, sometimes competing forces (Grossman et al., 1999), can result in teachers planning instruction that opposes the preservice training they have received (see, for example, Johnson et al., 2003).

In addition, we do not know much about how teachers currently plan because though some anecdotal evidence suggests coherence, integration, and content depth may occur in individual teachers' instruction (see, for examples, Lindblom, Galante, Grabow, & Wilson, 2016; Moss, 2011), there is other anecdotal evidence that focuses only on specific classroom assignments or activities where no mention of long-term cohesion or integration with parts of the discipline occurs (see, for example, Esposito, 2012; Kail, 2008). Publication restrictions and the common practice of discussing discrete instructional activities apart from the bigger picture of planning do not necessarily mean teachers do not plan for cohesion, integration, and content depth. However, what limited empirical evidence exists suggests teachers are likely not planning as desired in these domains. Reports exist of teachers engaging in practices that directly counter the goals of planning in those domains (see, Applebee & Langer, 2011; Hillocks, 2006;

Smagorinsky et al., 2011). Therefore, this rest of this section will describe approaches for how to plan across these three domains.

Once ELA teachers have their recommended and written curriculum guidelines, as well as their district provided materials, decisions ELA teachers make about what to teach and how to design their instruction are ideally informed, in part, by their philosophy about the purpose of ELA instruction. Regardless of the effectiveness of preservice teacher training and/or the "twisting path" (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003) of new teacher development complicated by many potentially opposing forces mentioned in Chapter 1, it is at this early juncture where ELA teachers may already find themselves faced with their first planning problem: how to define their educational goals as ELA teachers that will ultimately guide the rest of their instructional planning.

Varying views exist about the purpose of ELA instruction and what appropriate pedagogy should be. Brauer and Clark (2008) claimed ELA teachers are faced with educating students for "academic literacy, moral development, cultural tolerance, media savvy, literature appreciation, standards achievement, and civic responsibility" (p. 296). But, they also claimed this issue of varying purposes for ELA instruction needs reframing before any further planning because it is precisely ELA teachers' piecemeal picking of educational goals that creates incoherence in instruction.

Whether or not others agree with Brauer and Clark's opinion about reframing ELA purposes, it does appear there are specific, desirable pedagogical approaches to planning ELA curriculum regardless of teachers' goals. Therefore, the rest of this section focuses on a synthesis of literature about pedagogical decision-making surrounding cohesion, integration, and content

depth, three key components of instructional planning according to ELA-specific and general

instructional planning experts (see, for examples, Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1995, 1997).

Cohesion. Once individual ELA teachers have decided what their goals are for ELA

instruction, one of the macro-level instructional planning tasks that can be problematic as

mentioned earlier, teachers then determine how to organize the contents of their instruction

within their courses to support those greater goals. So, for example, if teachers decide an

educational goal is to prepare students to be effective communicators, then they must decide how

they will structure their lessons to arrive at that goal. It is at this juncture where cohesion

becomes necessary for effective instruction. Teachers must decide how they will organize

lessons so that the curricular conversations, as Applebee (1996) puts it, that students engage in

from day to day and across the semester/year are connected somehow. In addition, teachers

should consider how these connections are made explicit and meaningful to students' lives

(Beane, 1995). More specifically, ELA teachers think through the connections between lessons

that help to create instructional units, as well as how units connect with each other across an

entire course (Smagorinsky, 2008) in ways that enable students to see the relevance of their ELA

study to life outside the walls of the classroom. Consensus does not exist for *how* an ELA teacher

arrives at cohesion for these two instructional planning tasks, however.

In fact, many highly nuanced approaches exist. Any of these approaches may allow

teachers to create effective curricular cohesion, but they also require teachers possess a wealth of

content knowledge in order to decide which organizational approach to take with their specific

supported curricula. For example, teachers can develop cohesion across lessons through

instructional units that are organized around "themes, literary works…composing processes and

skills, and…the nature of language itself" (Tchudi, 1995, p. 40). Or, teachers may choose to

organize around themes, periods, movements, regions, genres, authors, or key strategies (Smagorinksy, 2008), or perhaps ethical or philosophical concepts (Hillocks, 2016). For unifying content across a course teachers have similar variety. Teachers could connect units through some overarching concept, such as themes, strategies, stances, and aesthetics (Smagorinsky, 2008) or they may utilize, accidently or not, one of the highly nuanced structures Applebee (1996) described, some of which have no cohesion at all despite the appearance of cohesion teachers lacking full understanding might perceive.

With all of these choices, beyond the initial content depth required to understand what they all mean, teachers must deeply understand the materials they are working with to pick the most effective organization. For example, teachers may need to analyze a particular set of texts they must teach to discover why a thematic organization might work better than a focus on a singular literary work for an instructional unit. Or, if a course is already designed by the school district as one that must teach Early American Literature, does that mean every unit and the overall course must focus on elements related to a specific time period? Further still, teachers must decide, how to incorporate plot and other skills of mandated curricula into whatever their organizational framework will teach. So, for example, if an entire course will be connected via some theme, how will skills of characterization and the like be made relevant to those themes? Regardless of the specificity or lack thereof in any publications that deal with cohesive planning, the scope of what teachers must know to make effective decisions could never be addressed exhaustively. It is for this reason that contextualized assistance in applying these general cohesion concepts could be useful.

Another important consideration with instructional planning for cohesion is that teachers must also possess extensive understanding of their students. Teachers must not only see the

connections within and between units for themselves but also tie students' wants/needs into the content they have to work with so that they, too, see the connections. This task could be particularly challenging with some canonical works schools often require students read (Rosenblatt, 1995). Although not focused on cohesion per se, Noddings (2006) argued certain universal topics are relevant to life, such as learning and self-understanding, parenting, gender, and religion. Teachers could change the organization of their ELA instruction to fall under these life categories, a way of connecting lessons of ELA content together under specific life themes deemed relevant by the author. In this way, teachers could then address how their specific works address some of those topics uniquely. But teachers are still then on their own in uncovering how to make the units across the course cohere.

In contrast, involving students in instructional planning might assist teachers in finding what is relevant to students that they could then turn into coherent curricula. General curriculum expert, Beane (1997) argued for student input, claiming that after repeated work with students and teachers learning his methods that common topics evolved, such as life in the future. Though he focused on students generating topics so that integration of discipline-specific knowledge could then occur, further discussed below, what students generate is relevant to them and could be the beginning of teachers connecting content together across the course once they know where students' interests lie. Similarly, ELA experts Beach and Myers (2001) chronicled their experiences with a student-centered approach to instructional planning evolving from salient points about the world students selected from literature they read. But both these strategies rely on teachers having not just deep understanding of coherence but also comfort with some level of uncertainty as the planning unfolds organically. Embracing uncertainty can allow teachers to focus on relationships with their students where rich learning can development, but preserve

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teacher preparation focused heavily on formal planning practices decontextualized from actual students seems to discourage such uncertainty (Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015). Despite Floden and Clark (1988) agreeing with the importance of maintaining some uncertainty in teaching, they claimed there may be instances where teachers could improve their instruction by reducing some uncertainties, for example through additional training in knowledge and skills. Applebee (1996) showed the years involved in one teacher's knowledge and skills increase related to coherence, once employed, which reflected the struggle a veteran teacher went through to uncover an engaging, coherent organizational approach to his planning unassisted.

Therefore, it seems a great burden falls on teachers when planning for coherence, with or without help from students, and that in-service training, guided by a content expert, could provide teachers with necessary assistance in easing some uncertainty of instructional planning, since preservice teacher training depth is seemingly not sufficient to support teachers' planning (Hillocks, 2011; Williamson, 2013). In addition, the duration of preservice training in pedagogical content knowledge is not very long, which does not allow teachers much practice to master curricular coherence. Teachers must also have a deep level of content knowledge, understanding of students' needs, and pedagogical knowhow, which new ELA teachers do not have at the same level as their veteran counterparts (McCann et al., 2005).

Though there are a variety of materials to lead teachers to coherent instructional planning, if they are decontextualized from actual classroom practice, such as in a methods course, teachers may struggle to successfully implement them. This issue is compounded by the use of resources that are not discipline-specific, such as Wiggins and McTighe (2005). In their *Understanding by Design* approach, Wiggins and McTighe prescribed the useful framework of creating essential questions as big ideas by which to group instruction. These big ideas force

teachers to think about defining relevant focal points and how relevant ideas can go together. But if ELA teachers received general pedagogical training in instructional planning, as preservice teachers they may have used such materials apart from an ELA expert which may have left them with incomplete knowledge of what coherence means in the context of their discipline.

With all these potential complications to a teacher developing a thorough understanding of curricular cohesion, it is no surprise that Applebee, Burroughs, and Stevens (2000) found the majority of the 19 experienced teachers they studied used designs for their high school literature curricula that lacked appropriate coherence. So, it would appear that ELA teachers might need more assistance with how to create cohesion if instructional planning resources cannot provide enough detail, especially when competing against the pressures of mandated Everyman curricula mentioned earlier and their lack, or inappropriate, pedagogical recommendations.

Before leaving the discussion of cohesion, it is important to note that these two ideas of within unit and between unit curricular cohesion have application to across-grade cohesion as well if teachers worked in a department that supported collaboration in graduating students' learning through the Common Core. Bruner (1960) and his spiral curriculum focused on the repetition of "key structures" across grades as a way of connecting learning over time. Early NCTE curricular recommendations (Hosic, 1917) and current standards documents (CCSSI, 2010) somewhat reflect this idea with the repetition of some of their content and skills prescriptions in the across-grade sequencing they provided that attempted to graduate students' learning over time. Though it is not the focus of this study, by using deep knowledge of content and students' interests, teachers could create instruction across grade levels that graduates the skills in the mandated curricula as well as spiraling back on other relevant topics from grade to grade, increasing curricular cohesion to its greatest level.

Integration. Initially, integration may seem very similar to cohesion. To avoid confusion, it is perhaps easiest to start by distinguishing between these two terms. Both involve organization of content. Ladson-Billings (1995) explained integration as the combination of parts of a discipline, or different disciplines, within instructional units. Whereas coherence concerns what umbrella those parts are combined through, such as instructional units and how those units go together in some meaningful way as a result. So, when it comes to ELA integration, specifically, a concern is with how the parts of the discipline—reading, writing, literature, vocabulary, grammar, speaking/listening—are taught in tandem within instructional units rather than teaching those areas in isolation from each other.

As the above analysis of early NCTE recommendations demonstrated (Hatfield, 1935; Hosic, 1917), suggested practice did not always endorse integration. Applebee's (1974) historical review of English curriculum movements suggested that, as early as the 1920s, scholars began to focus on ELA's components as integral for effective communication about literature, even though change in practice was not necessarily immediate. Current ELA Common Core mandates (CCSSI, 2010) and NCTE standards of today reflect recommendations of integration, despite how they separate the parts in the curricular documents (NCTE & IRA, 1996). However, these documents make no prescriptions for *how* teachers should create that integration, and empirical research on best practices for integration does not appear to exist.

Instead, once literature unit foci have been established, articles from practitioner journals, such as *English Journal*, seem to support integration of the parts around literature and offer more detailed evidence of successful integration through anecdotal examples of teachers integrating all parts of the ELA discipline within specific instructional activities. For example, Wang (2015) explained her secret compartment book project that integrated the reading of Toni Morrison's

Beloved with writing skills and visual representations of what students read. Any variety of combinations of the different ELA aspects could be visible in specific practitioner's lessons based on whatever the individual teaching and learning goals were for that teacher. However, such specific activities may or may not relate to the circumstances an individual teacher faces because of the many different viable approaches to instruction teachers could take given their students and teaching goals. So, it is possible those examples of integration may not find replication into others' planning practices, if ELA teachers take the time out of their already busy schedules to scour through such vetted resources only a paid membership affords. These issues provide support for an argument on the role subject-specific PD could have in improving integration for ELA in-service teachers.

With digital technologies continuing to evolve, research skills and the impact technologies have on those processes have resulted in increased examples for how to integrate research skills and technology into ELA instruction. Common Core and NCTE recommended curricula support the use of technology for research and composition. So, it is no surprise that ELA practitioners provide a wealth of examples of activities that highlight composition with technology through varying multimedia and web-based projects, including how those writing elements can be tied into literature, clear integration (Hicks, 2013; Kajder, 2010). But, composing with technology does not stop there. There are also some examples of pedagogical strategies to implement when integrating technology via word processing for traditional essays, incorporating analysis of spellcheck and grammar check results, for example, to improve student learning with those tools (Potter & Fuller, 2008). In this manner, students would not need to use decontextualized grammar drills but would instead integrate the learning of grammar within specific writing needs that appear in compositions students crafted identified with the aid of

technology. There is also the idea of research location, evaluation, and use that comes from technology-based sources with further conversation as to how to use research skills instruction in this way to create a product more integrated with the rest of the course than "the research paper" was as referenced in Chapter 1.

In addition to practitioner journal articles, book-length publications often isolate one aspect of the discipline but call for integration with only vague prescriptions of to how to do so, if they provide any pedagogical specifics at all. For example, Lewis (2009) presented reading concerns at the adolescent level, for teachers of all subject areas. She provided guidelines for how reading instruction could find integration with vocabulary and literature instruction, but teachers might then need help to integrate that instruction with writing, grammar, and the like. This kind of separation then forces teachers to determine how to apply those very detailed writings about a specific area to the rest of the parts as they plan and to figure out for themselves how best to do so given the specifics of their curricular mandates and the cohesive framework they want to use.

It is also important to note that because integration occurs does not mean instruction is effective. Thompson (2002) argued developing vocabulary lists based on weak literature selections would then result in weak vocabulary instruction. Instead, a technique he suggested using is based on "high profile" words in "strong literature" (p. 62). Thompson (1998) identified a list of over 100 such words that exist across different canonical texts teachers could use. But if teachers teach only "strong literature," then perhaps they would be able to develop their own word lists directly tied to their literature selections whether or not the words are on Thompson's list thereby maintaining tighter integration.

Beyond the within-subject integration of ELA parts, there is also an argument for integration on a wider scale that breaks boundary lines of subject areas. Beane (1997) articulated a continuum of integration where a multi-disciplinary curriculum is less ideal than a fully integrated curriculum because of the greater emphasis on the disciplines themselves in interdisciplinary instruction. He claimed a fully integrated curriculum only integrates discipline-based knowledge and skills on an as needed basis in instruction, according to whatever life topic unifies the instruction and what students need to learn within that topic. So, essentially, the common course divisions between the subject areas would totally disappear in favor of classrooms that are not bound by specific subjects. Similarly, Brady (1989) developed a five-part model that breaks down the main elements of sociocultural systems and claimed this model could be a way to organize curricula that accomplishes both coherence and integration. In this design, the focus in once again on learning about life rather than learning about specific subjects such as English. In 1936, NCTE endorsed an integrated curriculum that closely matched Beane's ideal and, unsurprisingly, the single subject course design that is still popular today made it difficult for teachers to successfully adopt this curriculum despite NCTE's endorsement (Cruikshank, 2000). Therefore, it is the former type of integration this study will focus on, taking note of any interdisciplinary collaborations with other subject-area teachers outside of ELA to confirm or disconfirm teacher belief and practice in integration at that higher level that Beane (1997) claimed occurs to varying degrees.

An additional concern with teacher planning arises at this point related to how/if ELA teachers see these elements of cohesion and integration aligned. Campbell and Latimer (2012) clearly called for integration of literature and writing instruction and they addressed discussion and grammar within their planning recommendations. However, though they discuss the idea of

essential questions and cohesion related to Wiggins and McTighe (1998) their example unit

focuses solely on one literary selection and does not seem connected to any "essential questions"

that extend beyond the content and skills specific to the ELA discipline. So it is possible that

materials ELA teachers encounter may not apply this ELA research properly causing teachers to

miss out planning in such ways.

In summary, just as with cohesion, a variety of approaches to integrate appear valid. And

within the topic of integration, ELA teachers may want to consider not only how they plan to

integrate the varying parts of the ELA discipline, and how integrating those parts may change

with technology advancements, but also how the content and skills of other disciplines may

enhance the ELA educational and instructional goals.

Content depth. Once ELA teachers have determined the major foci for their units, how

all the lessons and units will connect across a course, and decided how units will combine

writing with literature and the other aspects of the ELA discipline, they must then address

decision-making concerns with specific content and skills instruction. For example, what exactly

will teachers decide to address about a given novel and, more importantly, *how* will they decide

to emphasize this content in relation to the overall goals of the instruction. This is where, though

the variety of Everyman curricula mentioned above may give teachers mandates for *what*

teachers must teach, teachers must determine *how* those elements fit into whatever other content

they deem necessary to accomplishing their educational goals and *how* they will plan activities.

When Applebee (1996) wrote of curricular conversations, he used "quality content" as

part of content depth. What students engage in must be worth talking about, in other words.

Though he suggested some content might be less meaningful for educational purposes than

others, a key element to his stance is how content was embedded in larger conversations. For

example, he asserted that popular literature students find personally relevant might have little literary merit leaving conversations "thin" (p. 54) if teachers organized their conversations solely around those works. But he is also addressing cohesion when he later argued that when thin content is placed in other contexts, ignoring the authors' intent with a novel for example, the materials could take on a richer, deeper value in the conversation. Therefore, thin literature, placed in a framework of gender role studies or other relevant topics the cohesion section above addressed could allow what was once thin and not thoughtful to assume new depth. So elements of cohesion can impact content depth. Additionally, integration can impact depth. Hillocks (2011) previously found ELA teachers engaged in pedagogy that reinforced superficiality, such as decontextualized grammar drills referenced in Chapter 1, where students merely learn for a worksheet. Because those two curricular planning areas are already addressed above, this final section of planning recommendations focuses on content depth apart from cohesion and integration. Namely, how can teachers ensure they teach in a way that requires students to think deeply, or critically, about content rather than merely cover topics?

Unfortunately, Hillocks (2010) claimed secondary English education literature provides little clarity on what critical thinking means. And this section intends to show how he may be correct. In order to counteract examples of supposed coverage such as Hillocks' (2016) claim of literary term superficiality in high school literature curricula, or reductionist question-and-answer sessions where "discussions" merely regurgitate facts from a text (Hillocks, 2011), teachers may consider the types of thinking students perform when engaged in instructional activities. Some claim thinking skills are subject-specific (Moje & Sutherland, 2003; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), whereas others claim thinking skills are general and apply similarly across disciplines (Jablon, 2014: Paul, 1993; Tishman, Perkins, & Jay 1995). The generalists often recommend lists

of words that include synthesize or analyze, for example, with the intent that such thinking words, including higher order thinking associated with the final three tiers of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, help elevate the depth of the instruction beyond rote recall. Yet Paul (1993) found such simplicity and misapplication of Bloom to classroom activity instead of lesson planning practices as Bloom originally intended appalling. So, Paul combated both problems by creating 35 different "strategies," (p. 394) or kinds of thinking, including activities such as evaluation of arguments and the credibility of source information. However, these thinking activities as opposed to verbs to guide planning are still general to all subjects, so without a plethora of "how to" recommendations, it is unclear whether or not ELA teachers would get to deep thinking from pursuing these avenues.

In contrast, disciplinary literacy theorists, or those who subscribe to discipline-specific forms of thinking would seem to provide more helpful information. They contend that ELA-specific thinking practices related to literature include thought about the language and form of text, exploration of the social and cultural worlds within texts, and thinking about literature through different interpretive lenses (Park, 2013). But just because students think about metaphor, language of some literature, does that mean it is deep thought? For thinking involved in ELA-specific writing, Park (2013) claimed there is even less certainty. However, Applebee's (1984) study of 15 high school students' writing over a 16-month period, resulted in a coding system modeled after the categories of writing developed by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) and Moffett (1968b) that explained the different kinds of thinking students engage in when writing for specific purposes. So, in instances of observational writing the thinking would be of less depth than thinking associated with writing a summary of a piece of literature that requires synthesis. However, the coding Applebee used for writing purposes is not

unique to ELA contexts. In other words, what summary writing in ELA classes looks like could be different from summary in another course. He provided examples for the writing purposes of reporting and summarizing in both literature and social studies scenarios that reflected this point.

Therefore, how all the musings of these thinking experts apply practically to teaching thinking for depth in ELA contexts, specifically, is a bit unclear. Just as Paul (1993) criticized teachers' use of Bloom (1956) taxonomy of cognitive domains for being applied in a cursory and inappropriate ways, merely understanding that one must synthesize information across a text to create a summary does not guarantee a thoughtful exercise just because it is something literary analysts do (Rainey & Moje, 2012). Depending on the types of sources students are working with, how directly or implicitly content is stated could determine how thoughtful an activity the summarization becomes. For example, Hillocks, McCabe and McCampbell (1971) suggested differences exist in required skills for interpreting non-fiction and fiction texts. They claimed inference is less important in non-fiction text analysis and interpretation than with fictional works because of the purpose of non-fiction texts to deliver information rather than create experiences as literary texts do. Therefore, summarizing a non-fiction piece where information is often directly stated could be quite different in the thinking required than summarizing a piece of fiction where a main idea or theme may not be directly stated.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, what follows is a less a synthesis of literature based on some kind of theoretical backing of critical thinking in ELA, which really does not exist, but is instead a synthesis of major approaches to teaching ELA content and skills according to some of the thinking behaviors apparent in ELA instruction mentioned above, namely reasoning, relating, questioning, and synthesizing, that have direct application to recommended practices in ELA instruction that could promote depth of thought within those kinds of thinking.

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Rather than isolating specific components of ELA as the literature often does, these categories of thinking instead seem to cross over in various places within the discipline. This is an organization, therefore, that ultimately adds to the ideas of coherence and integration supported by earlier parts of this literature review.

Reasoning. Reasoning appears to be one of the main types of problem solving or analysis techniques students can engage in that has potential to activate deep levels of thinking in ELA instruction. I will provide examples from language study and writing to know a few recommended practices. For language study, Thompson (2002) and Kail (2008) found success with increasing students' depth of thought by having them examine Latin and Greek roots when studying language. This approach provided a way of understanding *why* words are spelled as they are and carry the meanings as they, a type of reasoning through language meaning.

Endorsed writing practices are probably the most comprehensive place where reasoning as a form of deep thought appears. Hillocks (2010) detailed a structured process approach to argument development, using Toulmin's (1958) terms, such as *claim, warrant, backing,* and the like, where students start with the *data,* or the details, and then generate a thesis/claim after analyzing the data, or solving the problem. Others have found success teaching argument development and reasoning in different ways (see, for examples, Lunsford, 2002; Rex, Thomas, & Engel, 2010). So, teachers may select different practices based on their students and their own preferences. One may also engage in a reasoning process when using technology to conduct and use research to judge the usefulness of materials found for a given writing purpose. The *affordances* of current technologies, the properties that help determine what a technology allows us to do (Norman, 1988), have changed what student researchers can do. For example, collaboration via the Internet allows anyone to be a published writer, which increases the

quantity of easy-to-access information, but not necessarily its reliability. This phenomenon has led information technology scholars, like Summey (2013), as well as English experts like Kajder (2010), to claim deep thinking skills are necessary in locating, evaluating, organizing and even sharing information for efficient and effective research.

Relating. Concerning relating as a means of thinking in ELA, relating is the deep thinking that comes from personally connecting, incorporating information of personal experience that goes beyond the reading or writing content/skills under study into the meaning making students generate. Rosenblatt (1995) claimed the meaning of a text is not static, but instead varies based on the life experiences of the reader. She did not explain how to make this instruction happen, but Rosenblatt (1978) claimed text impacts readers and readers bring different meanings to the text based on their life experiences. An example of a pedagogical activity that accomplished this task in a thoughtful way comes from Romano (1998) who assigned a paper about memorable experiences with literature to his undergraduate English majors. He found students' papers, though very different in their perspectives on life, revealed similarities in the impact literature had on students' identity formation. This idea reinforced the transactional experience Rosenblatt (1978) supported. Romano's activity would likely need to be adapted for younger students. Romano (2000) also offered a way for students of secondary or college level to relate to what they are read, fiction or non-fiction, through the experience of creative writing. His multigenre writing assignment asks students to write in emotive forms like poetry that help students to tap into relational aspects thoughtfully as they work with writing in such genres. In addition, journal writing activities or other short writing assignments that come from writing-to-learn pedagogies (Newell, 2006) may advance students' knowledge and depth of thinking in this relating way. Nurenberg (2016) explained the importance of appropriate

scaffolding for instructional activities for heterogeneous contexts. Therefore, given some teachers' teaching contexts, teachers might benefit from additional assistance for the successful planning of these instructional activities to accommodate differentiation should the activities be successful at the level of encouraging deep thinking for all students.

Questioning. Through questioning, students have other opportunities to engage thoughtfully with ELA content. The questions can come via oral discussion or written forms. If discussion is the strategy used, Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, and Prendergast's (1997) study of more than 2,000 eighth and ninth graders over two years found that teacher-guided, whole class and small group discussions must be based on open-ended questions about literature to improve students' depth of literature comprehension and writing performance. So when students ask questions, ideally, the questions should be open-ended, as well, to provoke deep thought.

Critical literacy theorists and those ELA experts concerned with students developing an awareness of the multiple perspectives provide one of the clearest uses of questioning as an aid to deep thinking. Critical literacy theorists (see, Freire, 1970; New London Group, 1996; Wilson, 2014) believe in the importance of questioning texts and the levels of bias within the evidence and language authors use. This kind of analysis is intended to empower readers and make them aware of the connections between language use and information dissemination. To attain deep thought in this way, Appleman (2015), Tyson (2015), and Wilson (2014) endorsed varying approaches to applying "critical lenses" that address Marxist, feminist, and other perspectives via specific questions to help students learn how to question literature from others' perspectives.

Exercises where students question themselves to learn from their mistakes or false assumptions also provide students, and teachers, with the potential for deeper thinking. For example, when using the Kindle app with her students, Griswold (2013) encountered a problem

in that the "popular highlights" feature showed readers underlined sentences, based on the company's data gathering of what readers often highlight. These underlines could inhibit students' reading as Griswold encountered. But, within students' surprise or confusion lies a chance for thoughtful analysis of any potential significance within those lines of text had they questioned rather than ignored the content. Similarly, Emerson (2008) explained how colleagues implemented Turnitin.com, popular in secondary and higher education contexts, as a teaching tool for undergraduates to correct their mistakes and understand, for example, why something was flagged as plagiarism rather than using the tool only as a final, summative assessment of written work. By having to ask "why" questions related to performance, students can learn content more deeply.

Similarly, how teachers plan questions for research can determine the level of thoughtfulness in a research-based activity. The findings of a Pew Research survey of 2,067 Advanced Placement and National Writing Project teachers, 36% of whom teach middle or high school English, suggest that what it means to do research in school appears to have changed in ways that unfortunately lack attention to thoughtful research (Purcell et al., 2012). In other words, students are not questioning what they encounter online. The sampled teachers claimed research was once a time-consuming process of examining complex issues, but is now something that is fast-paced; students seek only to find facts they need to complete an assignment. English educators, such as Hicks and Turner (2013), argued that English teachers should combat those changes and reconsider how they teach research skills because "asking only questions that can be answered by a search engine" (p. 61) degrades complex literacy tasks and fails to develop the critical thinking required for research in the digital age. If we want to engage students' curiosity

through research, which encourages their questioning the world around them, simplistic research tasks that "can be answered by a search engine" will contradict that goal.

Synthesizing. As students write or read, with research or without, if teachers are creating coherent instruction especially, students should have plentiful opportunities to synthesize content across the ELA discipline in thoughtful ways, the final example of content depth is this review. Simply put, synthesizing in this context is the idea of combining things to come up with a new, enhanced meaning. Moss (2011) recommended using text sets with middle school students. She provided examples of young adult literature and texts by minority authors, grouped by theme, that could help students gain diversity of perspectives about life beyond the perspective of white, male authors of the traditional canon. Lindblom and colleagues (2016) integrated technology when they asked students to synthesize literary and informational texts through composing infographics. With the research examples explained above, students might synthesize information across a variety of sources they found online to generalize a point they uncovered despite the difference in the original authors' intents. Similarly, Applebee (1984) addressed synthesis in writing, generally, through summary and theory writing.

In summary, based on the limited examples presented above of approaches to instructional activities that provide the opportunity for deep thinking along the lines of reasoning, questioning, relating, and synthesizing, planning for thoughtful instruction is no simple task, especially with the varying detail on pedagogical strategies provided when teachers also face trying to plan integrated and cohesive curriculum. As mentioned above, there are many nuances to the creation of thoughtful activity that impact the success of the instruction, that is if teachers even secure access to the sometimes seemingly competing viewpoints. Resources for teaching content thoughtfully are often buried among a variety of sources that may, upon first look, not

suggest content depth is even the goal. In addition, there is the highly contextualized nature of individual teachers' successes with a given approach to deal with. These issues, and the separation of the different aspects of ELA mentioned earlier are reasons why teachers might need PD to gain more proficiency with this aspect of their instructional planning.

The complexity of this singular element of planning exceeds what the scope of preservice training is likely to provide given the other requirements discussed in Chapter 1, which explains why Hillocks (2011) may be accurate to criticize ELA teacher preparation programs for their lack of depth. The depth required for ELA teachers to be effective curriculum planners for content depth alone is quite complex. This aspect of instructional planning becomes especially important to in-service teachers, however, because the Common Core standards appear to address pedagogical rigor in some ways like increasing text complexity and vocabulary nuance mentioned previously (CCSSI, 2010). Unsurprisingly, Herman and Linn (2014) argued aligned tests developed by PARCC and SBAC mentioned earlier include higher order thinking, more than state designed tests. They used Webb's (1997) Depth of Knowledge (DOK), the taxonomy used to evaluate the alignment of curriculum tasks, standards, and assessment items. But there is no guarantee teachers can get students to such high/deeper levels of thinking from this information alone. Mere test item analysis does not indicate what instruction should look like. Also, if these tests will be replaced with others that align to the standards such information on test analysis, of any test, the results of a specific test's item analysis become even less central to instructional planning for thought. This is where PD related to content depth comes in, not test preparation materials. Teachers need help piecing together a coherent and integrated ELA curriculum that addresses content deeply and aligns to mandate curricula from state and local

agencies, which places test preparation in a suitable position among those more significant elements of student learning.

In-service Teacher Professional Development

Given the complicated process of ELA teacher decision-making surrounding instructional planning, as well as the limitations of preservice teacher training noted in Chapter 1, and the call from English experts to contextualize planning-related knowledge and skills, in-service training seems to provide an opportunity for teachers to improve their PCK (Shulman, 1986) related to ELA instructional planning. Because in-service contexts may place limitations on new teachers' conceptualizations of their discipline, working with new teachers within their employment may be more helpful in their overcoming those limitations than during preservice preparation where the limitations may not exist. As an example, Eames (2016) studied collaboration between science experts and new science teachers who developed representations of science content the new teachers implemented in their instruction. Eames reported new science teachers' initial conceptualizations about science often included references to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, whereas the expert scientist discussed the key facets of the discipline, not curriculum. But within this in-service interaction, the new teachers adjusted their thinking, meshing what was important for the school context, curriculum, with other important aspects of their discipline they may or may not have entertained prior to entering the in-service context where the curriculum seemingly dominated their thoughts.

Therefore, if in-service training is potentially helpful in overcoming any school-based limitations on teachers' PCK that could impact their instructional planning practices, assuming designing training for teachers is similar to designing a curriculum for secondary ELA students, then facilitators should tie educational goals to teachers' training. Hammerness, Darling-

Hammond, and Bransford (2005) suggested the educational goal for teacher development should be to create *adaptive experts,* or teachers who can efficiently and effectively make use of teaching techniques for the varying and frequently changing needs of students. Because ELA teachers need to plan their curriculum so that the coherence, integration, and depth meet the needs of their changing learners, ELA instructional planning instruction seems fitting for the goal of adaptive expertise. In turn, if creating adaptive experts is the goal of teacher PD over a career, then the question becomes what does one need to learn in order to become an adaptive expert, particularly related to instructional planning?

Based on various studies of experts and novices, Berliner (1986) described novices as being routine-driven and rather inflexible when compared to their expert counterparts. Novices also see surface level characteristics rather than the higher order categorization of experts when making observations. These expert characteristics appear to be the same kinds of thinking ELA teachers should assist students in making, via deep engagement with content, as well as the kinds of thinking necessary for the ELA teachers to develop curricula that is coherent and integrated, and ultimately meaningful to students. In terms of instructional planning expertise, McNaughton (2011) claimed experts recognize patterns quickly which allows them to "innovate and modify" instruction (p. 133) in ways different from novice teachers. Therefore, the PD new teachers, specifically, receive could provide them with opportunities to development more expert-like pattern recognition by giving them deliberate practice in identifying patterns. Pattern recognition skills appear in the decision-making behaviors of instructional planning for coherence and integration. Only with specific context, such that in-service training provides, can teachers organize ELA content and skills in ways that synthesize their similarities for utility.

In terms of how training can improve the adaptive expertise of teachers, theories about expert development suggest expert skills develop after many years of practice. Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993) synthesized research across various domains and concluded a minimum of ten years of concentrated practice, many years beyond requirements of teacher certification, is required to become an expert. Someone more expert than the learners typically guides this practice (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Ericsson, 2006). This collaborative element is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) analysis of the way apprentices learn. Both these theories posit that learning is socially constructed. But with adaptive experts, specifically, Clark (2008) claimed metacognitive training and deliberate practice is also important. In other words, teachers need to engage in goal-driven instruction based on their needs and ultimately the needs of their students. Regular practice of this kind that encourages reflection on teaching practices and student performance promotes the development of adaptive expertise (Schon, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Therefore, ineffective training may result in teachers never attaining expert-level performance in the ways described because simply investing time on something does not guarantee expertise (Clark, 2008). However, individual school districts have flexibility to provide whatever kind of PD training they choose, whether or not it matches these ideas, since state-produced documents which require PD do not provide specifications for how that training should occur (Goldrick, 2016). This flexibility is similar to the way a variety of curricular mandates do not specify how teachers should carry out instruction. It would appear similar problems result, as well, in that much of current PD for teachers does not appear very effective, according to the failings presented in Chapter 1, likely because the training lacks alignment to effective adult learning practices.

This problem with PD is why Dunst and Trivette (2009) created a strategy for PD to better meet educators' training needs. Their approach provides a research base, which supports similar theories of how experts develop, even though the authors' intent was not specifically tied to that objective. For example, their Participatory Adult Learning Strategies (PALS) approach is based on adult learning methods such as coaching (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), which mirrors the collaborative element of adaptive expertise development. They also used principles of guided design (Hancock, Coscarelli, & White, 1983), which emphasizes context-based decision-making within groups of learners that includes a facilitator. The PALS strategy does not require a specific form for training, however. Instead it subscribes to specific trainer and trainee roles, which can be useful in evaluating in-service programs, as long as "training is provided on multiple occasions and multiple learning opportunities are afforded within any one training session" (Dunst & Trivette, 2009, p. 173).

Professional learning communities. A potential solution to the ineffective types of PD referenced earlier, which incorporates PALS and other learning theories, exists in the professional learning community (PLC) model of teacher development. But, it is important first to differentiate what a PLC is versus what it is not to arrive at a clear reference for how PLC will be defined for the purposes of this study.

Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) reviewed research on PLCs and concluded, "there is no universal definition" (p. 222). Instead, commonalities in PLC research studies indicate PLCs adhere to five characteristics: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (see, for examples, Hord, 1997a, 2004; Newmann, 1996). Though empirical research exists to suggest PLCs positively impact teacher development and student learning (Borko, 2004; Vescio et al.,

2008), their designs are highly varied. Dufour (2004) even argued the term is often misused because some of these variations that call themselves PLCs do not adhere to important core principles, causing the term PLC to lose its meaning.

It also appears some schools implement PLCs in ways other than intended by researchers. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) conducted interviews and surveys with 1600 teachers and an additional 1300 stakeholders in PD, some of whom were also teachers. The foundation reported 45% of teachers polled reported they were least satisfied with PD that occurred in the form of PLCs. DuFour and Reeves (2015) concluded, however, that the lack of clarity about how the PLCs were designed is relevant in understanding the teachers' negative responses to PLCs. They isolated teachers' self-reporting on other questions that indicated the teachers valued tenets of PLCs, such as collaboration, assistance with planning and instruction, and classroom-relevant practices. Therefore, Dufour and Reeves claimed leadership issues were a potential cause for teachers' reports that PLCs were undesirable and became nothing more than meetings or places to vent frustrations. It is also possible that funding, fear, and time pressures facing teachers, even those that meet during the school day together in the same building, working with the same students, can make PLCs fall short of effective (Hirsh, 2016; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007). Likely, the designs are often restricted to single sites in PLC research studies because the PLC characteristics of sharing a focus on improving the quality of students' learning through improving teacher practices, and doing so collaboratively (Dufour, 2004), is logical for people who share students. Additionally, with PD requirements at the state level, it makes sense that school districts would provide teachers in their building with localized training to meet state mandates.

But there is nothing in PLC literature to specify designs have to be centralized in one location or designed in any particular format, as long as they adhere to the characteristics, which is why there is so much variety to designs. In fact, technology affords teachers the opportunity to collaborate with people across the globe, in synchronous or asynchronous environments, creating easier opportunities for PD in some ways (National Research Council [NRC], 2007). And, if the PLC makes use of an expert facilitator to lead the group, the PLC may be able to operate more effectively as it would align with principles of adapted expertise development and the PALS strategy explained above. In addition, another of the PALS theoretical underpinnings, accelerated learning (Meier, 2000), emphasizes participants' active learning in a relaxed state of mind mirroring the supportive conditions and sharing components of the PLC. And perhaps most importantly to this study, Senge's (1990) five disciplines of a learning organization, which PLC components are based upon, discusses mental models, or assumptions and generalizations that impact perceptions about the world, and how they often are barriers to change. The way to change the often hidden thinking of mental models is through reflective inquiry (Senge, et al., 2000). This study seeks to uncover the kinds of mental models that guide teachers' decision-making processes about instructional planning by engaging reflective inquiry. This element of inquiry aligns directly with the collective creativity PLC trait where participants gather new ideas to assist in problem solving (Hord 1997b) as well as the reflection required of adaptive expertise.

Therefore, PLCs appear to provide the opportunity for a small-group, PD experience that can align with PALS strategies, as well as adaptive expertise theories presented above, as long as the design and implementation allocate for those features. In additional, instructional planning also seems appropriate content for a PLC given its ability to assist teachers in breaking habits of

thinking that might be less than desirable. But the questions then become, how have ELA teachers, specifically, used PLC designs for PD and what, if any uses have PLCs served for curriculum development improvement specifically?

PLCs in ELA teacher professional development. A common PD option English teachers have available to them comes from the National Writing Project (NWP). Though participation with NWP training is often teacher-initiated and occurs in summer institutes, different from traditional PLCs, the institutes make use of PLC tenets such that they strive, through collaboration and sharing, to successfully achieve the shared mission of improving student learning via improving teacher practice. Seglem (2009) described the nature of all the teachers, experienced and inexperienced, taking on leadership in the group activities within a five-week summer institute with the Flint Hills affiliate of the NWP. The NWP then expected teachers to take on leadership roles in their local communities. Seglem also explained the work intended to improve students' reading and writing and the two were regularly intertwined despite the name of the organization. However, Seglem's analysis was only anecdotal. Limited empirical research exists to describe the effectiveness of NWP PLCs. But the findings do show promise. Specifically, Dierking and Fox (2012) studied the impact NWP participation had on teachers and found participants' confidence increased. In addition, a national study of NWP's College-Ready Writers Program (Gallagher, Woodworth, & Arshan, 2015) found that teachers might improve their writing instruction and students' performance with reasoning and evidence use.

Beyond anecdotal evidence, limited empirical research exists that investigates secondary ELA teacher PD through non-NWP-affiliated PLCs. Specifically, the available research seems focused on online teacher professional development (OTPD). From their randomized controlled trial of OTPD that involved a total of 80 teachers across eight states, de Kramer, Masters,

O'Dwyer, Dash, and Russell (2012) suggested OTPD with ELA teacher PLCs hold promise for improving teaching and learning. Through online PLCs seventh grade language arts teachers in the treatment group participated in workshops on vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing instruction. The control group engaged in their normal PD. The treatment group showed statistically significant effects on improving students' reading comprehension and teachers' content knowledge in more than just reading. The learning community in their model included a facilitator and collaboration between teachers in the group. These features could be important components to the effectiveness of the PD as they mirror elements of the PALS strategy and PLC design tenets mentioned earlier. Additionally, this training provides the closest evidence of work with instructional planning in PD compared to the others studies available.

Similar to de Kramer and colleagues (2012), though not empirically studied or formal OTPD PLCs, NCTE offers occasional, free, web-based, live seminars for members on a variety of topics (NCTE, 2016a) that bring ELA teachers together with the shared intent of improving instruction on whatever the topic of the seminar might be. These seminars are interactive and allow ELA teachers to have PD in a community of like-minded teachers without geographical limitation. But these webinars must be purchased if live attendance is not possible, placing timing restrictions on members that may inhibit participation. Additionally, the cost of on demand seminars, as well as costs associated with fee-based online courses NCTE offers for members and non-members (NCTE, 2016c), along with the restrictions of predetermined topics for training likely limit participation for some populations. Acknowledging potential bias for marketing purposes, NCTE provided participant testimonial supporting the usefulness of these resources. Based on the positive feedback, these resources could be of use as materials within more structured PLC communities that seek to develop areas of instructional planning.

Like NCTE's online PD resources that attempt to create virtual PLCs, loosely defined, Jim Burke's *English Companion Ning* (http://englishcompanion.ning.com/) is an online community that bridges people beyond their traditional learning communities of their school building that they may lack (Faulkner, 2009). The intent is that teachers acquire targeted help through posing questions and seeking answers via a login-only web-based forum. Teachers can "meet" asynchronously, accommodating time restrictions, because of the technology affordances (Lever-Duffy & McDonald, 2011). However, with the wealth of what is available on the forum, it could also be overwhelming for teachers and ultimately more time-consuming if teachers do not have a target area of growth and must sift through information, like in journals. Perhaps more problematic is knowing whether or not the responses people provide on the forum are based in research or simply anecdotal "accidents" that just happened to work for a particular set of students. Additionally, the curriculum tab does not appear to address the elements of cohesion, integration, and content depth any more clearly than journal resources, leaving the application somewhat limiting depending on what information teachers seek.

In conclusion, there is no empirical research related to ELA PD with the instructional planning tenets described in this study. However, based on the existing research, PLCs could offer teachers improvement in planning practices, and potentially increase students' engagement and learning in ways that current, traditional forms of in-service training are not likely to provide. For one, having a knowledgeable facilitator could address the concerns of research that claims PLCs may be less effective and desired because of leadership problems. In this manner, teachers could have accountability in a non-threatening manner if that expert is not an authority figure. Secondarily, the knowledge of the expert facilitator could benefit the group's knowledge gain. This person could vet and use materials available from a wide array of sources that a highly

specialized education affords. Therefore, the expert could target the unique planning needs of a small group of secondary ELA teachers in ways they alone might not have the resources to accomplish.

As a result, the aim of this study was three-fold. Firstly, I examined the planning practices of novice teachers, with three to five years of teaching experience, to discover any planning needs they had in regard to cohesion, integration, and depth. Secondly, I sought to investigate how effective an online, expert-facilitator led PLC could be in improving new ELA teachers' instructional planning practices for cohesion, integration, and content depth. Thirdly, I assessed teachers' satisfaction with and perceptions of feasibility of the online PLC.

Chapter 3: Method

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that a case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit" (p. 232-233). A primary aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a PLC as a PD approach. A PLC is a group of teachers who share their expertise and work together to improve teaching and learning. Therefore, a PLC is a type of single, bounded unit. As such, a case study approach is the most appropriate method to study the PLC.

Participants

Population. The population from which I selected my participants is that of newly employed ELA teachers trained in Pennsylvania. Though teachers of any experience level may engage in PD as part of continuous learning, it is the newer teachers who are just beginning to form their identity as effective teachers. Newer teachers could, therefore, benefit from assistance in navigating the potentially competing forces impacting that identity development (Grossman et al., 1999).

Sampling. My sample from this larger population was six newly employed ELA teachers. A small group of participants allows for greater depth of understanding of the complex research questions under study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Such depth occurred from full, active participation in the collaborative intervention, an expectation of the properly functioning PLC (Hord, 1997a), which a smaller group affords. There is no required number of participants for an effective PLC. Instead, Blankenship and Ruona (2007) indicated models could vary in size from small groups of four to large groups of 30-40 teachers. Therefore, my group falls within the acceptable range of participants.

The participating teachers graduated from East Stroudsburg University (ESU), have been employed for no more than six years, aligning with the amount of teaching experience allowed before the initial teacher license expires (PDE, 2015). Additionally, the participants completed the secondary English methods course I taught during my tenure at ESU, Teaching English in Secondary Schools, and/or had my supervision during their preservice student teaching internships. This convenience sample (Gall et al., 2003) allowed me to minimize variables related to the participants' preservice teacher training. It also contributed to the safe and comfortable environment required for open sharing that an optimally functioning PLC should possess (Hord, 1997a). Since the researcher and the participants have an established relationship of trust and respect from their prior work together at the university, there was already an understanding of the environment in the training.

Participant recruitment. I reached out to thirteen of my former students who appeared to meet the criteria for the study through Facebook and phone contacts established previously. Thus, I restricted the sample to those teachers with whom I already had a good relationship, adding to the safe and comfortable environment required for effective PLCs (Hord, 1997a). In my invitation to participate, I provided teachers with information about my study and the time commitment their participation would require (Appendix A). I also used a snowball sampling technique (Maxwell, 2005), whereby I asked these teachers to inform me of the names and contact information for other teachers who fit the sampling criteria. The incentive to participate was the ability to work with materials teachers use in their classrooms, making the study a time for teachers to collaborate with others in their field on work they would otherwise be doing in isolation. Eleven of the thirteen teachers responded to my invitation. Seven teachers responded with interest, two indicated they were too busy to participate, and two others did not meet the

criteria (i.e., they did not currently teach ELA). However, after further consideration, one of the seven interested teachers ultimately declined participation due to an impending move and upcoming wedding that occupied her time outside of teaching. This resulted in a final sample of six participants.

Final participants. The following paragraphs describe each of the six participants who consented to participate in the study. I have used pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities.

Allison, a 29-year-old female, was teaching 8th grade General and Honors English at a public middle school in South Carolina. She had been teaching ELA for three years, but just began her employment at this middle school in December 2016. While working at this middle school, she had not had a mentor. But she had taken graduate credits in education since completing her certification at ESU in 2013. While at ESU, Allison was a part of my methods class, and I was also her content supervisor during her student teaching semester.

Ben, a 27-year-old male, taught General and Advanced ELA to 6th grade students at a public middle school in New Jersey. Ben had been teaching for four years, but this was only his second year at this middle school in New Jersey. He did not have a mentor assigned to him. While at ESU, Ben was a student in my methods course, and I was his content supervisor during his student teaching semester. He graduated from ESU in 2013.

Bethany, a 28-year-old female, taught 9th, 11th, and 12th grade English at a public high school in New Jersey. Specifically, she taught English 9 College Prep, English Special Education College Prep, and Mythology College Prep. She had been teaching for five years, but this was her first year at the high school in New Jersey. She had been assigned a mentor at her current school. In fact, her district required she pay for her mentor, a sum of $500. However, she clearly

expressed not feeling she needed a mentor and did not understand having to pay for one. Bethany graduated from ESU with her undergraduate degree in 2012. She also has a Master's Degree in Reading. My only role in her preservice preparation was as her content supervisor during her student teaching semester.

Colby, a 27-year-old male, taught 8th grade Reading/Language Arts at a public middle school in New Jersey. He was in his second year of employment with this school. Prior to working in New Jersey, Colby taught for one year in Virginia. He had not had a mentor since he had been teaching in New Jersey, and he had taken no credits beyond his bachelor's degree that he completed at ESU in 2013. Colby was a student in my methods course at ESU. I also acted as his content supervisor during his semester of student teaching.

Kayley, a 25-year-old female, taught 11th grade at a public high school in Pennsylvania. Specifically, she taught College Prep and Honors American Literature. She had been teaching for four years, but all her experience was as a long-term substitute. This was her first year teaching this particular set of courses at this school. The teacher she filled in for retired. Kayley did have a mentor she met with regularly. She had also taken 9 credits in literature and pedagogy toward a Master's degree in Reading since she finished her Bachelor's at ESU in 2013. She was a student in my methods course at ESU and also one of the teachers I supervised during her student teaching.

Kirsten, a 27-year-old female, taught all levels of 7th grade ELA at a public middle school in Pennsylvania. She had been teaching for three years. This was her first year at the middle school in a full-time position. However, some of her time as a long-term substitute prior to this permanent position was in the same building where she worked at the time of the study. She did not have a mentor. She had taken 18 credits of graduate coursework in educational leadership

since completing her undergraduate degree at ESU in 2012. While at ESU, I worked with Kirsten in my methods course and supervised her semester of student teaching. Due to the birth of her first child, Kirsten was unable to complete the PLC. She participated in the preintervention baseline interview and demographic survey, but did not submit any unit planning artifacts. She did, however, participate in meeting 1 and complete its corresponding reflection. She also participated in meeting 2 before discontinuing her participation in the PLC.

Expert facilitator. My background preparing me to be the expert facilitator of the group includes a Bachelor's Degree in English Education with certification in grades 7-12. With that certification, I taught 8th and 9th grade English at a public school district in the Poconos region of Pennsylvania for eight years. During that time, I also completed a Master's Degree in Educational Development and Learning Strategies and began pursuing a PhD in Learning Sciences and Technology. The pursuit of a PhD led me to a four-year stint of teaching at ESU, which is where I met the participants of my study.

I taught at least one English methods course every school year in my time at ESU and modified the course each time I taught it as I learned more about students' needs, university missions, and the societal pressures (e.g., Common Core and Keystone testing) to which Hawthorne, Goodwyn, George, Reid, and Shoffner (2012) claimed English educators often respond. As a result, since the participants were not all in the same class, they did not engage in fully the same course activities or utilize all of the same materials. However, a consistent assignment I used was the creation and teaching of two lessons. I required these two lessons be related in some way, as if part of the same unit. Prior to their lesson creation, students engaged in readings and lectures about lesson/unit planning and pedagogical approaches specific to ELA (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1978; 1995). Students chose the contents for their lessons with the only

requirement that one lesson include non-print media analysis. I also required students to meet with me to assist them in planning their lessons. Upon the conclusion of their teaching the lessons to their classmates, they engaged in individual reflection and group discussion about the effectiveness of the instruction they prepared and implemented.

In addition to the lesson planning and teaching components, students also spent 20 hours in an ELA field experience where they observed and, ideally, planned/taught instruction. The teachers they worked with in the field evaluated their performance and the preservice teachers reflected on their experiences. I also included a variety of readings in my course, some of which included student-selected materials from *English Journal* as well as *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford et al., 2000) and/or *Teaching English by Design: How to Create and Carry Out Instructional Units* (Smagorinsky, 2008).

In the role of content supervisor of the student teaching internships of English education students, I observed teachers in two different placements over the course of a semester, typically one high school placement and one middle school placement. I used a university-created evaluation rubric that aligned to NCATE requirements. At the conclusion of the instruction my students taught, I met with the student to discuss the student's effectiveness with the planning of and the execution of the lessons. At some point during each observation, I also met with the cooperating teachers in the field to discuss my students' day-to-day productivity and effectiveness with managing the many duties of teaching.

Intervention

The intervention I created was a PLC that consisted of the following: five virtual (video recorded) group meetings via Zoom that focused on instructional planning for cohesion, integration, and content depth, and alignment to standards materials and grading, as well as four

written responses based on the contents of each meeting and a culminating reflection on the content of the entire PLC. Zoom allowed teachers from different schools to collaborate as the synchronous, free, online conference application allows for bridging geographic constraints (Lever-Duffy & McDonald, 2011). In the sections below, I explain the specifics of the meetings. I discuss the written reflections in detail in the Data Collection section..

Meetings. The intervention consisted of five weekly meetings lasting approximately 90 minutes. Since regular reflective practice is important for the development of adaptive expertise (Schon, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), weekly meetings provided regular intervals of engagement with the content to help with the effectiveness of the training. I encouraged teachers to bring any required curricula with them to the meetings so that they would be prepared to discuss their specific contexts as needed. During meetings, I encouraged teachers to take notes on our discussions to help them with their post-meeting reflections.

The PLC characteristics of supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (Hord, 2004) required the PLC to maintain flexibility in the training to meet teachers' needs. Each intervention meeting adhered to those PLC characteristics, as we focused on developing strategies for planning that met the needs of the individual teachers. I prepared for the PLC with five topics – cohesion, integration, reasoning and relating, synthesizing and questioning, and alignment – all of which included questions for discussion and reflection, sample activities and tools, and teachers' contributions. I was also open to changes based on participants' needs and preferences (Hord, 1997b). In the following paragraphs, I explain the contents of each meeting.

Meeting 1: Cohesion. Cohesion was the first topic of the intervention training sessions. I selected cohesion as the starting point because teachers' development of cohesion in ELA

involves determining the content-based foci that joins together their written and supported curricula to their educational goals for their courses. Starting in this way enabled teachers to focus on what works of literature from their supported curricula they teach and how some pieces of literature may work together to develop relevant content over the course of units on those works. Creating these focal points at the beginning of planning gives teachers a meaningful place within which to integrate ELA skills in the next phase of planning.

I started the meeting by asking teachers to explain what they think "instructional cohesion" means. We then engaged in a reflective discussion of the term that included the specific terms of within unit and between unit cohesion. I also explained two important nuances to cohesion, in that teachers must make what connects lesson and units together relevant and explicit to students. We also discussed how teachers' educational goals are related to instructional cohesion.

After this discussion, I provided teachers with a short PowerPoint presentation on cohesion that aided us in the rest of our discussion (Appendix B). In this presentation I highlighted teachers units from the artifacts they submitted. We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches they used according to our earlier discussion about cohesion.

To help the teachers have strategies to improve their units' cohesion, I engaged teachers in Beane's (1997) two-question approach that develops foci for curriculum and instruction. Teachers experienced a process to define foci for individual units they could use in their independent planning, or in collaborative planning with students, depending on the structure of their individual teaching environments and personal comfort levels. I also provided teachers with an additional example of how they might want to consider organizing their units and create within *and* between unit cohesion using a chart I crafted based on research in child development

and curriculum theory (Appendix B). We discussed how teachers could use the chart to help departments develop cohesion across grades if they desired or were able to have such discussions with other teachers. Throughout these many conversations, teachers shared ideas they have related to their specific curriculum to help one another, also in line with PLC tenets (Hord, 1997b). Before the end of the meeting, I allotted time to discuss what teachers needed to accomplish before the next meeting and teachers had the opportunity to address any questions they had.

Meeting 2: Cohesion and integration. As a result of teachers' struggle with cohesion, I devoted a portion of the second meeting to cohesion as well before addressing the topic of how to integrate the ELA skills we need to teach into their cohesive units. At the start of the meeting, I shared a PowerPoint presentation that began with a review of what I noticed in the written reflections teachers sent me with their application of meeting 1 material (Appendix C). I pointed out both strengths and weaknesses and indicated that we would revisit the notion of cohesion in this meeting as a result of the struggle I noticed in crafting content-based units that were relevant to students. But, I also indicated that in order to help, we would start the meeting with integration because of how skills is the important focus of the concept of integration.

We then discussed what the teachers thought integrated instruction was. We reflected on the difference between ELA content and ELA skills and how grammar, vocabulary, and research skills are often integrated least in instruction because curricula often doesn't present those skills in an integrated fashion. This discussion culminated in an analysis of a visual of two umbrellas I created. The visual brought together the concepts we had been working with for cohesion and integration with specifics related to teachers' curricula. For example, we discussed how to integrate grammar, vocabulary, and research skills development on into the units on friendship

and bullying, the unit topics written on the umbrellas. We concluded this meeting with a discussion of a process that could help us arrive at foci for cohesive units and how we would decide what skills to integrate within those units.

Meeting 3: Content depth - relating and reasoning. In response to teachers' written reflections from Meeting 2, I began the Meeting 3 PowerPoint with a review of cohesion and integration before moving to elements of content depth (Appendix D). After spending a couple weeks framing the concepts where activities would fit, teachers were then ready to begin discussing specific activities for the remainder of Meeting 3.

We discussed teachers' understanding of content depth. Then I explained the two-part process in planning to engage students deeply in our content. Part one was identifying the target thinking they wanted students to engage in during an activity. Part two was how teachers needs to attend to non-leading instruction with these activities so that the activity does not become something that is surface-level, engaging only recall of the teacher's instruction. We then discussed the two parts and specific kinds of lower level and higher order, critical thinking that exist in ELA. Then, we moved into how, generally, our instruction can result in students' thinking being diminished. We then defined the two kinds of thinking we focused on for the rest of the night's meeting: relating and reasoning. We discussed where these kinds of higher order thinking appear naturally in ELA thinking, and I provided them with examples of graded activities, quiz/test items specifically, to analyze.

To meet teachers' needs and help them extend themselves beyond their comfort zones of literature and writing teachers seemed to stay mostly in their in their meeting two reflections (Hord, 1997a), I emphasized vocabulary, grammar, and research skills development with my examples of activities and the tools I used in the meeting. Teachers discussed their practices with

these skills for relating and reasoning. For relating, I also provided teachers with strategies and tools for relating that included a news story about the Oxford comma, an activity a teacher from South Orange, NJ did with slave auction posters, and multigenre writing (Romano, 2000). For reasoning, teachers discussed the Espresso App (*http://www.expresso-app.org/),* a tool that allows for textual analysis. I encouraged teachers to think about how writing style and grammar, for examples, are places students could activate reasoning as writers and readers (Weaver, 1996). We also discussed resources on plagiarism and teens' struggles to identify "fake news" that addressed research skills. In addition, I provided a tool on logical fallacies entitled Thou Shalt Not Commit Logical Fallacies (*https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/),* developed by Jesse Richardson, founder of *https://www.schoolofthought.org*. We discussed how this tool could strength teachers' content knowledge about common kinds of misleading evidence people use within argumentation. VocabGrabber (*https://www.visualthesaurus.com/vocabgrabber/)* is another tool we discussed that teachers could use to encourage students to use reasoning with vocabulary instruction. As with the other meetings, the conclusion of this meeting addressed the reflection writing teachers would complete independently prior to the next meeting where they would apply the contents of this meeting to their own instruction.

Meeting 4: Content depth - questioning and synthesizing. This meeting began with a review of the specific kinds of higher order thinking we discussed in the previous meeting and their application to grammar, vocabulary, and research skills (Appendix E). I chose to review this material as a result of teachers' limited understanding of what each kind of thinking was and their frequent avoidance of crafting activities related to grammar, vocabulary, and research skills instruction. Ashley, Bethany, and Colby shared some examples. I also engaged teachers in a conversation about how their activities for relating and reasoning that we were discussing could

connect to their unit foci they crafted in previous meetings. I was trying to bring the meetings all together and show how the activities teachers create should reinforce the basis for cohesion they previously established.

After this review discussion, we moved into discussion the two new kinds of thinking the rest of the meeting would focus on: questioning and synthesizing. For questioning, teachers discussed the kinds of questions their students ask and how often they ask questions at all. Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, and Prendergast (1997) recommended open-ended questions as helpful in creating depth, so we analyzed the kinds of questions students asked to see if they fell into open-ended questions or not. We also discussed why people ask questions and how we can encourage students to ask question, generally, as well as about vocabulary, grammar, and research skills-based content, specifically. We discussed multiple perspectives gathering, how we encourage students to question the text in relation to the eyes of others, perhaps with critical lens questioning (Appleman, 2015). We also discussed how we could embrace and encourage students voicing their confusions as places to question in thoughtful ways rather than equating confusion with a lack of intelligence (Bransford et al., 2000). The teachers addressed modeling this kind of questioning for students to increase students' comfort in asking questions that come from sources of confusion.

Then, we discussed synthesizing, what it means and how students might encounter it in ELA. Teachers addressed grammar, vocabulary, and research skills-related synthesis, as well as literature. Included in this discussion were examples of how we work with multiple sources of information at one time. For example, with research location and use, how do students use multiple sources to make a point? How do we help them to synthesize across materials we have not read? Or, within one text, when we are asking students to identify a theme of a literary work,

do we provide them with direct instruction on the theme or do we scaffold their inquiry somehow? I also provided them with the strategy of infographics. We discussed how to apply this tool as well as other from the previous week to synthesis activities for all aspects of the ELA discipline. The conclusion of the meeting, once again, addressed the reflection questions teachers needed to respond to prior to the next meeting.

Meeting 5: Alignment and grading. Meeting 5 is not part of scope of the dissertation focus on instructional planning for cohesion, integration, and content depth. Instead Meeting 5 content was included in order to address participating teachers' expressed needs related to managing grading concerns. PLCs are by definition responsive to the needs of their participants; thus, although this topic was beyond the aims of the dissertation, I wanted to adhere to the recommended practices of PLC implementation (Hord, 2004).

During this meeting, we reviewed of all the previous meetings, including questions related to standards alignment and why standards alignment occurred last in our training. We discussed how, or if, we grade standards, as well as the burdens of grading and some "toxic" practices teachers should avoid (Reeves, 2008). We discussed how grading should be purposeful and teachers shared their difficulties with grading students' work. I went over the final reflection questions on the last slide of the PowerPoint for this meeting (Appendix F). Unlike, the application questions of previous written reflections, these questions asked teachers to evaluate the content of the PLC since the intervention had concluded at the close of this meeting.

Meeting attendance. Bethany, Ben, and Allison attended all of the meetings, though Bethany showed up late to the first meeting. Colby missed Meeting 3 on relating and reasoning. Kayley missed meeting 4 on questioning and synthesizing. Kirsten chose to discontinue her participation in the PLC following Meeting 2.

Data Collection

      I collected data from a variety of sources. This section describes all data I collected before, during, and after the intervention, that is not a part of each meeting discussion, as well as the procedure I will follow to acquire that information.

      Before the intervention. Before starting the intervention, I acquired permission from Lehigh University's Institutional Review Board to conduct this study. Subsequently, I enacted the sampling procedures described above. Once I selected my participants, I presented them with the consent form in Appendix G. Once they consented to the parameters of the study, Appendix H contains the survey questions I used to gather demographic information from teachers. Teachers used Qualtrics to complete the survey. Separating these demographic items from the interview allows the interview time to be spent on the more nuanced questions.

      The interview questions I asked teachers following the completion of the survey are found in Appendix I. I chose to utilize semi-structured interviews because of the amount of information I wanted to glean from teachers; such interviews allow the details of participants' specific experiences to emerge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. I used teachers' responses to gather baseline data on participants' perceptions of their teaching and students' resulting learning, as well as their planning processes. At this time, participants also identified what availability they had for Zoom meetings so that I could set up our synchronous, collaborative meetings on days and times that were appropriate to the varying schedules of the group members. I distributed the interview questions to the teachers via email prior to the individual interviews so that teachers had time to prepare thoughts on their responses. I gathered this interview data through Zoom calls for most teachers because given the choice to use Zoom or meet-up, they chose Zoom as the more convenient option. Colby and I

had a physical meeting for his interview. I took notes during the interviews and recorded the conversations, as well. With these accommodations for ways to accomplish the interview, I attempted to further contribute to the comfortable and safe environment of the PLC (Hord, 1997b).

Teachers scheduled their interviews with me at their earliest convenience, and I requested they provide me with artifacts for two, sequential units they had already created and used with their classes before we met. Not all teachers were able to do so, however. Instead I received some teachers' materials following the interview but in advance of our first group meeting. I collected these unit artifacts as a measure of teachers' baseline performance with planning for cohesion, integration, and depth. Participants received instructions about the requirements for these baseline artifacts in the same email they received the interview questions. I provided flexible instructions for what teachers should submit for their two units to get a sense of what teachers considered a unit without biasing their perception with more specific parameters (Appendix J).

The teachers submitted a variety of artifacts. Specifically, Allison submitted the district-mandated unit plan guides for each level of course she teaches, and she supplied a calendar of major events she mapped out for one unit of each class. Since she just started at the school she was teaching at in December, she did not have two, sequential units of artifacts for each class to provide for my analysis. Ben supplied me with a unit plan template, partially filled in, for units on characterization and sentence structure. He also supplied me with the main assessment, a quiz associated with each unit. Colby submitted 10 artifacts. He supplied mostly PowerPoint presentations and quizzes related to persuasion, flashback, and foreshadowing. At the time of submission, he thought these topics were different units, but he realized during the intervention

that what he submitted were, in fact, lessons within his unit on *Touching Spirit Bear.* He also included a PowerPoint presentation that he used for a unit on Black History Month as part of a district initiative.

In contrast to the limited artifacts of the teachers mentioned thus far, Bethany shared a total of 63 files with me for two units, one entitled "Shifting Perspectives," and the other on "Self Reliance and the Hero Journey." Though I did not include all of these files in my data analysis because of the repetitious nature of the contents, she included a variety of activities including study guides, writing assignments, projects, tests, quizzes, and the like. She did not include any formal lesson plans with her materials. Similarly, Kayley supplied me with 46 files for her Colonial Literature unit and 31 files for her Native American unit. Like Bethany, I did not analyze all of these documents due to repetition. Also like Bethany, Kayley included a variety of activities such as tests, quizzes, a word wall activity, and writing assignments, but she did not supply any lesson plans.

During the intervention. I recorded all of Zoom meetings during the intervention. These recordings provided a record of each meeting to assist me in my reflections and memo writings about each session. They also provided a way to obtain specific comments made in meetings to assist in data analysis.

Similar to Hayden, Rundell, and Smyntek-Gworek (2013), I collected written reflections of teachers' planning practices during the intervention. Before the close of each meeting, I asked teachers to write a reflection on the training session. This written reflection served as an application of the topics we worked on to instructional planning practices for their own local (school district) and supported curricula and an articulation of why they made those decisions. Appendix K shows the guiding questions I provided teachers with for each weekly reflection

concerning how teachers would apply the contents of the training to their instruction and why they made those specific choices. By tying the reflections to specific meeting contents and the contexts of teachers' individual teaching contexts in this way, the exercise in reflective thought is likely to lead more to expertise than unstructured, feeling-based reflection (Amobi, 2006). Expertise grows through the interrelatedness of the questions. The ideas we started working with in the Week 1 reflection we continued to build upon with each subsequent reflection. Since the goal was to capture teachers' authentic thinking, they could write as much, or as little, as they chose. I collected the reflections, via email or Google Drive, approximately five days after each corresponding meeting. As Dunst and Trivette (2009) suggested in their model of PD, prior to the next meeting, I provided teachers with written feedback on their reflections to aid in the effectiveness of the training in improving teachers' knowledge. I made corrections to errors in teachers' thinking. I also asked questions to get teachers to think more deeply or to get clarification where I was not sure I understood their remarks. When teachers wrote questions or demonstrated problematic thinking in their written reflections, I provided them with written feedback to take with them for additional scaffolds in the current and future instructional planning attempts.

After the intervention. Post-intervention, Appendix L provides the list of questions I asked teachers to answer related to the content of the training as their final reflection. But unlike the other reflections that were on the contents of individual meetings, this reflection asked them to discuss the entire contents of the PLC. The questions include what they felt they learned about the different aspects of instructional planning. They had approximately one week from the close of the final meeting to email me their responses to these questions.

Appendix M provides the questions I asked teachers to answer related to their evaluation of the effectiveness of the PLC and the legitimacy they see, or do not, with the format of the PLC as a viable and desirable option for PD. The evaluation occurred through a Qualtrics survey so that participants could easily submit their evaluation, and do so anonymously (Richey & Klein, 2009).

Data Analysis

Based on the research questions for this study, there are three general areas of investigation I pursued in my data analysis: (a) new teachers' instructional planning needs; (b) the effectiveness of the PLC, the PD intervention, in promoting teachers' knowledge about instructional planning; and (c) participants' satisfaction with the PLC and its perceived feasibility. Once again, I did not include the contents of Meeting 5 in the analysis below because the content of that meeting did not relate specifically to the research questions under study.

New teachers' instructional planning needs. Research question 1 focused on new teachers' planning needs: What instructional planning needs exist for new in-service secondary ELA teachers? In the rest of the section, I first explain the analysis of what needs teachers reported within the initial interview (see Appendix I for interview questions). Then I explain how I analyzed what teachers provided in their two artifacts (i.e., unit plans) as further evidence of potential planning needs. Appendix J provides the instructions teachers received on what to submit.

I first analyzed each participant's report of their primary needs according to interview question 6 and 7. I used *in vivo* coding (Saldaña, 2016), or the coding of participants' language, for their responses to questions 6 and 7. The purpose of using the participants' exact words initially was to capture accurate connotations of teachers' needs as they emerged. I also used

process coding or "action coding" that used gerunds (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111) for follow-up details

teachers provided, as applicable, to isolate other implied needs that helped to justify their opinion

for their stated needs. Action coding allows a researcher to see the behaviors of participants, and

in the case of this study, I sought the behaviors that caused teachers' difficulty. I then used *a*

priori coding, or coding for pre-established criteria (Saldaña, 2016). This coding assisted me in

seeing if cohesion, integration and the kinds of thinking under study for content depth that exist

in extant literature (e.g., Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1995; Hillocks, 2011; Noddings, 2006) also

appeared in teachers' responses. So, for example, when a teacher stated incorporating grammar

as an introductory, daily class activity, separate from the rest of the content, I coded the passage

"decontextualized grammar" because literature on grammar instruction labels this practice as

such (e.g., Hillocks, 2006). In turn, this process also helped to isolate places where teachers'

stated practices, in response to questions 11-18, deviated from suggested practices related to

instructional cohesion, integration, and content depth, implying instructional planning needs.

As new codes emerged in data sources, I took notes in reflective memos accordingly. At

the conclusion of initial coding of all interview transcripts, I then revisited each transcript,

looking for support for the additional, new codes noted in my memos. Then, using NVivo, I

grouped codes together into new categories based on the similarities of the responses teachers

provided. So, for example, I organized all the different goals teachers articulated (and that I used

In Vivo coding for) into the category, "Educational Goals," to isolate those codes from other

codes about other topics. This process was also somewhat guided by the interview questions that

had already been categorized as providing specific types of information. See Figure 1 for a chart

of the categories and codes that led to the development of my themes for research question 1,

along with their corresponding locations in the data.

In my second cycle coding of the interview transcripts, I looked for the specific instructional planning elements one-at-a-time so as not to lose sight of applicable codes, (i.e. all cohesion-related questions at the same time before proceeding to integration-related questions for the whole group). Whenever participants mentioned activities, however, whether in the activity-specific questions or not, I analyzed their responses for evidence of deep thinking students did within those activities. So, for example, if I saw evidence of students engaged in "reasoning" anywhere in the interview, I coded it as such.

I then coded the unit plan documents for each participant. I first tallied up the kinds of materials each participant provided me based on their *structural codes* (i.e. test, quiz, study guide questions, essay assignment, etc.). I then grouped these codes as "Artifact Type." Then I looked for evidence of cohesion, integration, and the kinds of thought required of students in each activity. For cohesion, I looked to see if the documents teachers provided showed a consistent focus on what their units were to be about. I also looked to see if there was any narrowing of the general focus of the unit to something specific that related to students' lives. These a priori codes come from Beane (1995, 1997) and the explicit, meaningful concepts he discussed at integral to effective instruction. For between unit cohesion, I looked for references on the documents to connect the units together, either reference generally to previous work or overlap with topics discussed in each unit. Due to what little I found of this kind of information, I used *descriptive* or "topic" coding to capture simply the presence or absence of any kind of connections (Saldaña, 2016, p. 102).

For integration, I looked to see if teachers included documents within their units that instructed students with vocabulary, grammar, and research skills development, not just literature study and/or writing instruction. Once I located any mention of these often ancillary components

of the discipline, I noted how they were connected to the rest of the unit – tied into literature study the unit revolved around or part of instruction intended to improve students' writing. Process codes emerged here as a result of what teachers demonstrated (e.g. teaching vocabulary with novels).

For content depth, I coded the questions on teachers' documents using Bloom's taxonomy as my a priori guide, specifically the revised version (Anderson et al, 2001) as well as the specific thinking terms under study derived from extant literature (Applebee, 1984). As a result of the variety of teachers' activities and the majority of them appearing on the lower end of Bloom's scale, for my second cycle coding, I grouped these a priori codes for depth of thinking into general categories of lower order thinking and higher order. Any kinds of thinking on Bloom's first three tiers (Remember, Understand, Apply), I grouped as lower order thinking and any activities correlating to Bloom's last three tiers I grouped as higher order thinking. This process allowed me to see which kind of thinking dominated the major activities students engaged in within each unit of instruction.

I then compared the findings of the artifacts to that of the baseline interview data to see if what teachers reported in their interviews matched the kinds of documents they submitted. I also re-coded the interview transcripts and the kinds of thinking teachers expressed having students engaged in to more general categories of lower order and higher order thinking. I looked for patterns across the group to develop themes for what the group had as common needs.

PLC effectiveness in improving planning knowledge. Research question 2 focused on the effectiveness of the PLC in helping teachers to gain additional knowledge about instructional planning practices: 2. In what ways, if any, does the PD intervention improve new secondary ELA teachers' knowledge about how to plan (a) more cohesive, (b) integrated and (c) deeply

thought provoking instruction? To ascertain the effectiveness of the PLC as an intervention that improves teachers' instructional planning, I looked for how teachers' knowledge changed from the beginning of the PLC when compared to the end.

This objective required that I track the responses of each teacher through several key data sources: the preintervention interview data and unit plans, the written reflections post-meeting, and teachers' follow-up reflections on what they learned from the PLC to measure growth against their baseline data. I also reviewed the recordings of each Zoom meeting on an as-needed basis to locate points from the conversations that may not have showed up in teachers' written reflections. Data from meetings coupled with the written reflections allowed me to measure growth as teachers' retention of the materials from the PLC when baseline comparison did not apply.

I first analyzed the written reflections teachers submitted after each meeting. These reflections asked teachers to state both their understandings of the topic for the meeting as well as how they could apply the concepts to their instruction. Lastly, I asked teachers to reflect on why they would do so in the way they articulated. In short, the reflections provided artifacts of what teachers took away from the meetings. Since they were due within 5 days after the conclusion of the meetings and were often submitted on or after that day, these artifacts also showed what content from the meetings remained with teachers rather than just what they may have stated during the meetings.

As a visual aid to assist me in detecting instructional planning growth, I made a chart that outlined teachers' initial baseline competence with cohesion, integration, and content depth as ascertained from the analysis of data for research question 1. Then, as I read each teacher's reflections for each meeting (Appendix K) and the final content-based evaluation (Appendix L),

I used a priori coding based on the concepts outlined in each meeting (e.g., reasoning) seeking evidence of teachers' proficiency with defining and applying the concepts to their instruction. I recorded this evidence on the chart to create a visual display of their baseline and post-meeting understandings. I crosschecked my analysis of those documents with what I wrote in reflective memos after I initially reviewed teachers' reflections and sent them feedback. These memos helped me to prepare for each subsequent meeting after logging strengths, weaknesses, and general comments about the performance of individuals and the group.

During this process of (a) crosschecking the post-intervention analysis of the reflections with the during-intervention memos and (b) comparing to teachers' baseline data, patterns emerged with how teachers addressed the application question of the reflections. Teachers *showed awareness* of their current practices they did not articulate previously, *created* new instructional approaches to current practice and/or future instruction. Therefore, my second cycle coding grouped teachers' responses according to these emergent categories to help identify themes with teachers' growth. It was at this time emergent codes also developed relating to what, specifically, teachers were doing with the concepts when they did not create new instruction, for which I used process coding (e.g. repeating the baseline).

When I reviewed the recordings of the meetings themselves, I looked to triangulate the remarks from the reflections to teachers' discussion of the topics in the meetings showing the direct impact the training had on teachers' thinking. In addition, I compared the findings from these two data sources with teachers' final reflection on what they took away from the five-week PLC on each of the foci under study – cohesion, integration, and content depth. I focused on whatever remained consistent across these three data sources – post-meeting reflections 1-4, video-recorded Zoom meetings, and the final, cumulative reflection on the content of the PLC –

as the demonstration of teachers' learning from the PLC. I then looked for patterns in teachers' learning to help me determine relevant themes on the effectives of the PLC. See Figure 2 for a chart on the relevant codes, themes, and the like for research question 2.

        Satisfaction and feasibility of professional development. The final research question focused on the functioning of the PLC: 3. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility and satisfaction with the PD intervention? For what teachers think about the format of the PD intervention, I analyzed teachers' self report on how they felt about the PLC from the anonymous, follow-up evaluation survey (Appendix M). I created an Excel spreadsheet to record participants' ratings for the Likert survey items (1-16, odd numbered items only). On the spreadsheet, I also included each response to the corresponding open-ended follow-up questions (items 1-16, even numbered items only) as well as the open-ended questions that did not have corresponding Likert items, including the final question on feasibility, (numbers 17-20). I then analyzed the responses noting repetition across and within participants' responses. For example, a pattern related to time emerged. Then, I compared all this data looking for patterns related to what was positive versus negative feedback to identify overall findings on their satisfaction and ease of participation (i.e., feasibility) in the training. As necessary, I cross-referenced other data sources once my themes emerged to add further detail to the explanations of the themes. For example, teachers discussed their prior PD in their baseline interviews. Their descriptions of their prior PD I could then compare with their evaluations of the PLC and provide specifics about what teachers did not like about other PD, for example the specific topics of other trainings verses this one. See Figure 3 for how I aligned the a priori responses from the Likert items and emergent findings in teachers' open-ended responses to categories and themes for research question 3.

Validity

Maxwell (2005) defined threats to validity for qualitative research in two ways: (a) threats related to the researcher, and (b) threats related to the data collection methods and procedures. Threats related to the researcher involve researcher bias and reactivity, while data collection and methods threats are many. The following sections will address the two areas of potential threats to validity related to the researcher as well as a section devoted to accounting for potential threats within the methods and procedures for data collection.

Researcher bias. Researcher bias concerns the subjective nature of the researcher, including the researcher's preconceptions about the content under study. In the case of my study, the extant literature guided my data analysis (Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1997; Noddings, 2006) creating less subjectivity. I also discussed these ideas with a second researcher, my dissertation chair. These discussions forced me to re-examine the data with different ideas in mind.

Another potential bias I addressed is related to my working with a sample of teachers whom I already know from previous interactions as their professor from their preservice training as well as interactions on social media. I acknowledge this relationship means I may have some preconceived ideas about the planning practices of these teachers based on my personal relationships with them and the work I saw from them in their preservice training. In regard to my role as their instructor, I was guided by literature that indicates teachers' behavior is not solely based on preservice training but includes other influential factors such as mentors and PD (Grossman, 1990; Grossman et al., 1999; Lortie, 1975). As such, I was careful to reflect that I was not personally responsible for either the strengths or weaknesses in teachers' planning, which provided me with the freedom to honestly appraise teachers' knowledge and skills.

Personal positive bias is helpful to the safe and comfortable environment of a functioning PLC (Hord, 1997a). In addition, a positive bias does not necessitate a lack of honest evaluation of the teachers' work. To ensure I balanced my positive and negative evaluations of teachers' work, I monitored my biases by reflecting on both strengths and weaknesses of teachers' reflections and their participation in the group in my memos.

Reactivity. For qualitative research Maxwell (2005) claimed the goal is not to remove researcher influence because in studies that extend the researcher's role beyond observation as mine does, the researcher's influence in unavoidable. So, instead, Maxwell claimed researchers should acknowledge their influence and its impact on the "validity of the inferences" (p. 109) drawn from the study. Though I limited my leading questions in some instruments (Appendices I-M), a practice Maxwell encouraged, because I was involved in this PLC intervention in a very active way, as the content expert, I was trying to impact the participants. But through my data triangulation, informal member checks, discussion with a second researcher, and my reflective memos, I acknowledged the strengths and weaknesses of my influence on teachers. My acknowledgement of my influence informs some of the implications and future research discussed in Chapter 5.

Methods and procedures. To assist with potential threats to the validity of the data collection and analysis described above, I engaged in *informal member checks* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Informal member checks entail asking participants to verify the accuracy of information. One way this member check process occurred is through the interactive written reflections. As needed, I checked for clarification on how I interpreted the teachers' thinking and planning practices. In addition, during the meetings, I asked participants for clarification on their comments and we discussed patterns we saw with teachers' instructional planning practices.

Through this iterative process, participants were regularly involved in ensuring that what I saw and heard matched what they saw and heard. Once the intervention was over, I asked the participants to verify any confusion I had with what I recorded in their interview transcripts on an as needed basis.

In addition, as explained in detail with each research question, I triangulated data sources to verify the accuracy of the information collected (Krathwohl, 2009). When patterns appear across data sources, researchers can be more confident in their results.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I explain the central themes that emerged pertaining to teachers' needs, growth, and feasibility/satisfaction. For research question one, I will discuss four themes about participating ELA teachers' instructional planning needs, namely teachers': (a) less than optimal within unit cohesion, (b) little to nonexistent planning for between unit cohesion, (c) struggle to fully integrate research, grammar, and vocabulary with other aspects of the discipline, and (d) limited planning of graded activities that measured students' higher order thinking. Then, for research question two, I discuss four growth themes related to teachers' improvement with cohesion, integration, and content depth in terms of teachers' (a) creation of new practices for current or future instruction when they articulated a preintervention interest in improving their planning for that concept, (b) identification or creation of between unit cohesion for their current or future instruction, (c) recognition of the need for intentionality in planning for integration, and (d) limited ability to define specific kinds of higher order thinking and frequent omission of the impact of procedures teachers plan on engaging students' higher order thinking. Though cohesion, integration, and content depth work together as elements of effective planning, I separated my findings by element because of the differences in teacher thinking/practice required with each element. Lastly, for research question three, I discuss three themes. One theme is about teachers' satisfaction with the PLC in meeting their needs when compared to other PD. I also discuss teachers' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses related to the PLC's timing. The other theme concerns the impact of the Zoom technology on teachers' ability to learn effectively from the PLC.

Research Question #1: What instructional planning needs exist for new in-service secondary ELA teachers?

Needs theme 1: Teachers often planned for within unit cohesion at a less than optimal level as evidenced by a lack of a clear and consistent focus on what is meaningful about the unit.

Optimal within unit cohesion occurs when teachers connect lessons together to form units that focus on something narrow and meaningful to students' lives (Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1995). Teachers should explicitly emphasize this meaningful focus throughout the instruction of the unit. For example, if a teacher has a unit on a novel such as *Of Mice and Men*, she ideally decides how to frame students' learning of that novel through something meaningful they will gain about life by the conclusion of their unit. Specifically, teachers could frame the entire reading of the novel through a historical lens, comparing migrant farm work and the handling of intellectual ability in the 1930s vs. today. Or, as another example, teachers could choose to focus on the topic of friendship, such as why people become friends, why friendships fall apart, and the like, as some life learning through the relationships of the characters. Teachers could then incorporate other literature for comparison where students compare the discussions of friendships in each piece, demonstrating a unit that emphasizes the connections of themes across literature and life.

Despite often showing some understanding of within unit cohesion, none of the teachers exhibited this kind of optimal, within unit cohesion prior to the intervention. Instead, most teachers missed (a) a clear focus on something meaningful and/or (b) consistency in reinforcing their clear, meaningful unit focus in the major activities/assessments of their instructional units.

Lack of clear focus and consistency. Colby demonstrated the most difficulty with within unit cohesion. He lacked both a clear focus for his units and consistency with what he emphasized across his major unit activities, while the other teachers lacked consistency only or

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did not supply enough information for me to accurately judge. When first asked about his planning process in the preintervention interview, he stated, "I will base the lesson or the unit around the piece of text." His statement reflects a seemingly synonymous use of the words "lesson" and "unit," indicating potential confusion with how to define a unit. The unit artifacts he provided confirmed this confusion. Specifically, his unit artifacts appear to be missing a clear focus on something meaningful about his unit's focus, the novel *Touching Spirit Bear*. In the interview, he claimed he was teaching a unit based on the novel *Touching Spirit Bear*, and the lessons on that novel address literary terms, such as flashback and foreshadowing, because of their importance to the story. However, it is unclear from his artifacts on flashback and foreshadowing whey these terms are important to the novel. In fact, in the artifacts, he does not connect the literary terms to the novel at all. The majority of the examples of the terms in the artifacts had students recognize places where those terms appeared in real life, movies, and the like. It is possible that other materials for the unit may have addressed the literature specifically, or perhaps dialogue in class did, but what he identified as major parts of the unit worth sending me did not make explicit connections between the terms and the literature. So, if his statement about teaching units on pieces of literature is true, how his lessons help further some specific knowledge about the novel is unclear. In addition, his focus is also inconsistent in his materials. For example, the first slide of his PowerPoint on flashbacks states "*Touching Spirit Bear* Quiz Wednesday on chapters 1-10!" However, the PowerPoint does not address if the quiz would include flashback or not. The rest of the presentation asked students to examine the presence of the literary term in life and media clips, not the specific chapters of *Touching Spirit Bear*. He did not submit a quiz on *Touching Spirit Bear* for me to check.

Lack of consistency only. Though a clear unit focus is necessary for within unit cohesion, clarity alone is not sufficient. The following three teachers have clarity but not consistency. Though these teachers approached their planning differently, they all lacked a consistent, explicit emphasis on the meaningful connections their units make between real life and ELA content and skills throughout their major unit activities. The teachers claimed seeing the relevant connections their instruction made to life, but students may not due to the lack of consistent emphasis on the focal points throughout the unit.

Two of these teachers, Bethany and Kayley worked with literature-based units, provided by their school districts (one using a thematic approach about point of view/perspectives, and the other organizing units via specific groups of literature, such as Native American). These guides provide teachers with suggested and/or required materials, activities, standards, content and skills. In Bethany's unit "Shifting Perspectives," she said she teaches about "racism, prejudice, judgment, and preconceived notions" through works like *The Blind Side* and *To Kill a Mockingbird.* When I examined her unit materials, I found these topics as focal points of the activities for paper writing assignments and the like. However, Bethany also has students engage in numerous plot-based, comprehension activities, vocabulary exercises with words from the novel, and other activities where these topics do not appear. If these topics of racism, etc. are supposed to be the focal points of the study of the literature in the unit and draw the various pieces of literature within that unit together, it appears that point is a bit muddled. Kayley had a similar issue in that she has students making some relevant connections in her unit on Native American literature but not consistently. For example, she asks them to connect Native American literature (and beliefs) with life today when she asks students to answer: "How do the Native Americans' views of nature compare to our treatment of nature today?" But that question is the

only question one of its kind in all the documents she supplied for the unit. The rest of the documents emphasize mostly plot comprehension, literary terms, and vocabulary connected to each story.

The third teacher, Ben, also seemingly struggled with consistently emphasizing meaningful content through his unit on characterization. From the limited artifacts he provided, he seemed to have a meaningful focus but one that was *totally* absent from student view. Namely, in his lesson plans, Ben wrote essential questions, intended to provide a clear and meaningful focus for his instruction, such as "How can readers construct meaning from a text?" and "How do writers bring characters to life?" But, from his artifacts, it was unclear whether or not he actually emphasized those questions at all in his instruction. The only unit activity he provided was the final test. No evidence existed there of these key points of instruction his lesson plan outlined. And, in his interview, Ben seemed to recognize this problem, when he reported struggling to create "end goals." He claimed to have "individual lessons" but expressed that his primary need was "piecing everything together to come up with a flow that works." At the start of the first PLC meeting, he showed he had a clear, baseline understanding of a definition of instructional cohesion, by stating, "instructional cohesion is getting your lesson plans or your instructions day by day, or plan by plan, to just fit together, you know, nicely, and that they all make sense and sort of have, like, a flow." This definition was, however, decontextualized. He has a novice conceptualization of cohesive instructional planning. He possesses the general pedagogical knowledge of what cohesion is, but he does not have sufficient pedagogical content knowledge to make it happen effectively in ELA instruction. This lack of knowledge creates the difficulty he has in carrying the good ideas he started with into the activities and assessments within his unit.

Inability to evaluate baseline cohesion. The limited unit artifacts submitted by two other participants, Kirsten and Allison, inhibit my ability to know the specifics of their units' foci and their consistency in implementing a focus across major unit activities. From what was provided and/or discussed in the preintervention interviews, these teachers, at a minimum, appear to have within unit cohesion to some degree as their units are either focused on specific works of literature (i.e., *Romeo and Juliet* or *Anne Frank*), grammar skills (i.e., foundational grammar skills – kinds of sentences, prepositions, sentence structures, and the like), or genres (i.e. narratives). However, it is unclear if they have a specific focus on something *meaningful* to students' lives within those categories as well as how they emphasize the connecting pieces throughout their major units activities. Therefore, all the teachers in the study appear to have planning needs related to within unit cohesion.

Needs theme 2: Teachers exhibited little to no planning for between unit cohesion where all units of instruction progressively developed specific course goals.

Optimal between unit cohesion occurs when instructional materials provide students with evidence of meaningful ways units connect together to develop course goals. None of the participating teachers planned for between unit cohesion at this level. Instead, teachers' planning for between unit cohesion fell on a continuum ranging from no explicit planning to a little explicit planning with all of them struggling to clearly connect their instruction to specific course goals.

Three teachers, Colby, Ben, and Allison, provided no evidence of between unit cohesion from preintervention interviews, artifacts, or baseline data collected at the beginning of the first group meeting prior to any intervention from me. In the first group meeting when Colby discussed examples of instructional cohesion, he mentioned teaching a writing process unit as

well as a unit on literature. And though he claimed, "English all kind of fits together naturally," he did not articulate a way those specific units flowed together. Therefore it is unsurprising that when Colby provided major lessons on literary terms for a unit on *Touching Spirit Bear*, as well as a PowerPoint for lessons related to connotation and denotation within a unit on African American literature selections, there was no apparent connection between those units. In contrast, Ben recognized his struggle with between unit cohesion when he clearly explained in his interview that he had trouble connecting units together. He believed that his unit on elements of fiction transitioned nicely to a unit on active reading strategies. But he later acknowledged that *students* did not seem to see the connection when he said

> We worked on, like, elements of fiction in the beginning. As soon as we moved on to active reading strategies it seems like they've just left, um, the elements of fiction here. And then, like, I have to review to, like, bring that back up to speed. And it just seemed like things weren't transitioning as well as I thought they could have.

He did not submit artifacts for those units for me to see why that disconnect might have occurred. However, within the materials he supplied for units on characterization and sentence structure, this disconnect was also evident. The artifacts provided no clear connections between the two units. Allison, new to her school in December, expressed that there was an order to the units her district required her to teach but she "had no idea" why they were organized in the order they were. She also did not submit two consecutive unit plans for the same course, and as such I was unable to ascertain any level of between unit cohesion.

Despite presenting no evidence of between unit cohesion, these teachers did articulate goals for their courses that could have led them to create between unit cohesion if only the goals were more specific. For example, Colby said, "I want to make students as effective

communicators as possible" and he wanted students to "learn from the mistakes from the characters…they can grow themselves, uh, through the characters that they read." Similarly, Ben wanted students to see how "[literature] connects to their lives." But neither expressed any specific lessons or connections students should acquire from their courses. Allison, on the other hand, was concerned with students' career and college readiness. Skill-based course goals, or ones related to connecting to literature, could encourage some development of cohesion across a course if there was some evidence in the instructional materials of skills/content *building* across the course toward some *specific* improvement in communication, or learning about life, or connection with literature. But the lack of specific goals makes it difficult to build skills or content over a course in any concrete, specific way, further explaining their lack of between unit cohesion.

Though Bethany was more able to discuss how her units connected, she did not articulate explicit planning for between unit cohesion tied to specific course goals either. Instead, Bethany remarked that her students make connections across her units to key concepts like discrimination and loss of innocence that she teaches in her thematic units. She said she "thinks" they get it because she repeats the main points so frequently in class. However, her course goal is general, improved communication, instead of something specific related to the themes she is teaching. Explicit repetition of these themes also did not appear in her artifacts across her units, the way she claimed she emphasized themes in her speaking. So it is unclear if the connections Bethany reported students make are a consequence of intentional teacher planning or not.

Kirsten and Kayley appeared to have a more advanced understanding of between unit cohesion due to their claims of explicit connections. However, it is still unclear how they build *their specified course goals* across their units. Kirsten claimed to have connections between units

because her grammar units build students' skills and then units of writing follow each grammar unit where students then apply their grammar skills to different kinds of writing. However, Kirsten supplied no artifacts to verify her claims making it also unclear how her units might address the building of skills in some explicit way to meet her goals of "students us[ing] the grammar properly and [becoming] confident writers and in who they are." Kayley claimed her units on Native American literature and Colonial literature are connected through chronology. But it is unclear how these units build some specific knowledge across the *whole course* for something relevant about the *whole* of American literature that the course focuses on. Her specified course goals are concerned with, once again, general, skills related to improving students' reading, writing, and public speaking skills, rather than something specific about American literature students will develop through studying the Native Americans and the Puritans and the rest of her groups in her other units. Perhaps the singular statements I discovered on worksheets, such as "How do the Native Americans' views of nature compare to our treatment of nature today?" are implying what, specifically, she would like the course to develop about American literature as a whole, but she did not articulate such a connection. And, with no statement in her following unit to build on the treatment of nature, there is no clear between unit cohesion in the evidence provided.

Needs theme 3: Although all teachers integrated writing with literature instruction regularly, they struggled to integrate research, grammar, and vocabulary.

Five of the six teachers discussed assigning students written essays about the literature they study. This practice shows literature study integrated with writing. Of those five teachers, three provided artifacts that supported their claims. Bethany and Kayley provided writing assignment guidelines and rubrics, while Allison provided the district-mandated unit planning

guide she uses that explained the required writing assignment students completed after having studied Shakespeare and his play *Romeo and Juliet*. The sixth teacher, Colby, did not discuss literature and writing integration; instead, he discussed instruction he engaged in with his students but that was not connected to the literature he taught. He also provided no artifacts to show any writing instruction he incorporated into literature study. Though the majority of the teachers demonstrated incorporating writing instruction within literature study, they did not have the same success integrating grammar, vocabulary, or research skills instruction.

Integrating grammar and vocabulary into instruction involves the abandonment of generic vocabulary lists and grammar worksheets, for example, in favor of activities contextualized within students' literature and/or writing instruction. For example, when students are studying a piece of literature, the teacher may draw students' attention to the author's writing style to provide instruction on grammar (e.g., purposes of using different types of sentence structures or unusual pieces of punctuation) and vocabulary (e.g., word meanings). In this way, students' understanding of grammar and vocabulary is contextualized in authentic applications and students' understanding of the literature increases, as well. However, when integrating research skills into ELA instruction, there is another nuance to consider. A common prescription of curricula described in the literature review involves teaching research skills through some singular, research paper assignment, potentially not involving the literature students are studying. When such mandates exist, ideally, teachers would also include research skills instruction throughout other aspects of their course. For example, though districts may require students to engage in a research paper unit that is disconnected from the rest of the course content, teachers could also require students to research the setting from a novel to learn more about the context of the story. Such a practice provides students with an authentic research experience, researching to

learn something to aide in comprehension. In addition, this practice enhances students'

understanding of the text they are studying and could improve their skills as researchers.

     Integration of research skills. Four of the six teachers reported having decontextualized

research paper units as part of their curriculum. However, at least one of Kayley's, required

research paper units involved literature. Such a unit demonstrates a more desirable integration of

research skills with literature instruction not often apparent in units focused specifically on

research skills development. Specifically, Kayley reported students engaged in an independent

reading unit where they read a book by an American author and then "pulled a topic" from their

books to research for the writing assignment that the research paper unit developed.

     Whereas none of the other teachers indicated such a clear example of integrating

research, all teachers reported including research instruction of some kind, often occurring within

literature study, beyond any stand-alone research paper units that may have also existed in their

curricula. However, the level of integration varies drastically as does the kind of research skills

addressed.

     Ben and Allison reported integrating research skills instruction within literature study

with specific, age-appropriate goals for this instruction. For example, Ben described one of his

projects, Foods of the World, where his sixth grade students learn about "gathering content" as

they research a recipe from a culture and provide him facts about the culture and the food that

they found in their research. This project is part of their study of the novel *Penny from Heaven*

where an Italian family and their food is important to the story. Similarly, Allison said she

addressed specific research skills including evaluating sources, citing information used, and the

like in activities within the district-mandated, research-based writing assignments her eighth

grade students encounter within *every* literature-based unit she must teach. For example, students

evaluated the credibility of sources they collected on topics of Elizabethan life they then turned into a presentation. Allison explained further that this mini-research project would then aid students in "writing the essay at the end of the unit" where they answer the following question: "How well did Shakespeare incorporate Elizabethan life, like the information [students] learned from Elizabethan life, into his play of *Romeo and Juliet*? This practice shows complete integration of research and literature. Though Allison and Ben reported these positive practices, they did not submit any artifacts showing their planning for these research projects. Therefore it is unclear what exactly they teach and how effectively their materials address their expressed goals.

Bethany and Kayley also claimed to regularly integrate research instruction into their literature activities, but the integration was superficial in at least some instances within their supplied artifacts. For example, Bethany required students to research the meanings of allusions on a worksheet activity. The worksheet directions stated

> Prior to reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, choose two allusions…from the lists below. Research to find their meanings. For allusions, write a paragraph for each term, giving definitions, references, explanations, history, or any other information. Include a picture or example if appropriate.

It is unclear from those directions, however, whether or not the source of students' information mattered or whether or not they were to properly document the information they borrowed in the paragraphs they were to write. These are skills of research use that do not seem fully integrated even though students engaged in the act of *doing* research. It is quite possible Bethany instructed students about these skills in other activities not included in her artifact submission, but without direction, students could easily develop a bad habit of plagiarism that they do not even recognize

as such. Similarly, Kayley submitted an artifact that showed she required students to use MLA formatting for in text and works cited citations when students wrote about *The Crucible.* Only formatting citations for the one book they read is a surface-level research skill that could be deepened. For example, students could supplement their writing with additional research outside the book under study. This practice could require these high school juniors to learn citation formats for non-book sources and deepen the content of their essays.

In contrast, Colby only had students engage in one research-based writing activity, a persuasive essay on cell phones, disconnected from literature study, where he simply had students look up articles for this paper. The students were not required to use MLA citations in this practice. When asked why, Colby pointed to his lack of comfort with citations himself making him reluctant to engage students in those practices.

Integration of grammar and vocabulary skills. Teachers integrated grammar and vocabulary instruction within literature and writing instruction far less often than research skill development. For example, in the artifact submission, four teachers addressed grammar, all of which were executed in seeming disconnect from the rest of the ELA discipline. For example, Ben and Colby included tests and quizzes on sentence structure and "then vs. than," respectively, that were not connected to any literature or writing assignments. Kirsten reported having initial units on grammar decontextualized from writing. But after those units ended, students would apply the skills to a writing assignment in a new unit. Allison's only reference to grammar in the artifacts she submitted was a notation on the unit calendar of grammar quizzes, so it is a bit unclear what those quizzes contained. However, she explained that her department was currently reviewing their decontextualized approach to grammar instruction. The remaining two teachers stated that grammar was not even a requirement of the ELA curriculum. One claimed not to

teach it as a result. The other attempted to integrate it within writing instruction when she could. Kayley taught mini-lessons on grammar skills based on places students were struggling in their writing rather than asking students to work through grammar workbooks in an isolated and decontextualized manner. This practice shows some level of integration, but does not reach a place of full integration.

Four of the teachers reported teaching vocabulary in decontextualized ways with at least some of their classes. For example, Colby and Kayley discussed using word lists from vocabulary books disconnected from their literature. The district guide Allison submitted, which centered on literature, required her to teach word roots and stems. However, in her interview she claimed the only vocabulary she needed to teach according to that document was the jargon associated with literature comprehension and analysis, specifically "theme, character, setting, plot, objective summary, argument, inferences, archetypes." Therefore, she was seemingly unclear on what constituted vocabulary instruction and decontextualized these roots and stems from the literature. Two of the teachers, Ben and Bethany, expressed an explicit desire to learn different/better ways to address vocabulary than how they were currently engaging students in such instruction. Only two teachers submitted any unit plan artifacts that showed evidence of vocabulary instruction. Both Bethany and Kayley included samples of quizzes where students engaged in activities such as matching words from the novel to their definitions. For the one teacher, Kirsten, not teaching vocabulary at all, she reported not teaching it because it is not in her curriculum, which is exclusively grammar and writing.

Needs theme 4: Teachers demonstrated limited planning of graded activities that measured students' higher order thinking.

Teachers likely plan a variety of instructional activities, both formative and summative, in which students demonstrate their learning. When teachers plan these activities, ideally they construct the activities such that students must use higher order thinking skills to accomplish tasks successfully because students' engagement of higher order thinking results in their demonstrating a deeper understanding of course content. To effectively plan deeply thoughtful activities, a two-part process is necessary. First, teachers should create activities that engage deep thinking by nature of the activity. For example, asking students to make and support predictions about a character's next moves in a text engages deeper thought than asking students to only recall what a character has already done. Secondly, teachers must carefully plan how they prepare students to accomplish their thoughtful activities, so as not to end up with a scenario where students merely regurgitate, for example, potential answers to a character's next moves for a quiz item that the class already defined in a discussion. In this scenario, the potentially thoughtful quiz item would then merely require students recall the class discussion, a much different and lower level of thinking, rather than engage in deeper thinking. Students' thinking becomes recall because the teacher's planning in preparing students for the upcoming quiz included "leading" students to the appropriate answer. Because of the fact that the majority of the artifacts teachers submitted as major unit activities were graded assignments, this theme focuses on the two-part planning process associated with the graded activities teachers created.

As the theme implies, none of the teachers effectively utilized this two-part planning process to create graded assessments of students' learning that engage higher order thinking. Instead, the teachers' planning in this area showed: a.) little attempt at planning graded activities that assess higher order thinking or b.) a lack of attention to planning implementation procedures that ultimately diminished students' need to engage in the graded activities thoughtfully.

Little planning for higher order thinking. In their preintervention interviews, two of the teachers, namely Colby and Allison, reported not assessing much higher order thinking on the graded assessments they relied most heavily on: tests and quizzes containing a combination of multiple choice and short answer items. These teachers reported that the majority of their tests and quizzes address lower level thinking skills, namely recall and memorization. Colby did mention a thoughtful project where students created a persuasive ad for an object. But, this kind of activity is not the largest portion of his grading, which then supports that he more often plans graded activities that engage lower level thinking. He justified his choice to grade lower level thinking with, "I hate the grade book and I hate just slapping a number. And the easiest way is to have a test that's full of regurgitation." However, he also reported struggling to get students to think for themselves the few times he tried – graded or not. When asking students to tell him what they think about something more challenging, he claimed, "They'll be way off...like to the point where it's like 'What in the world?' Or they'll just sit there and say, 'I don't get it. I don't get it.'" Similarly, Allison mentioned her district mandating that teachers increase the level of thinking required of students. But when she added in a couple thoughtful questions, on quizzes as well as other worksheet-based prompts, if students responded to them at all, she also reported students struggled. They would complain by saying things such as, "Why can't this just be easier? And why can't we just, you know, answer the questions like we were doing?" She even reported not grading one of these thoughtful activities because of how much students struggled when they tried to accomplish the task. Therefore, she does not utilize higher level thinking activities much as a result. Though Allison did not provide artifacts for me to examine, Colby's artifacts support his assertion with a plethora of identification and definition questions present on his tests of literary terms.

Procedures planned that diminish outcomes. Four of the six teachers demonstrated leading students at times with their procedures that led up to students' grading assignments. For example, when Colby tried to give students a thoughtful activity, he required them to analyze the meaning of a quote for a writing assignment. However, he discussed the quote with them prior to the writing activity. His justification was that "you want them to get the right answer."

Though Kayley, Bethany, and Ben reported more frequently assessing higher order thinking than Colby in their baseline interviews, and they supplied artifacts that do support more assessment of higher level thinking than Colby or Allison, they, too, demonstrated evidence of planning procedures with activities that ultimately lessen the thinking required of students. Specifically, Kayley claimed she assessed higher level skills through projects, essays, and discussions. She also reported sometimes utilizing open-ended questions on the tests/quizzes to get more thinking out of students. However, when discussing this topic during her baseline interview, she made a self-realization that some of the open-ended questions resulted in students all writing the same answers rather than being "original," indicating her instruction that prepared students for the quiz/test item gave them an appropriate answer. Project-based activities that Kayley described in her interview as thoughtful, where students "[pull] out different aspects of what they learned" to create a myth, for example, appeared to involve that kind of thought according to her unit artifacts. However, the grading rubric for the project Kayley submitted indicated that fewer points were awarded to the deeply thoughtful elements than to grammar, spelling, creativity, and focus/clarity. She also did not define what creativity and focus/clarity entail, making it unclear if there is higher level thinking involved in these categories or not. Therefore, ultimately, the graded activity seems to reflect little higher level thinking based on the point values the teacher planned for the activity's grade.

Like Kayley, Bethany and Ben also claimed they engaged students' higher order thinking in their graded assessments through discussion and writing assignments. However, the artifacts they provided did not always support their contentions and the potential existed for procedures accompanying the higher level thinking activities to diminish the thinking required of students. Specifically, Bethany did include writing assignments with her unit artifacts that addressed some higher order thinking but this was not consistent across all her materials. For example, she asked students to create their own invocation, about themselves, that mirrored the format of the invocation at the beginning of *The Odyssey.* This assignment required students to relate to the text in a thoughtful way, a desired level of higher order thinking in ELA instruction. Yet, students were also required to create questions about *The Odyssey* as part of a group assignment that could show up on their upcoming test. This activity seems to engage students' thinking, but only if they had been instructed on how to create thoughtful questions as opposed to creating questions that result in mere regurgitation of plot details. From this assignment, it is not clear if or how Bethany prepared students to write thoughtful questions about literature, however. Though this is not leading instruction like Kayley's, it is instead an example of how a teacher's planning to assist her students' success with an activity could impact what students produce in their end product. In addition, these two assignments are from just one of her units. Materials she submitted for a different unit involving *To Kill a Mockingbird* were mostly tests, quizzes, and study guides that frequently addressed lower level thinking related to plot comprehension instead of these more thoughtful activities.

For Ben, when he graded thoughtful discussion-based activities, like his shared inquiry activity where he asked students to determine who was responsible for a character's death, he said he gave students "participatory" grades for the discussion based on the worksheet they

completed prior to the discussion. In other words, though he asked students to pick a stance on the assigned topic and support their stance with five pieces of textual evidence, higher order thinking activities, his language of "participatory" grades suggests he merely graded students' completion of the activity, not their thinking. He also graded three reflection questions students answered during the discussion about whether or not their stance changed. However, he said the grade comes mostly from "making sure they are writing correctly." This response does not clearly indicate that he graded their thinking either but instead addressed the grammatical accuracy of their statements. He did say there is a rubric that goes along with the shared inquiry activity, which would have been helpful to clarify his vague statements, but he did not include it with his artifacts. In addition, the artifacts that he chose to include for two units, one on characterization and one on sentence structure, did not reflect the thoughtful activities he described in his interview.

Research Question #2: In what ways, if any, does the PD intervention improve new secondary ELA teachers' knowledge about how to plan a) more cohesive, b) integrated, and c) deeply thought-provoking instruction?

 Growth theme 1: By the conclusion of the intervention, all teachers identified evidence of between unit cohesion in their current or future instruction.

 As was evident at baseline (i.e., Needs theme 2), teachers exhibited little to no between unit cohesion in their planning. But by the conclusion of the intervention, three of the teachers, Ashley, Ben, and Colby, created new between unit cohesion for their instruction where they had none before, while two teachers, Kayley and Bethany, identified how between unit cohesion *already existed* within their instruction in ways they did not articulate during the baseline data collection. Due to the limitations of the time of the intervention, the between unit cohesion

discussed here is limited to connections between two units rather than articulations of connections across units over an entire course.

Created new between unit cohesion. Allison, Ben, and Colby had the greatest room to grow in their understanding of and planning for between unit cohesion. As a result of what they created in the intervention, they showed evidence of growth with this concept that places them closer to their peers in the PLC than where they were prior to the intervention.

In the first post-meeting reflection, Allison chose to address between unit cohesion. It is important to note that none of the post-meeting reflections specifically asked teachers to focus on between unit cohesion. Instead, for the first meeting's reflection, I asked teachers, generally, to discuss the pertinent points of instructional cohesion from our meeting and to apply them to their unit of instruction. In subsequent meeting reflections that focused on integration and two areas of content depth, I instructed teachers that they did not have to make any changes to their instructional cohesion writings from any previous reflections, but could if they learned something additional from our meetings that changed their thinking. So when Allison described an insight she had regarding how to create between unit cohesion for her current instruction, she did so without prescription from me. Specifically, she explained seeing connections between the work she taught previously, the novel *Chains*, and the way characters are "chained" in the current work her students were studying, *The Diary of Anne Frank.* She reported that she is slowly trying to bring up these connections in class and wanted to have students complete a writing activity on the topic at some point in the current unit.

Ben and Colby's creations, on the other hand, were conceptual. Instead of creating specific activities, they re-conceptualized their units that were previously units based solely on works of literature with no connections between them. They created new units that were

thematic/topical. For Ben, his first reflection discussed the idea of having "relationships" as the topic students would build upon over the course of the year. For Colby, his first reflection talked about skill-based connections across units. For example, he reported having taught a unit on indirect characterization that he connected to a unit on static vs. dynamic characters by showing students how using indirect characterization an author provides can help students see whether or not a character is static or dynamic. However, Colby learned more about cohesion from the next meeting and additional help he sought from me outside of the PLC. His evolving understanding about the meaningful connections to life desirable for between unit cohesion caused him to modify his thinking further. His reflection after meeting two showed him having units on "bullying" and then "coming of age" with between unit connections occurring through different points of the plot in *Touching Spirit Bear*. This between unit cohesion may not quite reach optimal if Colby is required to teach more than one novel throughout the school year. But it does, show growth from where Colby began with no connections between units whatsoever.

   Identified existing between unit cohesion. Kayley and Bethany, on the other hand, started with some idea of how their two units went together according to baseline data. Therefore, it is logical that their growth with between unit cohesion did not involve as much new invention of materials or creation of new concepts as Allison, Ben and Colby. Instead, the shifts in thinking were subtle, but they still existed. In her first reflection, Kayley, identified morality as an element that connects her units together, something she had not stated in her baseline interview, showing her growth in applying the concept. She clearly articulated how societal beliefs are important to her instruction with both Native American literature and Colonial literature. Bethany did not mention between unit cohesion in her initial reflection, but after the first meeting, she took it upon herself to email me an essay assignment she had yet to teach that

she thought might represent cohesion because it allowed students to work with characters from any point in the course as they were connected through the theme of being heroes. In her second reflection, she also chose to continue working with the concept and identified a connection between two specific units related to people's perspectives. She discussed how the point of view instruction her students received in her current unit would transition nicely into perspective taking with forthcoming Holocaust literature involved in her upcoming unit.

Growth theme 2: Outside of between unit cohesion, teachers created new practices for current or future instruction only when they articulated a preintervention interest in improving their planning for that concept.

With each meeting, teachers could have experimented with creating new activities and conceptual frameworks to improve their instruction across each planning dimension under study. Despite their varying degrees of baseline performance, the sessions were tailored to address areas on which all of the teachers could work. However, teachers were, instead, selective about where they created new practices. It was when the teachers identified specific desires during their baseline interviews that aligned with the sessions in the PLC that the teachers' growth extended to the point of creating new instruction. Specifically, and explained in detail below, the teachers created new instruction that aligned to their baseline interests for (a) within unit cohesion, when they showed interest in structure; (b) integration, when they wanted to improve their research skills, grammar, and/or vocabulary instruction; and (c) content depth, when they sought to challenge students.

Cohesion sub-finding: Teachers seeking structure were likely to create changes related to within unit cohesion. The two teachers who lacked guidance from district-supplied units, Ben and Colby had little clear structure to their instructional units initially. They taught units that did

not seem to make consistent, relevant connections between the focus for their units and the real world. In fact, Colby reported that he struggled to identify what his units were. He also reported struggling with knowing what to teach and desired to have ELA curriculum be more concrete and specific/prescribed in some ways. In slight contrast, Ben expressed struggling with "end goals" for the units he had to bring the lessons together to a relevant point. By the end of the PLC, both teachers modified their units' foci so that each addressed relevant content, such as bullying for Colby or family relationships for Ben, rather than units on decontextualized skills. Based on what they wrote in their reflections, they did not have equal success in accomplishing the task, but their efforts to attempt new instructional planning here align with what they sought at the beginning of the PLC. Specifically, Colby crafted multiple topics for units, such as "bullying" and "coming of age." But he tied all these topics to one novel, leaving open the possibility that he had no intention to teach any other literature. His baseline interview did indicate that he was not forced to teach any specific literature, but he did mention texts other than the one novel he created within unit cohesive units for during the intervention.

In contrast, though she had district-supplied unit plan guides, Bethany seemed to view the structure of her units as incomplete. In her baseline interview, she expressed liking the thematic units provided in her district's curriculum guide but that she will "jazz [them] up." She also felt frustration over not knowing exactly what to teach, similar to Colby. Specifically, in relation to how she decides what literary terms to teach, she expressed frustration with her unit guides' assistance, or lack thereof, indicating "I kind of wish I was a math teacher. Like I really do. Cuz I feel like it's so much more specific." What she started working with in her reflection following the week one meeting gave her some potential starting points to addressing these needs. Namely, she reported wanting to adapt Beane's (1997) approach for developing individual unit foci,

discussed in the first PLC meeting. This approach involves students identifying what they want to learn about. She planned to ask students about their "Shifting Perspectives" unit that discussed point of view to see what was relevant to them about that topic. She reported that she was concerned that the racism concept they discuss in this unit through works such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* may have become "passé." She questioned whether or not her students might want to interject some conversation about LGBTQ topics within this unit. By incorporating students' input she could be sure to provide them with relevant foci when she next went to "jazz" up the unit and the kinds of conversation the class had around the district-required novels. Though this intended use of student input to help determine some of the structure to the individuals units she teaches was a new occurrence that helped to address one of her structural concerns, it does not help with her other problem related to how literary terms instruction meshes with the unit foci. However, she did start to create solutions for perceived structural problems to the units she taught by deciding to allow students' input on the within unit foci of her units to increase their relevance and meaningfulness, what Beane (1997) encouraged that she learned from our meeting.

The other two teachers, Allison and Kayley, who made no alterations to their within unit cohesion over the course of the PLC had school district-mandated units, as well. Interestingly, at the end of the PLC in the final reflection, Kayley reported confusion about within unit cohesion as it applied to her prescribed, written curricula from her school district. However, she never mentioned this cognitive disconnect during the intervention and did not report any attempts to improve her planning in this area. In addition, her baseline data addressed her interest in activities, not structure that cohesion provides. So, the salience of wanting to increase the variety of activities she has students engage in, compared to some of her colleagues, likely made any

confusion with within unit cohesion less important to her to address as a result. Allison also expressed no interests related to within unit cohesion at the time of baseline data collection.

Integration sub-finding: Teachers who articulated an interest in research skills, grammar, or vocabulary were more likely to attempt creating activities for those areas integrated into literature and/or writing instruction.

Research skills. Two teachers, Kayley and Ben, reported incorporating research into literature-based activities during their baseline interviews. Both also seemed genuinely interested in having students demonstrate research skills more often than required. For example, Kayley said, "I always make them, uh, cite the book throughout. Where they're doing papers for me, they cite for me." Similarly, Ben had students looking up sources for project when his district had a separate reading/writing course that required research paper writing. As a result, Ben avoided instruction on formal research paper writing, but he still chose, based on his interest and what he found important, to include research skills development within his course, even if the research was only used in a presentation. Though what they created was not perfect, they both made use of research in more authentic ways than formatting citations, for example. As a result of the PLC, Kayley created student-centered activities that made students responsible for researching necessary background for a literature unit when she said

> I would like to add a research piece to the Native American unit. It is the first unit that I teach therefore I think students would benefit to learn some basic researching skills. The lesson could be gathering information on a tribe and learning more about the people in order to better understand their stories. The Crucible essay that I assign relied on students prior knowledge but could also implement research skills - possibly focusing more on incorporating citations into their writing.

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Ben's vocabulary book activity mentioned earlier incorporated students researching the definitions of the words they did not know.

Of the remaining three teachers, Allison, Bethany, and Colby, who did not show interest in integrating research or create any new integration, two already had research prescriptions provided to them that likely made additional research unnecessary. For example, Allison's district required her to incorporate research into her instruction with each literature unit, thereby likely explaining why she did not attend to integrating research more during the PLC. Similarly, Bethany's district prescribed a research paper unit and she indicated in her baseline data that she also included research in other places in her instruction.

However, Colby did not teach much research at all and claimed not feeling very comfortable himself with research. His disinterest likely explains why he did not create any research-based activities during the PLC.

Grammar. Within the baseline data, Bethany and Kayley reported wanting to provide more grammar instruction than they currently do, with Bethany explaining pressures from her district prevented her from teaching students grammar. One other teacher, Allison, isolated grammar as something that her department was seeking to change because it was too decontextualized. In turn, Allison created an activity that integrated grammar into literature study in her third reflection. However, the other two teachers, Bethany and Kayley, appeared challenged by creating specific activities they could incorporate, but they both attempted general discussion about changing their grammar integration. For example, in her meeting two reflection, Kayley proposed, "Maybe implementing it earlier in the year would help students." Bethany used her reflection as a way to ask questions about grammar integration. And in a later reflection, she wrote about teaching the grammar of MLA citations during a week of instruction that

occurred during the training. This project was new for her. So in light of her interest in integration evident from her emailing me the paper idea before she began instruction to see if both were occurring, it is possible she was being reflective about integrating grammar in that current planning.

The other two teachers in the group, Colby and Ben, did not create any grammar activities that could be integrated. They also expressed no concern with their current grammar instruction during their baseline data collection despite the fact that both provided grammar instruction that was decontextualized (i.e., not integrated).

Vocabulary. Three teachers, namely Allison, Ben and Bethany, expressed concern during baseline data collection with vocabulary instruction. Specifically, Ben claimed trying to teach students ten words a week, decontextualized from other aspects of the discipline. But he was unhappy with that approach and was not sure what to do to be most effective. Bethany admitted that she did not particularly care for the vocabulary she currently teaches that comes from the required literature. She would, instead, prefer to use "high academic" or high frequency vocabulary, words often found in life as opposed to the sometimes-archaic language of canonical texts. Allison, on the other hand, did not seem concerned with vocabulary but instead voiced confusion over some of the "academic jargon" students were required to learn in a given unit according to her district planning guide. For example, though she could understanding why students needed to learn poetic elements and author's purpose when studying *Romeo and Juliet*, she did not understand why verb moods was placed within that unit as vocabulary related to the literature students should know.

Two of these teachers, Allison and Ben, integrated vocabulary with literature during the intervention. Allison noted the vocabulary stems she had been teaching in isolation for the first

time and decided she could now get students "finding the stem words that may be used in our texts/novels and creating questions or small activities based on the stem words in the texts" to get those integrated. Ben offered up students creating a vocabulary book on unknown words they encountered as they read.

Similarly, Bethany integrated vocabulary and research within her current practice. Specifically, she reported teaching vocabulary as part of her current instruction on research paper writing that she had not previously taught. Her students were struggling to differentiate among bibliography, source, citation, and Works Cited, so an impromptu vocabulary lesson occurred there. She experienced resistance from her district with her desired approach to vocabulary through the use of a web-based software called Membean. The software isolates students' individual deficiencies with high frequency vocabulary, which in Bethany's vision, she could then have students make use of any time written communication occurred in the class. For example, if students engaged in writing about their literature, they could use the words provided to them from Membean within their writing. Though she was unable to use Membean, what she was able to do with the research paper writing activity still integrated vocabulary in an authentic way before the end of the PLC.

However, the other two other teachers in the group expressed no concern with their current vocabulary practice even though they reported or provided artifacts documenting decontextualized vocabulary instruction. They worked with decontextualized vocabulary lists from vocabulary workbooks for at least one of their classes. That practice is less than ideal and should be altered, but they made no attempts to design activities that would integrate that vocabulary into other aspects of their ELA course.

Content depth sub-finding: Teachers who reported a desire to challenge their students created new activities that attempted to engage students in deeply thoughtful encounters with ELA content more than teachers with other interests. According to their preintervention interviews, two of the teachers, Allison and Colby, wanted to increase the level of challenge their instruction addressed. Though Allison provided no artifacts for me to justify her desire, Colby provided evidence of lower level instruction through unit artifacts, such as quizzes with mostly lower level thinking items. Kayley wanted to challenge students by increasing the variety of the kinds of activities she used in her instruction. In her preintervention interview, she reported her routine of using the same few activities bored students at times.

These three teachers created new activities focused on higher order thinking during the intervention. Colby missed designing an activity to encourage student questioning, but he attempted creating new activities for relating and reasoning, concepts addressed in a meeting he did not attend. Specifically, he said "maybe they can have an assignment wherein they create a venn diagram between the text and what they see in their real-life experiences." He also mentioned having students make predictions about characters' actions in future portions of a novel. Allison used specific tools from the intervention like the Espresso app to analyze author's grammar and infographics to synthesize student-generated topics that connect literature to life. Kayley created a reasoning question for her Native American literature unit assessment she submitted previously:

> The students would have read the story of the right-handed twin and left-handed twin in "The World on the Turtle's Back." Each twin has their flaws and better qualities. It is up to the student to analyze these and determine which twin was in the right or in the wrong.

She also created a new writing activity for relating that asked students to write creation myths, like those of the Native Americans, but of their origin, not just of their literal birth but also of who they are today.

The other two teachers, Ben and Bethany, did not identify desires to increase the challenge of their instruction for students and thereby did not create new activities with the same consistency as the other teachers who created new activities for almost all of the kinds of higher order thinking under study. Instead, they often merely identified examples of what they already do that they discussed in their baseline data, such as Ben's example of shared inquiry that tapped into students' reasoning abilities. Or, they may have skipped parts, such as not mentioning specific activities correlated to specific thinking behaviors. For example, Bethany discussed higher order thinking generally in her first reflection on content depth rather than isolating relating or reasoning, specifically with comments like

> On a formative quiz, I will ask the basic questions and look for basic comprehension of characters, for example. On a summative, I am taking that to a higher level--the so what--the why--the how. In order to get to this final stage, they need to know these lower level questions.

It is possible that these teachers were making realizations of how their current practice already attended to the higher order thinking under discussion; however, their lack of changing their instruction in this area makes sense considering neither had expressed a desire for increasing students' challenge with activities. Ben was most concerned in his baseline interview with elements of cohesion and Bethany with managing grading.

Growth theme 3: As a result of the intervention, most teachers recognized the need for intentionality in planning for integration.

The second meeting of the intervention addressed the process by which a teacher goes about planning for integration. Specifically, after having discussed cohesion and establishing a framework for teachers' ELA instruction based on the literature they must teach, they could then establish how the variety of ELA skills their curricula dictate they teach mesh with the frameworks they established. In their assigned reflection for that week's session, in part, teachers were asked to discuss what they thought was pertinent information about integration. To do so successfully required an awareness of the key points of effective integration, such as the purposeful contextualizing of grammar and vocabulary skills even when written curricula provided to teachers may not require such context. Teachers' reflections throughout the intervention revealed changes in their understanding of the deliberate nature of planning for integration for four of the five teachers (Kayley, Allison, Colby, and Bethany) compared to their baseline data.

In her reflection following meeting two on integration, Kayley reported recognizing the importance of intentionally planning integrated instruction. Specifically, Kayley wrote that she desired to be more "deliberate" with her integration. Claiming to have realized the "benefits" of integrating all parts of the discipline for students' learning, Kayley understood that the accidental occurrences already in her instruction were not sufficient. In her final reflection, Kayley also said that she thinks she integrates "most of the ELA skills" but "would like to do this on a more conscious level." This kind of conversation did not arise in Kayley's preintervention interview.

Similarly, in the reflection following meeting two, Allison realized that she and her colleagues did not "integrate the various things we are supposed to teach." She further remarked that the conversation during the meeting "really resonated with me that this is what we need to be doing and have been struggling to figure out how to do it. Especially with the grammar and

stems." She clearly represented the struggle, the challenge involved in making deep connections between the various aspects of the discipline that only deep knowledge of the subject matter allows, as well as the need to be calculated to make integration happen. Though Allison explained that her department was going through revisions with how they handled grammar, the rest of her awareness in her reflection was not part of her baseline data, showing her growth.

Though Colby did not provide the level of detail Allison did, his meeting two reflection also showed he recognized that integrated instruction does not happen accidentally. He stated, "…it takes a lot of planning ahead." From Colby's preintervention interview and artifact submission, he taught decontextualized grammar skills without any vocalized discontent. But in his meeting two reflection, he reported realizing that grammar is a skill that should be integrated into his units and is not in fact something that should be taught as a unit itself. By the end of the reflection, he articulated the beginnings of plans for next year, also an indicator of his deliberate planning, where grammar was no longer a unit or a collection of units he reported intending to teach.

In Bethany's final reflection, she remarked that "being more purposeful in my instruction" is what she learned from the PLC that would make her instruction more meaningful to her students. In her prior meetings, she demonstrated this purposeful, deliberate nature with integration, specifically. For example, she carried the topic of integration into her meeting four reflection, which was not targeted at the topic of integration. In that reflection, she discussed what she did with integrating grammar and vocabulary in her research paper unit. This was the same paper assignment she sent me via email, on her own accord, where she was also asking for my feedback regarding cohesion.

Growth theme 4: Teachers minimally improved their ability to define specific kinds of higher order thinking and frequently omitted the impact of procedures they plan for those activities.

Defining higher order thinking. The baseline data collection for this study did not involve teachers making distinctions among different kinds of higher order thinking they include in their instruction. Instead, the focus was, generally, on what teachers deemed examples of thoughtful instruction they have implemented. However, the intervention focused on defining specific higher order thinking relevant to ELA: relating, reasoning, synthesizing, and questioning. In the third meeting of the intervention, teachers discussed the terms relating and reasoning as they apply to ELA instruction and identified how these kinds of thinking could be incorporated into their classrooms. In meeting four, teachers did the same activities for synthesizing and questioning. In both meetings, teachers were exposed to tools and strategies to help them create activities that would address these specific areas of higher order thinking and discussed the role of planning instruction with the activities to ensure the activities remain thoughtful and allow students a deep experience with ELA content rather than surface contact. What teachers articulated in their written reflections after each of these meetings and in their final reflection on the content of the intervention as a whole reflect only partial acquisition of the contents of the PLC.

Of the four teachers present during the session that included content on relating and reasoning, no one accurately and completely defined the word "relating" and what that kind of thinking requires in that meeting's written reflection. Allison admitted to forgetting what the term meant and stated that she should have completed the reflection activity closer to the conclusion of the meeting so she did not forget. Kayley did not submit her reflection for the

meeting until the conclusion of the entire intervention, perhaps explaining why she did not retain or define the term reasoning in the first reflective question. Similar results occurred with participants' articulations of the relevant points of reasoning in ELA. Only Ben correctly defined reasoning. However, he did not actually use the word. Instead, when asked "what do you think the pertinent points are in planning instruction that asks students to engage in deep thought when they relate or reason in ELA," his response implied a definition of reasoning only and focused on discussion exclusively:

> The pertinent points of deep thought discussion are to make sure that the students can not "guess" the right answer. Having the students come up with an explanation as to why that is the correct answer, or how they arrived at a certain answer forces them to understand their own thinking, as well as better understand the text.

In addition, none of the final reflections on the PLC mentioned the words reasoning or relating as learning teachers gained about deeply thoughtful instruction. Only Allison implied reasoning when she stated that she learned that "us asking critical thinking and evaluation type of questions is more important than going over the basics with students."

For the second meeting on content depth that addressed synthesizing and questioning, teachers demonstrated similar gaps in knowledge. When asked to define pertinent points of synthesizing and questioning in their meeting four reflections, all the teachers identified modeling as key strategy to help students question for themselves, but only two of the four teachers present for the meeting, Allison and Colby, accurately defined synthesis as requiring students to bring information together from a variety of places and create something new with it. In the final reflections on the content of the entire intervention, Colby and Allison mentioned the

importance of students asking questions as something they learned about deeply thoughtful instruction. The final reflections contained nothing about synthesis.

Impact of procedures planned. For the part of planning thoughtful instruction where teachers consider the instruction they plan for these higher order activities, teachers demonstrated even less growth. Therefore, it appears teachers could benefit from additional training on how instruction could diminish the amount of thinking required by students if teachers provide students with the answers to otherwise thoughtful activities with the intent of ensuring students' success on graded assignments.

At baseline (i.e., needs theme 4), four teachers who deliberately planned to engage students in higher order thinking activities did not always prepare instruction/instructional materials requiring higher level thinking as a requirement for success with the activity. Yet, after two meetings during the intervention where we discussed this idea of teachers planning non-leading instruction, only Kayley and Bethany mentioned the importance of not giving answers to students in one of their two content depth reflections, while the other two said nothing. In addition, when teachers wrote about activities that would address each kind of higher level thinking in their reflections during the intervention, these weekly reflections asked teachers to "Include what your instruction would be like surrounding the implementation of these activities to show how you would scaffold the instruction toward deep thought." Yet none of the teachers provided details of the instruction for the activities they described in their reflections. In addition, only Kayley mentioned the notion of "non-leading" instruction in her final reflection as something she learned about designing thoughtful instruction.

Research Question #3: What are teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility and satisfaction with the PD intervention?

All teachers reported the PLC as feasible in the anonymous, final evaluation survey. Teachers also provided additional descriptive responses on feasibility and satisfaction on the Likert and open-ended items on the final evaluation survey. Teachers valued many of the elements of the PLC. For example, one person wrote the personal nature of the PLC and his/her interest level in it created a positive experience. Specific individual comments related to what was most beneficial about the PLC included design elements like the strategies provided in the training, reflections that had them use their own curricula with the strategies, interactions with others within the group, and "unbiased" and research-based opinions from me. From the many strengths teachers reported, one theme emerged consistently across four participants' responses: the PLC was more beneficial in meeting teachers' needs when compared to other PD experiences. An additional theme highlights teachers' beliefs that the timing of the PLC was an asset but one that could still use enhancement. The final theme indicated that while technology allowed for logistic flexibility, it also created challenges to participants' learning.

Feasibility and satisfaction theme 1: Teachers reported being largely satisfied with the PLC's ability to meet their needs when compared to other PD.

In the follow-up survey, four of five teachers reported that this PLC was better than other PD they have encountered in terms of its relevance to their needs. No teachers reported this PLC was worse than other PD in meeting their needs. Instead, the fifth teacher responded "No change." When asked to justify their responses, teachers indicated enjoying elements of the design such as how "we shared ideas" and that "it was with some people I knew so I generally cared about what they had to say." For the one who responded "no change," the teacher reported "A lot of the PD that I had, like this one were geared towards ELA."

In cross-referencing teachers' responses to questions during their preintervention interviews about their prior PD experiences, I found further context and explanations for their positive reactions to the PLC. For example, of the five teachers who completed this PLC, four reported in their preintervention interviews that their PD to that point had been sub-par with respect to their content area. For examples, Colby stated "We have had some of those content-based [professional development], but it's....not very helpful." Allison had only had one in-service day at her school at the time of the interview and it was a training related to sexual abuse. Kayley reported having induction meetings where she encountered problems using Google hangouts and a wealth of information she felt she already received from her preservice training about such topics as IEPs and general pedagogy. Though her department recently began trying to address more ELA-specific PD, Kayley explained this process was not yet perfected. The head of the department was located in the middle school limiting his ability to closely monitor the activities of the high school teachers like Kayley. Lastly, Bethany reported dissatisfaction with her school's twice-a-year approach to PD, despite liking the content she got to choose from that her colleagues presented. However, she also exhibited feeling rejected in how the selection of whose voice gets heard as a PD leader at her school when she stated

> During my interview, I told them, like, I did, like, you know, professional development with the writing project, and I'd be happy to, like, offer it, and, like, they never asked me. And I get I'm new so they think I know nothing, but, like, you know, I do have stuff to offer. So, um, it seems to me like it's the same people that they trust that have been there awhile.

Bethany clearly didn't feel like her years of teaching experience prior to joining her current school and her training with the National Writing Project, a popular source for ELA teacher PD

discussed in an earlier chapter, was respected, different from the collaborative element of the PLC where everyone's voice is encouraged.

Feasibility and satisfaction theme 2: Teachers reported the timing of this PLC as compared to other PD was mostly better, but suggested some changes to improve the effectiveness along this dimension.

Three teachers reported that this PLC was "better" for their availability than other PD they have had. Only two teachers responded that there was "no change" with this PD compared to others. Three teachers who provided written comments to the open-ended survey question asking them to support their reasons for the evaluation of the PLC as feasible also cited reasons related to time. One claimed the online environment helped bring together people despite *time* and distance problems of physical meetings. Two others reported that my working with the teachers' schedules was helpful. One of those teachers also reported this kind of PLC gave them "enough time" for their reflections. Though not all teachers were able to attend each meeting because of prior obligations to their schools, the flexibility with timing this PLC afforded appeared as an overall strength for its feasibility, generally.

However, when reporting about their satisfaction related to timing, teachers did have some suggestions for improvement. For example, though three teachers reported being very satisfied with the time we had to address goals and allow people to speak, teachers' comments about what would have made them more satisfied revealed a desire for "a little more time" and "Maybe more sessions at a time that wasn't as late on a work night." The only response provided for the survey item on suggestions for improving the PLC echoed this sentiment about the timing of the sessions. The teacher commented that "more trainings at a better time for all participants" could improve the PLC. Lastly, the survey item on teachers' satisfaction with the time provided

to complete reflection/planning activities returned the least satisfactory responses of all the other survey items related to satisfaction. Two teachers reported being "very satisfied" with the time allotted, while two were "mostly satisfied" and one only "somewhat satisfied." When asked what would improve their satisfaction, of the four who provided responses, three claimed there was nothing to be done, with two of them reporting having busy lives as the thief of their time. The one person who did provide a suggestion indicated that discussing the reflections during the meetings might have helped. However, it is unclear exactly what that means. We discussed the prompts for each reflection at the end of the meetings. Perhaps the teacher wanted to discuss specific examples, but from the comment as written in the evaluation survey, no such details appeared.

Feasibility and satisfaction theme 3: The novelty of Zoom as well as technology difficulties impacted teachers' ability to learn effectively from the PLC.

Teachers reported Zoom provided affordances for flexible timing that they valued. Specifically, in three of the four open-ended responses teachers provided to justify the feasibility of the PLC, the teachers mentioned how using Zoom allowed us flexibility with time. However, technical issues also impeded participants' learning. Three of the five teachers reported having no trouble with Zoom, and two reported having a little trouble. Though these numbers do not appear to reflect any concern teachers had about the technology related to its feasibility or their satisfaction, teachers reported specific technology problems during the intervention. Specifically, Bethany used the chat feature during meeting one because of microphone problems that prevented her from being heard. Similarly, in her meeting two reflection, Allison wrote that

> …for about the first 15 minutes [of meeting two] the microphone on my ipad and phone
>
> (I signed out several times to see if it would stop happening) was cutting in and out so I

couldn't hear everything that was being said the whole time, only bits and pieces. It did

get better after awhile.

In addition, Colby sent a text message to me after meeting two explaining that his computer shut off and he missed part of the conversation. In a later meeting, Ben also logged off and logged back in due to the technology malfunctioning. In addition, as I recorded in my memo following the final meeting, we all momentarily logged out of Zoom due to feedback that we could not resolve otherwise.

Furthermore, in the unusual occurrence where the majority of teachers rated a category with less satisfaction than the highest possible, such as the four teachers who reported "usually" feeling listened to and valued rather than "often", one teacher provided the suggestion to increase satisfaction in this area by "maybe showing my ideas on a screen share." Being new to Zoom myself, as one teacher also reported being, the PLC meetings did not make use of all the affordances of the Zoom technology due to my own limited familiarity. Therefore, from the teacher's comment about screen-sharing, the lack of the full use of the technology impacted her ability to learn as effectively as she might have had she felt more listened to and valued with his/her own ideas showing up on the screen for the group to see and, ideally, respect.

Two participation-related questions on the evaluation, how much teachers actively participated and how comfortable teachers were participating, also seemed impacted by the technology based on the responses teachers provided. For the active participation question, only one teacher reported participating "very often," while two teachers reported participating "often" and two only "sometimes," the greatest number of teachers at the lowest evaluation of any category in the post-intervention evaluation survey. In contrast, for the comfort question, three teachers reported being "very comfortable," while only two reported being "usually

comfortable." But the follow-up questions related to comfort and active participation revealed a different teacher in each citing needing to have more people talk. From my observations and conversations with teachers during the opening meeting, it was difficult to know how to share the stage in the Zoom forum. We discussed trying to take turns and be respectful to one another in lieu of a hand-raising icon teachers had seen in other virtual meetings software, but not Zoom. Though they attempted to avoid interrupting each other, even after the first meeting, comments from teachers like "sorry, go ahead" happened frequently when inevitable interruptions occurred. Therefore, despite the utility of Zoom bringing our group together, our use of Zoom impacted teachers' interaction with each other and the content of the PLC in less desirable ways.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, for each element of instructional planning, I address how teachers' needs and the outcomes of their work in the PLC align with current literature. Next, I discuss teachers' perceptions of the PLC and how these findings align to PD literature. Then, I detail implications for practice related to working with new ELA teachers and how their needs and performance post-intervention could impact the content and design of future implementations of professional learning communities on instructional planning for novice ELA teachers. I end the chapter with the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

New ELA Teachers' Needs

Though literature on new ELA teachers does not specifically focus on teachers' instructional planning needs related to cohesion, integration, and content depth, literature does indicate ELA teachers, generally, engage in practices that counter the recommendations in these areas of planning (e.g., Applebee et al., 2000; Hillocks, 2011). My findings related to new secondary ELA teachers' planning corroborate that research. Overall, the findings indicate teachers' planning is non-optimal. Yet, the teachers did improve in each area. As a result, though all three of these areas of planning combine to create effective instruction, for any discipline, I divided the discussion into separate subsections for each planning area. My findings extend the literature by demonstrating specific instructional planning needs within each area. Therefore, the following section discusses each area of instructional planning and how these new ELA teachers seem to align with what we know about ELA instruction. Within each area of instructional planning, I discuss the impact of preservice preparation as well as in-service training and support on the existence of new ELA teachers' instructional planning needs.

Cohesion. Instructional cohesion involves the connections that typically occur within and between instructional units (Smagorinsky, 2008). This concept is an important part of instructional planning because these connections, ideally, help to provide relevance to students' (Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1995) and thereby engage students in building their knowledge of relevant course goals (Kelly, 2006). However, when it comes to planning specific course goals, Brauer and Clark (2008) argued that the varied purposes for studying ELA from which teachers have to choose could derail ELA teachers' attempts at creating cohesive instruction. The findings from the current study seem to support their claim given the lack of between unit cohesion teachers' planning included at the onset of the intervention. In this study, participating teachers demonstrated limited ability to articulate clear connections between units or execute them effectively within their instruction. They also seemingly formulated units without much attention to their course goals. In addition, their course goals were often general and skill-based, not necessarily something secondary students would find engaging to explore and/or that is unique to their students and class contents. They adopted the Everyman philosophy with their goals in that their skill-based goals could be, and perhaps should be, part of any English classroom, such as building students' abilities to communicate effectively. Such goals are not unimportant; they are merely insufficient for meaningful cohesion instruction ideally builds (Applebee, 1996).

Though teachers often demonstrated some awareness of within unit cohesion in their interview baseline data, their unit artifacts demonstrated little support, or little consistent support, for what they perceived. Therefore, within unit cohesion appeared easier to grasp when compared to between unit cohesion, especially with districts that provide unit guides as part of the written curricula. However, all teachers lacked optimal practice related to either clarity they would achieve through a specific, narrow focus for each unit on something content-based that

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was meaningful to students' lives and/or consistency with that focus. Colby's focus was entirely skill-based, which scholars argued is not the most effective for students (Applebee, 1996; Beane, 1995; & Noddings, 2006). The more effective kind of unit where some element of ELA *content* is utilized requires teachers possess a deeper understanding of what ELA offers students for life beyond literacy skills. This kind of thinking is something novice teachers often do not have (Berliner, 1986). In addition, where some deeper understanding existed, evidence of novice thinking still occurred. For example, teachers did not consistently emphasize the narrowed, thoughtful ideas they had in their instructional materials. How to consistently emphasize those important life connections present in literature requires more expert thinking. In other words, expert teachers not only see what is relevant about ELA content but they also decipher *how* to position that relevant content among the comprehension-based instruction that can dominate literature instruction (Rosenblatt, 1995). The new teachers in this study did not accomplish this task.

There are many explanations for why these cohesion needs may exist beyond teachers' newness to the profession. For example, preservice training cannot provide contextualized experiences where teachers use the written/supported curricula of the school for which they will someday work. Specifically, ELA teachers may encounter works of literature they have never taught, or ever even read, upon entering field experiences, their first job, or their first year in a new school (Shulman, 1986). Therefore, the preparation involved in just learning the materials may limit how much cognitive energy remains for broader thinking about course planning. Therefore, new teachers often have a limited scope to their planning whereby they do not conceptualize the "big picture" with their course or even across multiple units. Similarly, if new teachers are learning unfamiliar texts while they are teaching them, teachers' ability to narrow

their focus for within unit cohesion is also inhibited unless their district provides them with planning guides. They simply cannot know what important concepts their required materials build because they do not know the materials.

Besides a lack of context, new teachers may have had less than optimal preservice training that only superficially addressed the concepts of between unit or within unit cohesion. Given the broad array of pedagogical skills that must be targeted in English methods courses, instructors may focus on coverage rather than depth with their instruction (Hillocks, 2011). Specifically, preservice preparation may not differentiate between the kinds of cohesion (i.e., within- and between unit cohesion) for which ELA teachers should plan. For example, speaking from my experience as one of the teachers' preservice educators, teachers spent some instructional time in their preservice training on how to create instructional units, so lessons that would go together in some way creating within unit cohesion. But it is less likely they isolated the other type of instructional cohesion as it deals with a larger scope of instruction that is hard to address in a decontextualized environment such as preservice training.

As a result of these kinds of shallow attention to cohesion and the decontextualized nature of preservice training, it is unsurprising new teachers may leave behind their preparation when they start their on-the-job planning, a common occurrence according to activity theory (Grossman et al., 1999). From the unit planning guides teachers in this study received, such as Kayley and Bethany, it may appear teachers get help with cohesion on-the-job. Logically, the purpose of district-mandated planning guides is to help teachers create instructional cohesion at the within unit level. However, they may not assist with between unit cohesion. In this study, the teachers with district-provided unit planning guides did not result in greater proficiency with between unit cohesion. Therefore, without receiving additional, on-the-job training on between

unit cohesion, though district-provided unit planning guides can be helpful tools at some level of

cohesion, teachers may not put the prescribed units together in a way that will help to build

larger course goals and result in between unit cohesion. Teachers' independence with this

decision-making process could result in many desirable, as well as less desirable, results.

Given teachers often do encounter PD on-the-job, do teachers experience personalized,

context-specific PD as would be necessary for planning between unit and within unit cohesion?

Scholars have bemoaned the often-ineffective PD that is decontextualized from classroom

practice (Glazerman et al., 2010; Strauss, 2014; The New Teacher Project, 2015), suggesting

help with ELA instructional cohesion is probably limited. Ideally, ELA experts argue new ELA

teachers should receive individualized PD experiences that account for their specific context

(Bentley, Morway, & Short, 2013; McCann, 2013). However, in this study, teachers' reports

about their previous PD largely indicate a lack of attention to their specific contexts suggesting

any form of instructional cohesion was likely absent from previous conversation.

Integration. Integration is the blending of the skills of all parts of the ELA discipline

rather than, for example, separating grammar instruction from literature instruction and the like

(Langer, 2001). The goal of such integration is for ELA instruction to mirror authentic use of the

discipline aligning with contextualized learning principles of effective pedagogy (Brown,

Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Though empirical research on new ELA teachers' instructional

planning is lacking, some evidence exists demonstrating ELA teachers decontextualize grammar

(Hillocks, 2011). Anecdotal evidence suggests the same for vocabulary instruction (e.g., Kail,

2008). These sources align with my findings of teachers' struggles to integrate grammar and

vocabulary instruction into literature and writing instruction. These needs seem largely related to

the design of school district written and supported curricula and dispositions.

For examples, in districts which require materials include vocabulary or grammar books, teachers may not know how to integrate generic word lists and exercises from those books into the rest of their instruction. As such, they may resort to teaching those skills in a decontextualized fashion as Colby claimed he did. This phenomenon may be further encouraged if other teachers in their school, following the school culture as activity theory supports (Grossman et al., 1999). Similarly, when no vocabulary or grammar materials are provided, teachers can face an overwhelming decision about how to address instruction with those skills, like what Ben faced when trying to plan vocabulary instruction. He explicitly articulated not knowing how to incorporate vocabulary instruction in a way that would be effective. A lack of materials and requirements can also lead teachers to avoid teaching the skills at all like Bethany did as a result of being in a district without grammar requirements. In other cases, teaching these skills can simply become an afterthought for teachers. So though grammar or vocabulary may get integrated into a specific activity for a singular moment in time, teachers may not integrate the skills throughout their courses, or any particular unit, with specific, long-lasting intentions.

It is also possible teachers' lack of confidence in their content knowledge, or actual lack of knowledge, can also impact integration as happened in this study, as well. For example, Shulman (1986) explained how, preservice ELA teachers in field experiences encounter novels they never read despite the many novels their undergraduate training likely has them reading. Similarly, Colby described not feeling competent formatting citations despite having completed an undergraduate degree in English where he likely wrote many research papers. As a result of his perceived incompetence, he admitted avoiding teaching research skills, especially citation formation, in the face of a district that specified no research requirements. Shulman (1986) also lamented that teacher education programs ignore PCK. Though today PCK may no longer be

completely ignored, content knowledge seemingly remains the emphasis of certification requirements (ETS, 2015a, 2015b; NCLB, 2002). In turn, where teachers integrated research skills at only a surface level, such as emphasizing formatting or merely collecting sources rather than other more thoughtful elements of research use, this could also be a lack of confidence and/or PCK. They may simply instruct students with formatting citations because they do not know how to instruct students on more nuanced aspects of research.

One strength of participating teachers' integration related to research skills instruction is the frequency that teachers incorporated research skills instruction outside of stand-alone essay assignments required by school districts. This finding suggests that the long-standing tradition of "the research paper" as the culmination of some singular unit of instruction may still exist (Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2015). However, it also suggests teachers understand the importance of incorporating more research skills development. It is over repeated periods of time and practice students gain deep knowledge about complex tasks (Bruner, 1960).

Content depth. Instructional planning for content depth concerns teachers' planning for instruction that goes beyond facts and recall to acts of thinking deeply about the important content of the discipline (Applebee, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1995) The impact of instruction on students includes a limited knowledge of the discipline and potential difficulty engaging in authentic ELA tasks in the real world. However, researchers claim that new teachers plan instruction in surface literacy skills rather than teaching literature with depth (Scherff, Rush, Olsen, & Nemeth, 2013). In addition, empirical evidence reflects ELA teachers' reliance on writing formulas over content and thought (Hillocks, 2006). This literature reflects the existence of a lack of planning for content depth. Unfortunately, the findings from this study align to the

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prevalence of such practices as reflected in the graded activities teachers discussed and submitted as their main artifacts for their units of instruction.

Teachers face challenges when grading complex thinking compared to recall activities, which may engender anxiety (Floden & Clark, 1988). The teachers in this study experienced that anxiety. However, although teachers rarely graded student work that showcased higher order thinking, this does not mean thinking with depth never occurred in teachers' classrooms. They also often created materials/instruction that diminished students' need to think to achieve academic success. Grading students' thinking means that there is no "one" right or wrong answer for new teachers to rely on. Instead, teachers must be willing to be flexible and accept multiple answers. However, that can cause difficulty when justifying what answers are not well thought out/supported, especially if one needs to justify a grade to a parent. Teachers can also associate fear of unpredictable outcomes with open-endedness in that no guaranteed responses exist the way multiple-choice items have fixed responses. Williamson (2013) explained teachers resorting to "discussions" that are mere recitation as a result of such fear. So for graded activities, it can be easier just to grade lower level thinking activities where anxiety and fear for all decrease.

Preservice preparation is unlikely able to prepare teachers well for the kind of specific dilemmas they may face related to assessing higher order thinking and/or what to do when students struggle to think because deep student thinking, or lack thereof, does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, students may engage in surface-level thinking for a variety of reasons related to their specific experiences inside or out of school that could impact what teacher responses would have the most success. Floden and Clark (1988) recommended routines for social studies teachers to determine how to write the content of a quiz utilizing one question from each heading of a textbook. But such a routine cannot assist teachers like Allison who encountered specific

students struggling with specific questions. Preservice preparation lacks the necessary context of classrooms to assist teachers like her effectively.

PLC Effectiveness

Much of formal PD through induction and mentoring programs is ineffective in helping teachers to improve their classroom practice in meaningful ways (Glazerman et al., 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; The New Teacher Project, 2015). PLCs, however, have shown potential in improving teachers' classroom practice (Borko, 2004; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). My study findings also suggest the promise of PLCs. Specifically, my study shows the potential PLCs can have to improve new ELA teachers' instructional planning. In addition, the study reveals the strengths PLCs can have compared to other PD, particularly in meeting teachers' needs and timing, as well as the potential of technology to assist the effectiveness of the PLC. I discuss each of these areas in detail below.

Instructional planning improvement. Overall, teachers' experienced limited growth with instructional planning. The topics of cohesion, integration, and content depth as presented in the literature review are all very nuanced. Therefore, it is unlikely this PD, or other typical forms that currently exist, could or do address them in meaningful ways given limitations on time and resources. However, this study, the first of its kind, provides some inroads as to the potential PLCs could have in assisting new ELA teachers in improving their instructional planning practices, despite time limitations.

Specifically, all participating teachers made some gains in between unit cohesion. Most showed a newfound awareness for intentionality when planning for integration. In addition, they did make gains in recognizing specific types of higher level thinking in ELA that the intervention included and information related to the role of instructional materials in ensuring students engage

in thoughtful activity. However, their gains were quite small for these areas of content depth. The small gains teachers made are just the beginning of improving teachers' instructional planning knowledge and practice to the level of experts (Bloom, 1956). By engaging teachers in the deliberate practice Clark (2008) recommended for expert development, in this case deliberate practice with each instructional planning element, teachers began to improve. However, I did not have enough time in the PLC to delve deeply into creating specific course goals or have the teachers collaboratively investigate where "natural" connections exist between the skills and the specific literature they teach. Similarly, we did not have enough time in five weeks to discuss or create rubrics that emphasize grading thinking, or provide teachers with appropriate instruction to recall the important elements of reasoning, relating, synthesizing, and questioning, or articulate the importance of *how* teachers implement activities for ensuring higher level thinking occurs.

Due to the highly nuanced nature of the topics and teachers varying starting points, it is likely I took on too much content at one time for these teachers. According to Bransford and colleagues (2000), too broad of a focus in instruction could have resulted in teachers' inability to provide conscious attention to all the tasks. In addition, it is important to recognize the lengthy, potentially too time-consuming nature of the reflective writings used in the current study. Though I tried to elicit dialogue through the questions I posed in response to teachers' writing, the time needed to engage with the prompts at the depth I envisioned may have been too lofty. Besides teachers' busy lives potentially impacting the effectiveness of the prompts, their scaffolds were entirely removed for the reflective writing, which may have limited their ability to perform with content that was challenging to them (Vygotsky, 1978). They no longer had the group to bounce ideas off of while they were writing or my assistance with the same ease and

convenience that existed during our meeting times. Effective planning for instruction that reflects cohesion, integration, and engages students' higher order thinking does not necessitate teachers' ability to explain how their instruction accomplishes those tasks. However, if teachers were able to do these things in the PLC, it is reasonable to assume that their planning would be stronger and more accurately implemented in the future.

Better than other professional development. Additional encouragement for the PLC comes from teachers' overwhelmingly positive responses to the PLC in comparison to teachers' previous PD experiences. Specifically, the majority of the teachers stated the PLC better met their needs than prior PD. Teachers also reported both strengths and weaknesses related to timing of the sessions despite having a mostly favorable outlook when comparing this PLC to other PD. As such, below I discuss (a) the strengths of the PLC in meeting teachers' needs, including teachers growth related to their interests and (b) the positives and negatives related to the PLC's timing.

Meeting needs. Teachers' frequent evaluation that this PLC met their needs "better" than other PD seems to come from the group dynamic and the contents of the PLC. Their comments related to appreciating working with people they know, getting strategies from me, and applying the contents of the sessions to their own classrooms as strengths support that contention. These strengths directly connect to the tenets of a PLC (see, for examples, Hord, 1997a, 2004; Newmann, 1996). In situations where new teachers are engaged in PD with authority figures responsible for their tenure and/or pay increase, in stark contrast to the design of the study PLC, could incite discomfort and self-consciousness, inhibiting teachers' learning (Hirsh, 2016). Likewise, if teachers are new to a building and do not know the colleagues they may need to work with in mandated district or department PD, teachers may keep to themselves or be rejected

by others as teachers in this study voiced. PD required by school districts is also often not ELA specific, and as such is decontextualized, and thereby ineffective (Glazerman et al., 2010; Strauss, 2014). This fact is supported by the fact that only one of six teachers commented that prior PD was focused on ELA related. This PLC, however, was highly contextualized to teachers' specific written and supported curricula.

In fact it was the intention of the PLC to address at least some specific elements of ELA instructional planning in which teachers perceived needs or demonstrated interest. Specifically, the findings from Growth theme 2 related teachers' development with their baseline interest in/engagement with the instructional planning topics. This phenomenon aligns with adult learning principles that value meeting teachers' specific needs (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). I asked teachers about their specific needs in the baseline interviews, tied them into our meetings, and encouraged teachers to illustrate their needs in the group meetings (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). For teachers' within unit cohesion growth, active interest in structure at the baseline resulted in substantial growth. Though one of those teachers, Bethany, already had a fairly strong start to within unit cohesion, her interest in how she would "jazz up" what the district provided explained her desire to incorporate Beane's (1997) strategy of getting students involved in planning instruction. For content depth, a baseline desire to challenge students showed teachers' recognition that higher order thinking activities challenge students more than lower level thinking activities. This interest in a key component to the benefit of teaching content with depth prior to the PLC encouraged their growth with the concept during the training. Similarly, where teachers gave input on how they had tried incorporating grammar, vocabulary, and the like, or specifically requested assistance in doing so, they participated in active engagement at the illustration level, which increases teachers' growth (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). So, for example,

Ben expressed frustration with how to integrate vocabulary effectively into his instruction during his baseline interview and articulated how he had tried to do so in the past that did not work. Subsequently, he created a possible activity during the PLC that would help engage students in vocabulary instruction integrated with literature more authentically than he had been able to create prior to the PLC.

      Timing. Similarly, teachers' response that the timing was often better than their previous PD is a strength of this PLC's effectiveness. I asked all the teachers about their schedules to help get a time that would work for all, a practice school-mandated PD likely does not do. However, it is difficult to find a time that works equally well for six busy people to meet with each other. Teachers, especially, often have busy lives after school hours as a result of supporting students' extracurricular activities besides attending to their own personal lives. Therefore, our evening meeting times, which sometimes ran beyond an hour and a half, became exhausting for me and seemingly for other members of the group, as well. Some also missed a meeting because of other commitments. So it is unsurprising that some teachers voiced suggestions for improvement related to different meeting times that weren't so late in the day. However, teachers did, at times, acknowledge their own difficulties with time that impacted their participation but that they did not blame on our timing. This finding is important because it is unlikely that any one scheduling change would have been acceptable for all. It also suggests that what McCann and colleagues (2005) found related to new ELA teachers' misconceptions about workload and resulting fatigue is likely true for these new teachers. They agreed to a time, and to participating in the group, perhaps not realistically recognizing the fatigue they were already experiencing from their jobs/lives adjusting to being new teachers.

In addition, though some teachers expressed wanting more time to complete reflection/planning activities, and made additional time to contact me for help or took time beyond the assigned due dates for the assignments to complete activities, the time provided had to be limited. When designing a PLC such as this one, I had boundaries related to time to complete the study, and also needed to be able to get enough people to participate. Requiring more time than I did could have benefitted some, but it could have also caused others to decline participating. In addition, though teachers were less positive here, the lowest rating, by only one teacher, was "somewhat satisfied." The only suggestion requested discussing the reflections during the meetings for help. This suggestion implies something was unclear from the general discussion we had about the prompts. Perhaps, the reflection guidelines themselves were a problem as I suggested in the discussion of content depth growth. Otherwise, simply adding more time to complete reflections, though it would have been a luxury, simply might not have worked for other teachers. There is also a pedagogical reason to carefully weigh how much time teachers should get for reflections. The longer teachers wait after the completion of a meeting to put their thoughts to paper, the less accurate, or thoughtful, their responses might be. Teachers may simply forget information if they did not take detailed notes, which teachers sometimes admitted. Short-term memory is, as the name indicates, limited (Bransford et al., 2000). Therefore, it is possible the five days may have actually been too much time, time that encouraged procrastination and memory loss. This experience could have ultimately left teachers feeling like they did not have enough time when, in fact, they had too much.

Technology. Also related to timing, teachers recognized the opportunity that the technology-supported PLC provided for bridging geographic distances and allowing more flexibility with scheduling. Because teachers could work from home with a PLC of this kind,

there are opportunities to work in the evening that would not necessarily be feasible for face-to-face environments. Though these benefits are commonly recognized affordances of synchronous conferencing technologies, they require that teachers reach consensus for time to meet, which can be challenging when compared to the use of asynchronous technologies where teachers can work at their own pace and time (Lever-Duffy & McDonald, 2011). In addition, teachers' reports of relative ease using the Zoom technology suggest Zoom is a viable vehicle for delivering PD. Though there is limited research on internet-based, synchronous PLCs, it would seem this study supports the potential such structures possess for providing PD effectively. There are many other factors that go into the overall effectiveness of a PLC than simply ease and convenience, but without positive results on the ease and convenience factors, a PLC in this forum would be unlikely to be effective.

Though teachers' reported struggling very little with the Zoom technology, which would seem to support their satisfaction with and perceived feasibility of PLCs with this forum, their perceptions do not negate the many technology malfunctions that occurred. In fact, the NRC (2007) warns that teachers should have technological support provided to them when engaged in using technology for PD. However, in working from home, not as a part of any specific school or district sponsored PD, these teachers did not necessarily have that support. As a result, whether or not teachers perceived the impact of the technology as an impediment to their learning when they were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the PLC, their reports to me during the intervention indicated the technology caused them to have learning problems. Missing some of the discussions caused Allison, and maybe others, to miss information in her written reflection and Colby to reach out to me via text for some additional help. One reason for this seeming disconnect in what teachers reported in the evaluation and what occurred during the intervention

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could be that these new teachers may be accustomed to experiencing technology problems. In fact, they may be so used to malfunctions that unless they happen for the duration of a meeting or repeatedly across weeks, the malfunctions may simply be ignored instead of thoughtfully critiqued. Teachers who regularly work with technology seem to develop a level of acceptance that issues will arise when technology is in use.

In addition, teachers experienced no training with the Zoom technology, which could have influenced the struggles they had and their ability to pinpoint features of the technology as culprits in any potential learning difficulties. One should not assume that just because teachers may have a cell phone and use the Internet to find resources for their instruction that they are proficient with any technology tools that might possess helpful affordances for PD (NRC, 2007). One teacher cited screen sharing as a way to improve her feeling of being listened to/valued. Though this person acknowledged the way the technology negatively impacted learning, it is possible that other teachers did not respond with that suggestion or consider it as a helpful addition because they were new to that affordance or the Zoom technology generally. A lack of familiarity with the technology's capabilities and how to use them would make it unlikely any comments related to such things would appear in open-ended questions even if certain affordances being underutilized were in fact problems.

Implications

In the following section, I first discuss the implications of this study related to assisting new ELA teachers and their instructional planning. Then, I discuss the implications this study has on the content and design of PD that seeks to strengthen new ELA teachers' instructional planning.

Assisting new ELA teachers. New secondary ELA teachers have instructional planning needs, whether they recognize them or not. But the question becomes, how do we help them overcome those needs and/or recognize they have them if they do not see it for themselves? Also, what stakeholders should take responsibility for new ELA teachers' instructional planning practices?

Preservice preparation. Critiques on the ability of preservice training to address ELA teachers' instructional planning needs exist, such as English methods courses lacking necessary depth to be effective (Hillocks, 2011; Williamson, 2013). There is also discussion of the difficulty preservice training can have combating the "apprenticeship of observation" phenomena (Lortie, 1975). As if that weren't enough, the struggles for preservice preparation's ability to be successful with instruction on planning techniques continues with the potentially conflicting influences that impact teachers' classroom behaviors according to activity theory (Grossman, et al., 1999).

However, preservice educators, utilizing a few targeted strategies geared toward foundational pieces of cohesion, integration, and content depth could help draw attention to some basis for these areas of instructional planning that do not seem to exist currently. First, English methods course faculty could address pedagogical content knowledge with between unit cohesion, for example, by addressing the development of meaningful course-specific, course goals. Initially, teachers could debate, prior to employment, the many general aims of ELA and how to combat the incoherence Brauer and Clark (2008) claimed can occur at this first phase of instructional planning. Then, preservice teachers could discuss how to apply these general to a mock course plan. Specifically, the preservice teachers could discuss possible, for example, how a general goal of "academic literacy" (Brauer & Clark, 2008, p. 296) translates to course-specific

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goals and meaningful content for classes such as American Literature, British Literature, or even survey literature courses younger secondary students often take. Many school districts' curricula is available online, free to the public without any necessary credentials to access materials such as unit planning guides. Incorporating these materials could help provide some authentic context for the activity and expose preservice teachers to literature they may expect to encounter in future jobs. This activity need not take up a lot of the precious time of the preservice educator. In fact, it could be incorporated into unit planning activities educators already have students engage in that might address the kinds of within unit cohesion of which the newly employed teachers had a better baseline understanding. By attending to both forms of cohesion in this way, preservice teachers when they enter the work force, have a greater chance to begin planning more effectively for cohesion than no, specific attention to these features would supply.

For integration, preservice methods faculty can also implement practices that bring preservice teachers' awareness to the topics in targeted ways if they do not already do so. For example, in instances where preservice teachers may create lesson plans for a unit, or teach lessons to their peers, preservice educators could require preservice ELA teachers to work with areas of content in which they may be less confident. In this way, the methods course becomes an opportunity for preservice teachers to improve their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge simultaneously. Shulman (1986) identified both of these kinds of knowledge as critical skills methods courses should include. If they included both, preservice teachers like Colby was, who don't feel they understand research writing well, could hone their own skills as effective researchers while also engaging in learning how to plan for incorporating research skills into lessons they plan for students. It would be for the methods course faculty to ensure that as preservice teachers planned lessons on skills, they incorporated those skills in meaningful

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ways, contextualized within a larger unit framework of literature/writing instruction. Teachers could reflect on why they integrated as they did, exposing their hidden thinking for faculty to comment on and provide assistance as needed (Senge, et al., 2000).

Similarly, with content depth, preservice methods faculty members likely already assist teachers with developing activities that ask students to engage in higher order thinking. And, they likely address grading and creating rubrics for content-specific activities. But, do they emphasize how to evaluate thinking processes, like how to evaluate students applying their classroom learning to new tasks, or do they focus only on evaluating products that demonstrate merely what facts teachers covered in class (Hillocks, 2009)? The former requires methods instructors to invest a lot of time with preservice teachers in building a unit where the final evaluation is a novel task. But the time might be worth investing for the return of more thoughtful instruction and evaluation. Similarly, providing specific, targeted practices related to leading vs. non-leading instruction could address new ELA teacher needs here. Methods courses could target new teachers' struggle to evaluate thinking in proportion with other skills by encouraging preservice teachers to first create a graded assignment that engages students' higher order thinking with a corresponding rubric as necessary for non-test/quiz activities. Then, the preservice teachers could also plan the lesson(s) that would lead up to students completing the graded activity, paying particular attention to not leading students or giving them answers, or creating rubrics that lessen the thinking required to achieve success. This process could all be part of a singular unit, with a culminating evaluation as recommended above that requires students to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge to a new task. These targeted practices for planning for cohesion, integration, and content depth do not guarantee new teachers, once employed, will plan instruction more effectively than the new teachers of this study.

However, new teachers would have more of a chance to do so with some exposure rather than none.

In-service supports. When teachers are first employed in a new district, or new to the teaching profession entirely, a mentor is a primary resource intended to help the new teacher to adjust to a specific teaching context and its required materials. McCann (2013) acknowledged that *English Journal* provides ongoing support for developing mentoring programs in the journal's regular, "Mentoring Matters" column. However, he also claimed there is no "standard formula" for how to do so effectively (p. 19). Instead, he, too, provided many general guidelines that include the responsibility of the mentor "to facilitate the extended conversations to help the less-experienced colleagues to reflect on the effect of instruction and to make plans for adjusting practice" (p. 19). Ideally, this mentor also helps the new teacher to transition his/her university-based, research-grounded, decontextualized knowledge into practice. Without effective mentors, or the provision of mentors at all, new ELA teachers may perpetuate sub-par patterns of behavior related to instructional planning without even knowing they are doing so. However, training mentors, ensuring ELA teachers work with a mentor who has the same content certification, paying mentors, and the like can be barriers to districts utilizing mentors, or securing high-quality mentors for new teachers. Yet, with the instructional planning needs teachers face and the impact ineffective instructional planning can have on students, like boredom or a lack of learning, districts may want to give serious consideration to the drawbacks of foregoing mentors. In fact, regular meetings with mentors, when teachers are new to a district, especially, regardless of the teachers' prior years of teaching experience could be very helpful for instructional planning practices. Given the highly contextualized nature of effective instructional planning previously discussed, the new context of a new district is likely to impact the planning practices

for a teacher new to the ELA curriculum of that school. Lindblom (2013) provided a variety of examples of specific mentor/new teacher collaborations that reveal anecdotal evidence in support of meaningful, contextualized experiences between novice and more expert teachers. Some involve outsider experts, but where that is not available, examples of successful in-house experts and novice teacher interactions exist demonstrating some mentor assistance is better than none for new ELA teachers.

In addition, school districts/English departments may want to make use of unit planning guides for ELA instruction, providing teachers with a more prescribed curriculum, if they do not already do so. And, when crafting such documents of written curricula, it would be helpful to articulate specific, narrow, content-based foci for teachers and students to explore within each unit and reference how teachers should integrate skills-based instruction with grammar and the like into the central questions/ideas the units are to explore. The unit planning guides do not need to prescribe every detail of the curriculum, however. The recommended curricula of Hatfield (1935), Hosic (1917) and Moffett (1968a) did not. But some of the prescriptions of these historic curricula have the potential to guide teachers more than the vague recommendations of the current NCTE standards (NCTE & IRA, 1996) or some district-mandated unit planning guides. Though district's unit planning guides likely help teachers with cohesion on some level as Hosic (1917) did by giving teachers ideas or how to organize the literature he thought they should teach, district-mandated unit planning guides that are specific about integration like Moffett (1968a) or content depth like issues related to corrective teaching would be helpful, especially for new teachers. If districts wanted to include uniform assessments across a department, then they should ensure the assessments and their corresponding instructional materials address higher order thinking.

It is important, however, to allow teachers some flexibility in their planning to adjust instruction according to both teachers and students' needs. As such, districts could decide to encourage teachers to develop their own course goals. But at a minimum, the planning guides should alert teachers to the need to develop goals specific to course content that each unit will build to develop. Such a nod to between unit cohesion at least informs teachers generally of what they need to do but still allows them flexibility to design a course to their own strengths and the needs/interests of their specific students. Districts could also supply teachers with sample goals in the fashion of Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) essential questions and enduring understandings from their *Understanding by Design* approach. By giving new teachers samples that are ELA-specific, they provide a scaffold that could lead new ELA teachers toward a better start with elements of cohesion than they might otherwise possess.

Professional development in instructional planning. Even with preservice and in-service supports in place, however, PD in instructional planning techniques would likely still be necessary for new ELA teachers. Planning instruction effectively does not occur absent from a specific context. There are also many nuances to planning effectively for cohesion, integration, and content depth teachers must address; more information than what preservice training, mentors, and/or documents of written curricula can likely provide adequately. PD that provides new teachers with additional practice with elements of instructional planning does not necessarily need to occur within the structure of a PLC. However, the results of this PLC can alert future in-service providers of PLCs on instructional planning for new, secondary ELA teachers about content and design considerations to maximize their effectiveness. I describe implications for both content and design below.

Content. Based on teachers' articulated desire for more time, their limited growth, and their extension of time beyond the required participation time, it would seem one way to address those concerns is to limit the amount of content in each PLC. Seemingly, I did not account for issues of limiting cognitive load (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011) and allowing teachers more time in proceeding through Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson, et al., 2001) where overlapping and non-linear progress with the levels can occur (Sousa, 2011) as much as I should have. However, the following recommendations are based on pedagogy related to these notions of learning that could assist future implementation. Without others studies to prescribe recommendations for dividing up this content, it was only during the PLC where I discovered the research design I used would not provide teachers with enough time as a result of their needs that emerged in the study. However, because teachers agreed to a certain amount of time investment prior to the PLC, I kept the division of content very close to the original plan choosing to at least expose teachers to all concepts.

However, instead of three topics of instructional planning per five-week PLC, a focus on only one element of planning in five weeks might be better. Though a variety of combinations of content could be possible, the most effective content division would likely involve a less is more approach. This content division would allow teachers more time to work with any one component, getting closer to mastery or more expert-like thinking on the topic, before transitioning into a different, but related, element of instructional planning. With this slowed pace teachers would have more time for more deliberate practice and metacognitive training (Clark, 2008). For example, after teachers take time to understand the definitions of between unit and within unit cohesion and their applications to instruction, they could then take additional meeting times to think through a variety of examples of each. They could assess the strength of

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the variety of examples in terms of their relevance to students' lives. Then, teachers could have more time to collaborate on creating their own examples, for their own content, including referring back to the definitions to justify their thinking. These are all activities we engaged in related to methods Dunst and Trivette (2009) utilized in their PALS model. This layout just provides more time for teachers to accomplish each task to achieve greater depth with the material rather than the coverage approach that, ironically, developed. Lastly, in a final meeting on cohesion, they might work on the consistency element, taking actual materials from their units and modifying them to reflect the meaningful focus of the unit and ensure it comes across clearly to students in all the main activities they will encounter in the unit. The details of the process for the cohesion content I just described could easily comprise an entire five weeks. The same process could also be mimicked for integration and content depth.

It is unlikely that new teachers would address all elements of instructional planning in one year as a result of this in-depth approach to the content of the PLC. However, in-service providers could analyze their teachers' needs, rather than just assuming all new ELA teachers' needs are the same and prescribe a uniform approach to PD for them all (McCann, 2013). If they then compared the new teachers' needs to the needs of the district, it is likely some, singular element of planning would take priority over others. For example, if mentors, supervisors, or other administrators observed lessons high in teacher recitation and collected test materials that emphasized mostly plot-based recall, those new ELA teachers may simply work on content depth training if the district is concerned about students' abilities to answer thoughtful questions on standardized assessments. Similarly, districts could decide only certain facets of a piece of instructional planning might be relevant. For example, if new ELA teachers demonstrated sound

within unit cohesion, but no between unit cohesion and lacking integration of grammar only, new ELA teachers could work on a PLC with only those elements of instructional planning.

Design and operation. Besides deciding what content to focus on, how much content to address, and what the specific interactions with the concepts teachers might engage in, in-service providers looking to develop a PLC must also consider facets of the design and operation of the PLC. A PLC of the sort studied appears feasible, but providers may want to adjust elements of for better effectiveness. The following paragraphs of this section explain considerations of design and operation related to teacher grouping, expert facilitation, distribution of content, and technology use that could inform future PLC designs.

Teacher grouping. This study implemented a heterogeneous grouping of teachers. None of them were from the same school, they taught a variety of grades and specific courses from grades 6-12, and they varied in how many years they had been teaching. The only common ground was their preservice preparation. Because their preservice preparation occurred within a four-year span, the duration of typical undergraduate certification, all the participants knew each other. This element of the design appeared to be helpful for collaboration and the comfort with sharing required of functional PLCs (Hord, 1997a). However, such a structure may not always be feasible. Also, that grouping may not be desirable. Because of teachers' varied environments, having a heterogeneous group potentially allows for a variety of opinions to circulate in discussions. However, in situations, for example, where mandates exist to use district-provided planning guides for some teachers but not for others, the diversity may obstruct optimal learning. In such a situation, the basis of planning and the procedures teachers utilize when beginning planning are likely quite different for the teachers in each group. Though the instructional planning content in the PLC is likely still relevant to each teacher as it should be according to

one of the defining characteristics of a PLC (Hord, 1997a), *how* teachers practically address the content may be quite different. An us vs. them scenario could develop which might hinder effective collaboration and the possession of shared norms of optimally functioning PLCs (Newmann, 1996).

The typical PLC occurs within individual schools where the teachers are all from the same district (Dufour, 2004). This format homogenizes the group across their teaching context. Homogenous grouping might be a better option for mitigating surface-level issues that can arise due to teachers' varying starting places and curricula described above. However, homogenous groups may get stuck in their thinking, struggling to find answers to planning dilemmas that arise as a result of the lack of diversity of experience within the group. Instead, one could consider modifying the content of the PLC or the criteria for entrance into the group to address the many variables of the different teaching contexts. For example, perhaps filtering participants by types of curricula their school districts provide could be a way to control another variable besides the preservice preparation one that initially placed my participants in a PLC together. In this way, there would still be diversity of experiences from different schools, a largely heterogeneous group, but they group would have commonality on an additional key feature of instructional planning, similar written curricula across the schools.

Expert facilitation. Typical PLCs also often lack an expert facilitator, instead favoring collaborative leadership that occurs via the mixed levels of teacher expertise the one would find in a department (Dufour & Reeves, 2015). Based on what teachers found beneficial with this PLC, the knowledge of an expert seems helpful, however. Given the nature of new teachers' limited knowledge of instructional planning techniques and the nuanced nature of applying the concepts to specific curricula, it is likely the teachers' struggles would have significantly

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increased without a knowledgeable mentor to facilitate discussion and learning. In fact, the

challenge was significant enough with a mentor since teachers asked questions and continued

discussion outside of the PLC to further their understandings of the concepts. What I was able to

provide, as someone who has studied instructional planning more than they had, was a scaffold

to get the teachers to the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). These experiences

coupled with other studies who have also shown promise with expert facilitators leading PLCs

(deKramer et al., 2012; Vescio et al., 2008) suggests selecting an expert facilitator who is an

expert in instructional planning for ELA maximizes the functioning of a PLC dealing with

instructional planning. Districts could identify an individual teacher to lead the PLC, rather than

utilize a preservice educator or other outside influence that might possess extensive knowledge

of instructional planning techniques. However, should districts do so, the selected teacher is

likely to need training or other support to achieve a more expert status than the other teachers in

the PLC.

 Distribution of content. There is no literature on how to most effectively distribute this

amount of content. However, based on my experiences facilitating this PLC, the following are

my thoughts on amendments to my approach that may be desirable.

 As I have emphasized previously, expert development with any subject matter requires an

extensive amount of time (Ericsson et al., 1993). Even with the deliberate practice involved in

the reflection work teachers did in this study, and the focused hour and half meetings teachers

had with each element of planning, there was not enough time. Though the division of content

described earlier could, by default, mitigate the timing issues should in-service providers be able

to accommodate the divisions suggested, the reality is that the time needed for such depth is

often hard to come by. So, in-service providers may want to consider other ways of distributing

the content of each PLC meeting to teachers to help maximize the time available. The goal is to

utilize the affordances of the technologies for maximum benefit for participants and facilitators

(Norman, 1988). For example, to help teachers reflect on each session more smoothly, the

facilitator of the PLC could provide recordings of each session to the teachers, which Zoom

allows. This additional material allows for a detailed recall of the events beyond what may

otherwise be teachers' scant notes they took during the meetings and/or copies of materials used

during the sessions, such as PowerPoint presentations. Also, if teachers know they will receive a

recording of the meetings, their cognitive load during the sessions can be reduced, allowing them

to think more intently about the discussion rather than multitasking with note taking. In addition,

or in lieu of recording capabilities, the facilitator could provide teachers with detailed

slides/materials in the sessions rather than mere outlines. Facilitator-provided detailed notes

would once again lessen teachers' cognitive load and provide them with more information to

help in their reflection writing. Facilitators might also consider changing the reflections in some

way to invite more dialogue, such as adding in due dates for responses to questions or

suggestions the facilitator makes on teachers' work. Teachers could also use one document for

all their reflections and responses to have a consistent record of each meeting that is easy to find

and allows teachers to refresh themselves with the related content from one meeting to the next.

Facilitators may also want to consider carefully the "when" of distributing content.

Though it is unlikely all teachers would be able to attend every session regardless of the day of

the week, the time of the year, or the time of day, there is much to negotiate when settling on a

time. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to vary the days and times of meeting rather than sticking

to a rigid routine. Such an approach might satisfy teachers' needs for a time that wasn't as late on

a work night" even when teachers agreed to meet on a work night. It also may accommodate

teachers better as they recognize the impact of their fatigue that they may not have realized prior to experiencing the session (McCann et al., 2005). Facilitators could also consider if certain times of the school year are better for teachers than others related to the specific extracurricular activities and obligations their teachers have. A dissertation study does not necessarily afford such flexibility, but outside of those restrictions, it is possible certain times of the year may be better than others. In fact, with instructional planning as the focus of the PLC, summer time, if teachers would agree to meeting then, could be the most beneficial time. This could be why Seglem (2009) and many other ELA teachers make use of the National Writing Project[2] summer institutes for PD. The planning teachers naturally do during the summer to prepare for their upcoming year could be done in community, with sound leadership, to maximize the effectiveness of their planning. However, this option would only be viable for new teachers who have job assignments by that time. For teachers who enter a teaching assignment mid-way through the year due to retirements or maternity leaves and the like would be left out of a PLC that started in the summer.

Technology use. Technology does not have to have any involvement in the distribution or content or the bringing together of the people in the PLC. However, affordances of conference technologies, Zoom specifically, seem to allow for collaboration that can optimize the element of time that McCann and colleagues (2005) reported new ELA teachers likely lack given their misjudgment of their workload. However, it is important to consider the experience all participating in the PLC have with whatever technology may be involved. Familiarity matters for comfort, ease, and ultimately effective learning. It could be wise to poll participating teachers about what conference technologies or even asynchronous forums they may have already used

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[2] The National Writing Project, discussed in Chapter 2, is a popular source of collaborative, professional development with sites on many college and university campuses

before deciding upon what would be most beneficial for the specific teachers in the group. If necessary due to a lack of familiarity, and possible, some kind of advanced training with the technology's features, prior to the meetings, could be helpful for efficient use of time during meetings. Though it is unclear from the study exactly what all the causes of the technology problems were, providers might want to consider the devices participants use, as well, and whether or not headsets will be in use. In addition, verifying teachers' bandwidth could be important to consider.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

One limitation of the study involves the use of a snapshot of teachers' instructional planning practices. What I collected and analyzed was only a small portion of the materials teachers use in their classrooms. Therefore, I am unable to draw accurate conclusions about the entirety of teachers' planning practices from these limited sources of data. Instead, the findings represent only a small portion of teachers' application of cohesion, integration, and content depth in their planning.

Similarly, I collected no data on implementation, so I am unable to ascertain the long-lasting learning that might occur or not occur in months or years following the intervention. Future research could follow up with the teachers from this group and collect materials they plan for instruction as they go into their next school year. Similarly, future research could start with a new group of teachers and involve an implementation component within the PLC. In that way, the facilitator could examine in real-time, how teachers follow through with the sound plans they made. If teachers do not actually follow what they planned for cohesion, integration, and content depth, then the PLC would have an additional measure to assess teachers' learning and make adjustments as necessary to the group work during meetings.

In addition, the time constraints of the study limited my ability to hit the saturation point of the content under study. Based on the teachers' reports and their limited growth, the five meetings did not provide teachers with enough time to grapple with nuances of each topic as much as would have been desirable. Some of the limitation is a result, however, of unanticipated teacher baseline knowledge and the requirements of dissertation timelines. Limitations related to time also exist with teachers who agreed to a certain dedication of time and may not otherwise want to increase their time commitment midway through the PLC. In turn, the implications section above provides a wealth of considerations for changing the content division and/or design and operation of the PLC to maximize whatever time is available to future researchers who might attempt a PLC such as this one.

There are also limitations related to the group's familiarity with the Zoom technology. I, as the facilitator, had no training with the Zoom technology prior to facilitating the sessions. Though I had been a participant in Zoom meetings, I was not instructed about the various features of the tool. In fact, it was only during the first group meeting that, after trial and error, I figured out how to operate the most basic screen sharing. Similarly, most of the teachers utilized Zoom during their preintervention interviews with me, prior to the beginning of the meetings. Though this may have allowed the teachers new to the technology an opportunity to see what the tool looks like and assess, to some degree, how their bandwidth, etc. supported the video/audio feed, they also did not receive instruction. I could not provide them with instruction on something I did not have instruction with myself. So, though most of the teachers and I had some exposure to Zoom prior to the meetings, which is better than nothing, the outcome of this study certainly could have been different with additional or more calculated exposure.

Also related to technology use, future research might investigate the feasibility of a hybrid approach to the PLC. This approach might include asynchronous modules or forums for work sessions that could supplement a limited number of face-to-face meeting times through meeting software like Zoom. The addition of an asynchronous component could give teachers who wanted more time with the content the opportunity for it, but at their availability. In addition, teachers could have less need for training with Zoom or other such conference-related software if they were not spending as much of their time with it.

Lastly, future research might explore the use of think-aloud protocols as an additional methodology for understanding teachers' thinking and decision-making when they plan instruction (Ericsson & Simon, 1998). By engaging teachers in think-alouds related to unit plans they created, for example, researchers could gain deeper insight into teachers' planning for cohesion, integration, and content depth within those specific units. Contextualizing the planning elements in this way could provide researchers with a more concrete picture of teachers' initial conceptualizations of cohesion, integration, and content depth and how those elements may appear within specific units of study even when teachers may not be able to articulate their practices using those terms.

Conclusion

New ELA teachers need support in approaching mastery when planning cohesive, integrated, deeply engaging content for their secondary students. Though in-service training is not the only place where teachers can get assistance with these planning practices, it is the place of optimal development. PD provides teachers with the context they need and mentors/colleagues for support to plan authentic instruction. PLCs, specifically facilitated by an expert in instructional planning, provide teachers with an even greater opportunity for success in

improving their instructional planning because of the assistance of a knowledgeable leader and the intimacy and trust expected in functioning PLC. However, creating such an experience for new ELA teachers is not without challenge. Yet the challenge is worth pursuing for the benefit of not just new ELA teachers, but for the students they serve.

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Research Question #1: What instructional planning needs exist for new in-service secondary ELA teachers?			
Needs theme 1: Teachers often planned for within unit cohesion at a less than optimal level as evidenced by a lack of a clear and consistent focus on what is meaningful about the unit.	**Needs theme 2:** Teachers exhibited little to no planning for between unit cohesion where all units of instruction progressively developed specific course goals.	**Needs theme 3:** Although all teachers integrated writing with literature instruction regularly, they struggled to integrate research, grammar, and vocabulary.	**Needs theme 4**: Teachers demonstrated limited planning of graded activities that measured students' higher order thinking.
Unit Foci (I, A) *Skill-based* **Single Work** **Author** **Genre** **Region** **Period** **Stand-Alone Research Paper Unit** **Narrow focus present** (I, A) **Narrow focus not present** (I, A) *Goal consistently present (A)* *Goal not consistently present (A)* Needs *End goals* *Be relevant* *Knowing what to teach* *Determining what to grade*	Educational goals (I) *Communication* *Improved skills* *Literature appreciation* *College and career readiness* *Confident writers* Connections between units (I, A) **Theme** **Strategy** *No connections between units*	*Writing with literature* (I, A) *Generic writing* (I, A) Grammar Instruction (I, A) **Decontextualized grammar** *Excluding grammar* *Teaching grammar with writing* Vocabulary Instruction (I, A) **Decontextualized vocabulary** *Not teaching vocabulary* *Teaching vocabulary with novels*	Lower Level (I, A) **Remember** **Understand** **Apply** Higher Order (I, A) **Analyze** **Create** **Evaluate** **Reason** **Relate** **Synthesize** **Question** Activity Type (I, A) *Study guide* *Quiz* *Test* *Lesson plan* *Project* *Homework* *Essay assignment* *Worksheet*

		Research Skills Instruction (I, A) *Researching with literature* *Teaching research with grammar* Needs *Deciding how to teach vocabulary* *Teaching more grammar* *Persevering with research*	Group activity *Non-leading instruction* (I, A) *Measuring thinking* (A) *Measuring facts* (A) Needs Challenge students *Bored students* *Adding variety to lessons* *Make students work harder*

I = Interview
A = Artifacts
MR = Meeting reflections
FR = Final reflections
ES = Effectiveness Survey

Underline = Category
Bold = a priori codes
Italics = emergent codes

Figure 1. Research Question 1 Data Sources, Categories, Codes, and Themes.

Research Question #2: In what ways, if any, does the PD intervention improve new secondary ELA teachers' knowledge about how to plan a) more cohesive, b) integrated, and c) deeply thought-provoking instruction?			
Growth theme 1: By the conclusion of the intervention, all teachers identified evidence of between unit cohesion in their current or future instruction.	**Growth theme 2:** Outside of between unit cohesion, teachers created new practices for current or future instruction only when they articulated a preintervention interest in improving their planning for that concept.	**Growth theme 3:** As a result of the intervention, most teachers recognized the need for intentionality in planning for integration.	**Growth theme 4:** Teachers minimally improved their ability to define specific kinds of higher order thinking and frequently omitted the impact of procedures they plan for those activities.
Creation **Connections between units** (MR, FR) Awareness *Defining between unit cohesion* (MR, FR)	**For cohesion:** Creation **Content-based unit foci** (MR, FR) **Narrow focus** (MR, FR) **For integration:** Creation **Grammar integration** (MR, FR) **Vocabulary integration** (MR, FR) **Research integration** (MR, FR) *Creating literature activity only* (MR, FR) *Creating writing activity only* (MR, FR) *Creating writing and literature activity*	Awareness *Hard work* (I, A, MR, FR) *Planning* (I, A, MR, FR) *Deliberate* (I, A, MR, FR)	Awareness *Defining reasoning* (MR, FR) *Defining relating* (MR, FR) *Defining synthesizing* (MR, FR) *Defining questioning* (MR, FR) *Mentioning non-leading instruction* (MR, FR)

	For content depth: Creation **Reasoning** (MR, FR) **Relating** (MR, FR) **Synthesizing** (MR, FR) **Questioning** (MR, FR) **When not creating (for all):** *Repeating the baseline* *Omitting a response*		

I = Interview
A = Artifacts
MR = Meeting reflections
FR = Final reflections
ES = Effectiveness Survey

Underline = Category
Bold = a priori codes
Italics = emergent codes

Figure 2: Research Question 2 Data Sources, Categories, Codes, and Themes.

Research Question #3: What are teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility and satisfaction with the PD intervention?		
Feasibility and satisfaction theme 1: Teachers reported being largely satisfied with the PLC's ability to meet their needs when compared to other PD.	**Feasibility and satisfaction theme 2:** Teachers reported the timing of this PLC as compared to other PD was mostly better, but suggested some changes to improve the effectiveness along this dimension.	**Feasibility and satisfaction theme 3:** The novelty of Zoom as well as technology difficulties impacted teachers' ability to learn effectively from the PLC.
Meet Needs **Better** (ES) **No change** (ES) Why *My practice* (ES) *People I know* (ES) *Strategies* (ES) *Engaged* (ES) *Shared* (ES) *ELA specific* (ES, I)	Negative *More trainings at a better time* (ES) *A little more time* (ES) *Somewhat satisfied with reflection time* (ES) *More time* (ES) Positive *Enough time* (ES) *Meet schedules* (ES) **Better for availability than other PD** (ES) *Enough time* (ES)	**No trouble** (ES) **Little trouble** (ES) *Screen share* (ES) Technology problems (MR) *Sound* *Logged off/on*

I = Interview   Underline = Category
A = Artifacts   **Bold = a priori codes**
MR = Meeting reflections   *Italics = emergent codes*
FR = Final reflections
ES = Effectiveness Survey

Figure 3. Research Question 3 Data Sources, Categories, Codes, and Themes.

Appendix A: Facebook Recruitment Invitation

Hi, friends!
Happy New Year!
I hope things are going well for you!
As you may have seen on Facebook, I am FINALLY getting to the point of being able to conduct my study for my dissertation so that I can complete my PhD. It has been quite a long and bumpy road in life the last few years, as I know some of you know the details of, but alas, things are moving forward, and that is good!

This forward movement is why I am contacting you right now. As a former student/mentee of mine during your student teaching, and a currently employed ELA teacher, I would like to work with you for my study, a professional learning community (PLC), comprised of you and I, that would meet virtually through Zoom so that our different geographic locations don't hinder our work together.

Your participation in the PLC would consist of approximately five, 60-90 minute-long discussion sessions (conducted approximately February 2017 to March 2017). We will focus on different elements of planning and organizing ELA instruction in ways that are meaningful to your students and address content development thoughtfully. After each meeting you will be asked to reflect on the dialogue that occurred during our meeting and apply the content to your specific teaching contexts. I will collect these reflections and provide you with feedback to help ensure that the ideas you come up with will be useable with your students.

There is a bit more I would ask of you regarding a couple of brief surveys and an interview I would do with each person individually before our meetings as a group begin. But the purpose of this contact is just to see who might be interested in working with me.

Should you decide you are interested, you haven't committed to anything yet. You're just letting me know that when the Lehigh Human Subjects board gives me approval to get your signed consent, you'd be interested in reviewing the detailed information of my study. At that time you'd have the opportunity to consent to participating or not. So, this message is just a feeler, if you will.

You must currently be an employed ELA teacher, for no more than six years, who has instructional planning responsibilities. I combed my Facebook contacts and selected your name. But I might have missed someone, especially because it's not always easy to see who is employed in ELA teaching and who is not, and for how long. So, if you know of anyone I missed, please let me know!

If you're interested, you can either respond to this Facebook message or email me at alk308@lehigh.edu. I am so excited to have the chance to see you all again and work with you as colleagues. Thank you for considering working with me. I hope to hear from you soon! If you have any questions, please let me know.

Group's Unit Foci

- Characterization
- Sentence Structure
- Meet the Bard
- Flashback
- Author's Appeal
- Connotation/Denotation
- Foreshadowing
- Extraordinary Circumstances
- Native American Literature
- Colonial Literature
- Journey of the Hero
- Shifting Perspectives
- Foundational grammar skills
- Vignettes

Activity

- 1. What questions or concerns do you have about yourself?
- 2. What questions or concerns do you have about the world?

Post-Meeting Reflection Questions

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning for instructional cohesion.
2. Discuss how you think you can apply this concept with two units you will teach with your students.
3. What made you decide that the concepts for cohesion you chose for question 2 would be best for your students and the curricula you're working with? In other words, how do those concepts help you to tie together the kinds of content and skills you're working with in your school based on your educational and instructional goals.

Directions for Reflection Writing

- In order to get an understanding of what you know about the topic we discussed in meeting #1, cohesion, I am asking you to reflect on the meeting and its contents in writing, using the guiding questions listed below to provide some direction on key points. This reflection activity also provides you with a way to think through how you can fit this idea of instructional cohesion into your own planning and allows me to give you feedback on that thinking, important to the ultimate goal of having you walk away with knowledge you will actually implement in your classrooms to address instructional needs.

- There is no length requirement or any other formulaic expectations. Instead, the writing should be authentic. I will provide you with feedback, clarification, and the like, as needed. Therefore, the level of detail you provide is directly connected to the kind of feedback I will be able to give. You may hand write your reflection if you prefer, or type it here or in a separate document/email.

Reflection Due Date

Please get me your reflection via email or text or Google Drive by the end of the day on Tuesday March 7th, so I have time to review them prior to our next meeting on Thursday, March 9th at 7:30pm. Thanks! ☺

1

Appendix C: PowerPoint Slides for Meeting 2: Cohesion and Integration

Cohesion Revisited
…With a little integration…integrated ☺

Written Reflection Highlights

- Mostly clear on definitions and locations of cohesion
- Some seeming struggle with applying *relevant, content-based* frameworks to individual units
- Some still skill-based with a little content thrown in on the side, but focus is still skill
- Why?
  - Lack of clarity/understanding/detail?
  - Lack of fit for curricula? Environment?

Break to integration temporarily…

- What is integrated instruction?
  - What is the opposite of integration?
- What are we attempting to integrate?
  - When?
- Do we currently integrate or separate?
  - How?

Cohesion and Integration

Developing Planning Protocols

- How do we arrive at things like "bullying" and "friendship" as topical, content-based units we can work with?
- How would this idea apply to teaching writing only contexts without lit?
- How do we know what to integrate within these units?
- What are steps in a process can we engage in to arrive at such cohesive and integrated instructional planning?

We Do/You Do

- Let's talk about you and your units – Based on this discussion, after feedback with questions, suggestions, etc. from reflection 1:
  - What two content-based units could you create similar to unit on friendship and unit on bullying?
  - How are they connected?
  - How might you address integration?
  - Problems making any of these modifications?
- Let's talk about your specific examples – help us help each other

1

Meeting #2 Reflection

- *Possibly need to revise concepts for units from previous work – that's OK! Learning ☺

- Prompts for reflection – due by end of day Tuesday, March 14th?

  - Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning integrated ELA instruction

  - Discuss how you think you can apply this concept within the two units you previously developed concepts for in your first reflection.*

  - What made you decide the kinds of integrated instruction you explained would be best for your students and the curricula you're working with?

- Next meeting – Thursday, March 16th, 7:30pm?

2

Appendix D: PowerPoint Slides for Meeting 3: Content Depth, Relating and Reasoning

Content Depth – Part I
…for Cohesive and Integrated ELA Instruction

Thus Far…

- Narrowing focus for *What* to teach
    - Specific goals, not EVERYTHING about a novel
    - Content-based foci
    - Units that inform each other
- Integrate ELA skills to advance those foci
    - **Research skills**
    - **Vocabulary**
    - **Grammar**
    - Writing
    - Literature

Now….how to integrate?

- Through activities and their corresponding instruction that will further goals of lessons/units/ course

- What does content depth mean to you?

Content Depth Planning Process

- Identify target thinking
    - Recall and memorization
    - Higher order/critical thinking

- When creating activities
    - Attend to thoughtful design rather than surface-level instruction
    - With non-leading instruction that prepares students for activity performance

ELA Thinking Identification

- Where does memorization and recall belong in secondary ELA instruction?

- Kinds of critical thinking that occur in ELA?

- Critical thinking skills can be taught with depth or at a surface level – how?

Critical Thinking for Tonight

- Relating
    - What does this word mean in ELA? Where do we ask students to relate?
- Reasoning
    - What does this word mean? Where do we ask students to reason?

Surface vs. Depth

- Quiz/Test question:
  - T/F: Huck Finn is a good boy.
- Quiz/Test questions:
  - Short answer: Justify whether or not Huck Finn is a good boy.
  - Short answer: Did you like *Insert Novel Title Here*? Why or why not?
- Problems with any questions?
- Potential instruction that might lead to less content depth and more surface?

Key Points

- Consciously analyze (or predetermine before activity creation) the thinking inherent in the activity starter (question, prompt, etc.) and student response format (T/F, project, etc.)
- For tonight – elements of connecting, reasoning
- Also analyze whether **instruction** promotes or demotes student thinking
  - Regurgitation of facts from texts or INSTRUCTION lead to less thoughtful engagement

## Resources/Examples to Integrate G, V, RS into Instruction?

- Focus on purposes for skills
- Grammar/writing style
  - Ashley
  - Oxford comma story
  - Expresso-App
- Elements of research
  - Teens Can't Tell Fake News
  - Preventing Plagiarism
- Vocabulary/Jargon
  - VocabGrabber
  - Thou Shalt Not Commit Logical Fallacies

Integrated Activities

- Integrated Activities (often papers/projects)
  - Blasia paper
  - Multigenre papers
  - Brandon's graffiti wall?
- Connected to relating and reasoning?
- Is the instruction non-leading?

Potential Pitfalls

- South Orange, NJ news
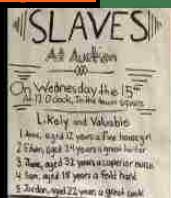
Reflection Questions

- 1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning instruction that asks students to engage in deep thought when they relate or reason in ELA.
- 2. Create at least two examples of instructional activities, questions, or the like, one for reasoning and one for relating, that shows evidence of how students would need to be thoughtful to complete the tasks successfully. Include what your instruction would be like surrounding the implementation of these activities to show how you would scaffold the instruction toward deep thought.
- 3. What made you decide that these instructional practices would be best suited for your students and the curricula/units you've been working with for our PLC?

2

Final Thoughts/Reminders

- Reflections due by end of day Tuesday March 21st
- Next meeting Thursday March 23rd, 7:30pm?
- We are more than halfway through!

3

Appendix E: PowerPoint Slides for Meeting 4: Content Depth, Questioning and Synthesizing

Content Depth

Part 2: Questioning and Synthesizing
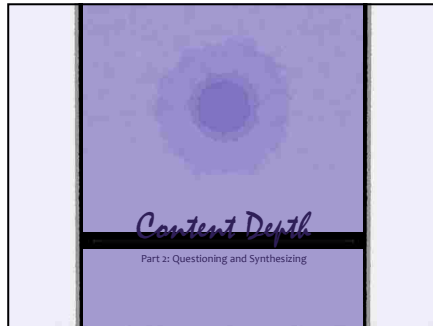
Content Depth Review

- Not higher-order thinking but important student thinking process at times
  - Recall
  - Memorization
- Higher order thinking from last week
  - Relating
  - Reasoning
- Higher-order thinking skills can be addressed at surface levels or with depth (latter=desirable)

Non-Lit Examples

- Relating? (Empathize/connect to)
  - Grammar
  - Vocabulary
  - Research Skills
- Reasoning? (Problem solving, decision making)
  - Grammar
  - Vocabulary
  - Research Skills

Tonight's Higher-Order Thinking

- Questioning
- Synthesizing

Questioning

- Just like last week – tonight's focus is on STUDENT thinking
- Last week = TEACHER created questions/activities to elicit STUDENTS' thinking - reasoning and relating, specifically
- So TONIGHT: **Students** question

Questioning?

- Do students ask questions?
- Why do you/people question, generally?
  - Curiosity
  - Misunderstanding/confusion/clarification
- How do we encourage student questioning?
  - Related specifically to grammar?
  - Vocabulary?
  - Research Skills?

1

Synthesizing

- What does is mean to synthesize in ELA? Why do we do this?

- How do you include this in your instruction?

- Can there be synthesis in aspects of the discipline that aren't literature-based?

Synthesizing Applied

- Grammar?

- Vocabulary?

- Research Skills?

- Tools from last week to help?

- Infographics?

Infographic Example

Compare/Contrast

1. With literature?
2. With Grammar?
3. With Vocab?
4. With research?
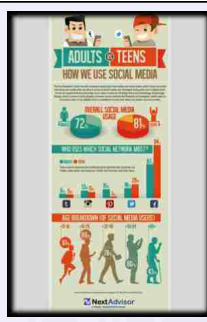
Meeting #4 Reflection

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning instruction that asks students to engage in deep thought when they question or synthesize in ELA.

2. Create at least one example of an instructional activity, question, or the like for each kind of thinking (synthesizing and questioning) that shows evidence of how students would need to be thoughtful to complete the tasks successfully. Include what your instruction would be like surrounding the implementation of these activities to show how you would scaffold the instruction toward deep thought.

3. What made you decide on these instructional practices as best suited for your students and the curricula you're working with?

Meeting Wrap-Up

- Reflection #4 due by end of day Tuesday.

- Next week's meeting? – The final one!

- One more task post-meetings = follow-up evaluation survey

Putting It All Together

The FINAL PLC Meeting!

Goals (group and me)

- Improve
  - Cohesion (connections to big ideas of content, not skill)
  - Integration (blending ELA parts together)
  - Content depth (students go beyond recall/surface - activities)
    - Relating and Reasoning
    - Questioning and Synthesizing
- Assessment (which aligns with content depth, in ways)
- Standards alignment

Standards (Alignment)

- Where do standards enter into instructional planning?
  - Seemingly most have curriculum already aligned?
  - NCTE standards?
- Why are standards important?
- Problems with them?

- Why reserve this discussion until now?

Grading Standards?

- Burdens?
  - Discuss grading/feedback experiences, problems, expectations, etc.
  - Some bad practices do exist – Reeves (2008) says "toxic"
- Why do we assess/grade? Should be PURPOSEFUL
  - ~~Punishment?~~
  - ~~Standardized test prep?~~
  - Help – students apply learning to future (work, life, etc.)
  - Encouragement
  - Communicate about learning
- Connection between formative and summative assessments?
  - Is one more important than the other? What does our practice reveal?
- Connection to standards?
  - Standards-based assessment
- Student-centered?

Planning Process?

- Assemble required materials
- Categorize for **cohesion** within and across units, relevant foci, therefore, likely content rather than skills-based
- Add additional useful materials as necessary, varying genres*
- Isolate authentic writing, lit., grammar, vocabulary, and research skills to further goals of cohesive units
- **Integrate** accordingly
- Plan **higher-order thinking** activities (ala Bloom)
- Build **assessments** that hit standards for these activities (formative → summative)
- Verify standards alignment

Final Reflection

- Five questions related to your "take-aways" from our time together and what you think you have learned, perceive differently now, etc.
  - If anything, what have you learned about planning cohesive instruction you did not know prior to the PLC?
  - If anything, what have you learned about planning integrated instruction you did not know prior to the PLC?
  - If anything, what have you learned about planning deeply thoughtful instruction you did not know prior to the PLC?
  - If at all, how will the planning practices involved in the PLC enable you to plan more meaningful instruction for your students than you did prior to the PLC?
  - If any, what aspects of planning cohesive, integrated, or deeply thoughtful ELA instruction from the training are you unclear on?

1

Closing Activities

- Final Reflection AND
- Follow Up Evaluation Survey (Anonymous)
    - https://lehigh.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eE9RnDxxbfr0eWN
    - 20 Questions – mixture of multiple choice and open-ended
- One week for both? Both due by April 7th?

2

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INFORMED CONSENT

English Language Arts Instructional Planning Professional Learning Community (PLC) Study

Dear Teacher,

You are invited participate in a research study about Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and English Language Arts (ELA) instructional planning. A PLC is a group of educators who share their areas of expertise and work collaboratively during regular meetings to improve teaching and learning. The purpose of this study is to determine how a researcher-facilitated PLC that involves collaboration between secondary ELA teachers in different buildings may assist in improving ELA teachers' knowledge about effective planning practices. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a secondary ELA teacher who received methods instruction and/or student teacher supervision from the researcher who is facilitating the PLC while in your preservice training. Please read this form carefully and ask questions about any concerns before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Adrienne Kotsko; Learning Sciences and Technology Ph.D. Program; College of Education, Lehigh University, under the direction of Dr. Brook Sawyer, College of Education, Lehigh University

Procedures

For those who agree to participate:

Your participation in the PLC will consist of approximately five, 60-90 minute-long discussion sessions (conducted February 2017 to March 2017). These sessions will focus on different elements of planning and organizing ELA instruction in ways that are meaningful to students and address content development thoughtfully. I will video-record these sessions. After each meeting you will be asked to reflect on the dialogue that occurred during our meeting and apply the content to your specific teaching contexts. I will collect these reflections and provide you with feedback to help ensure that the ideas you come up with will be useable with your students.

Additionally, you will be asked to complete two surveys that will occur before and after your participation in the PLC. You will also participate in one interview that will occur before the PLC and submit planning materials from two instructional units you have taught.
   o   The first survey will gather demographic information about you, such as your teaching experience and your participation in professional development. This survey should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.
   o   I will provide you with specific instructions about what to submit, via email or hard copy, as evidence of the way you've planned two instructional units you've already taught. This compilation of materials should take you no more than 30 minutes.

- The interview will address items related to prior professional development and your planning practices. I will provide you with the list of interview questions in advance of the time we schedule to talk so that you have more time to think about your teaching practices. I will also audio/video-record the interview based on the capabilities of Zoom vs. face-to-face environments. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes.
- The ending survey will include questions about your satisfaction with the PLC. This should take you approximately 25 minutes to complete.

The anticipated time for study participation is approximately 12 hours.

Risks and Benefits of Study Participation
The study has minimal risks:
There are minimal risks in participating. It is assumed that you will actively participate in the group as sharing your teaching practices and ideas is an integral part in how we will be able to effectively collaborate to support your instructional planning practices. However, should you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may elect to not participate in the discussion. At any time, you can also end your study participation.

The benefits to participation:
The personal benefit to participating is that you may learn new ways to plan instruction that is more meaningful and engaging to you and your students. You may gain additional resources (e.g., websites, strategies) to support your planning. The findings from this study may also benefit the field of teacher education by discovering new strategies that help improve current and future pedagogy for preservice and inservice teachers.

Compensation
There is no compensation provided for participating in this study. However, at the conclusion of the study you will receive a $30 Amazon gift card to thank you for your time.

Confidentiality
All data collected in this study will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a code number to protect your identify. If you provide permission for audio recording, these recordings will be stored securely on a Lehigh server for a minimum of three years. Then, all recordings will be destroyed. The audio/video-recordings will only be used for purposes related to this study. In any sort of report we might prepare, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary:
Whether or not you decide to participate has no effect on your current or future relations with Lehigh University, your school or school district, or the researcher. At any time during the study, you may choose not to answer questions or participate in any way. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Contacts and Questions
The researchers conducting this study:

Adrienne Kotsko (researcher) and Dr. Brook Sawyer (adviser) will be conducting this study. If you have questions, please contact Adrienne at 570-401-1544 (email: alk308@lehigh.edu) or Dr. Sawyer 610-758-3236 (email: brooksawyer@lehigh.edu) at Lehigh University's College of Education.

Questions or Concerns:

If you have questions or concerns related to this study and want to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Naomi Coll at 610-758-2985 (email: nac314@lehigh.edu) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

<u>**Statement of Consent**</u>

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered.

Please <u>check ONE of the three boxes</u> as indication of whether or not you will participate in this research study and whether or not you consent to being audio/video-recorded. Please complete all of the information requested.

☐ YES, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study about PLCs and ELA instructional planning <u>and</u> I provide consent to be audio/videotaped.

Participant's Name (Please print.) _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

☐ YES, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study about PLCs and ELA instructional planning but I <u>do not</u> provide consent to be audio/videotaped.

Participant's Name (Please print.) _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

☐ NO, I do not want to participate in this study about PLCs and ELA instructional planning.

Participant's Name (Please print.) _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix H: Preintervention Demographics Survey Questions

Directions: The following survey consists of demographic questions to learn a little about you and what your teaching experience has been like.

1. Which of the choices best describes your gender identity?

   o Male
   o Female

2. How old are you?

3. Which of the choices below best describes your race?

   o Black/African American

   o American Indian or Alaska Native

   o White/Caucasian

   o Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

   o Asian

   o Multiracial (specify) _____

   o Other (specify)_____

4. Which of the choices below best describes your ethnicity/

   o Hispanic or Latino

   o Not Hispanic or Latino

5. What is your highest level of education completed?

   o Bachelor's degree

   o Master's degree

   o Doctoral degree

   o Other: _____

6. a.)Beyond your highest level of completed education, have you acquired any credits toward an advanced degree?

   o No
   o Yes

   b.) If yes, how many?

   c.) If yes, what type of courses have you taken?

7. How many years have you been teaching English/Language Arts (ELA)?

8. What is your current school of employment?

9. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? (check all that apply)

- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

10. What academic levels are you currently teaching? (General, college preparatory, AP/honors, other). Please also include specific course titles for those levels, as applicable (i.e. Honors American Literature).

11. a.) Do you have/have you had a mentor assigned to you?

b.) If yes, is/was that mentor a certified ELA teacher?

c.) If yes, on average, how frequently do/did you meet with this person?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Several times a month
- Once a month
- Several times a year

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for sharing your teaching with me! First, I will ask you about your participation in professional development that may impact why you do what you do.

1. Please describe any/all district or school building-based professional development experiences you have had (this could include interactions with your appointed mentor, Act 80 day workshops, and the like). What did/does the training address? How helpful did/do you find it?

[Rationale: Contextual description of participant]

2. What kind of professional development do you seek out for yourself? (For example, did you, on your own, seek out a mentor inside or out your department, do you collaborate with others on education-based social media, etc.). Please be specific.

[Rationale: Contextual description of participant]

Teachers are different. They may have different aims in their classrooms, different strengths/needs, and different approaches to teaching. These next questions are designed to find out more about what your goals and approaches are so that I can be of best use to you. There are no wrong answers.

General Reflection on Teaching and Learning:

3. What do you see as the purpose of ELA in your classroom/for your students? In other words, what educational goals are you working toward when teaching ELA?

[Rationale: Contextual description of the participant]

4. What do you think are your strengths as a teacher?

[Rationale: Contextual description of the participant]

5. If at all, how do you think your students are impacted as a result of your perceived strengths?

[Rationale: Contextual description of the participant]

6. What do you see as your greatest needs, places you'd like help with to be a better teacher? You may consider any aspect of your work as a teacher.

[Rationale: Needs]

7. If at all, how do you think your students are impacted as a result of your perceived needs?

[Rationale: Needs]

8. What do you see as your students' greatest strengths?

[Rationale: Contextual description of participant]

Reflection on Instructional Planning Practices:
9. What core materials are students required to use for your class? Include any anthologies, grammar or vocabulary workbooks, etc. you are required to use.
[Rationale: Contextual description of participant]

10. Describe what your thinking process is when you start planning instruction for your students. Potential follow-up questions if responses lack necessary detail:

- Do you consult Common Core or NCTE standards when you are planning? If so, when/how do they enter into your planning process? *[Rationale: Alignment]*
- What resources do you consult? *[Rationale: Contextual description of participant]*

11. Do you plan instructional units that group individual lessons together in some way? If so, what are the foci for a couple of the units you've taught? Why do you organize in that way? [*Rationale: Planning – cohesion*]

12. Do you include research skills instruction in your course anywhere? If yes, where/how?

[Rationale: Planning – integration]

13. Do you work with teachers in other subject areas when you plan your instruction?

[Rationale: Planning – integration]

14. How do you currently address grammar and vocabulary instruction in the ELA instruction you provide?

[Rationale: Planning – integration]

15. What kinds of activities that you assess, formatively or summatively, do you have students engage in that require them to use recall or memorization as the primary forms of thinking?

[Rationale: Planning – content depth]

16. What kinds of activities that you assess, formatively or summatively, do you have students engage in that require thinking that goes beyond recall and memorization? Please identify what the thinking is that you think students are engaged in with each example activity you provide.

[Rationale: Planning – content depth]

17. Across your whole course, are there certain kinds of activities you assess that you have students engage in more frequently than others (i.e. multiple choice tests, study guides, essay writing, discussions, etc.)?

a. If so, what are they?

b. Why have you chosen to value these activities when you're planning instruction more than others?

[Rationale: Planning – content depth]

18. Give an example of a thoughtful question you've had students answer – in any kind of activity.

a. Explain who the question came from (you, students, textbook, etc.),

b. what activity the question was embedded in (test, essay, discussion, etc.),

c. and how students arrived at answers to the question (what kind of instruction you provided)

[Rationale: Planning – content depth]

Future Meeting-Related Items:

19. Considering when you are able to access a computer in a quiet atmosphere, what days and times are you available for what will be 60 to 90 minute-long meetings via Zoom (a free, Web-based audio/video conference call software like Skype)?

[Rationale: Increase participation]

Appendix J: Artifact Instructions

Before we start working together, I need to collect some samples of the kinds of instruction you have taught your students. This information allows me to help make the work we do together specific to your environments and approaches to instruction.

Please provide me with the following information, via email, before our scheduled interview, if possible.

1. I would like to see two different unit plans for instruction you have taught. These unit plans should be ones that are consecutive in your instruction. So, for example, if you taught one unit for 3 weeks, and then the unit that came immediately following that one was 4 weeks long, I would want to see both of them.

I realize not everyone unit plans in the same way, so please provide me with as much of the material as you can. I am not requiring a specific format. Whatever you do is what I want to see. I do NOT need to see student work. It is YOUR work I am looking for.

2. I would like to see the major activities or assessments you give students within each unit. Once again, I do not need to see students' performance on these assignments. Instead, I want the worksheets, tests, etc.

Thank you for taking the time to gather all these samples of your work for me. It helps me learn about you so that I can make our valuable time together as meaningful as possible!!

Appendix K: Guiding Questions for Post-Meeting Written Reflections

Meeting 1: Cohesion

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning for instructional cohesion.

2. Discuss how you think you can apply this concept with two units you will teach with your students.

3. What made you decide that the concepts for cohesion you chose for question 2 would be best for your students and the curricula you're working with? In other words, how do those concepts help you to tie together the kinds of content and skills you're working with in your school based on your educational and instructional goals.

Meeting 2: Integration

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning integrated ELA instruction.

2. Discuss how you think you can apply this concept within the two units you previously developed concepts for in your first reflection.

3. What made you decide the kinds of integrated instruction you explained would be best for your students and the curricula you're working with?

Meeting 3: Content depth – Relating and Reasoning

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning instruction that asks students to engage in deep thought when they relate or reason in ELA.

2. Create at least one example of instructional activity, question, or the like, one for reasoning and one for relating, that shows evidence of how students would need to be thoughtful to complete the tasks successfully. Include what your instruction would be like surrounding the implementation of these activities to show how you would scaffold the instruction toward deep thought.

3. What made you decide that these instructional practices would be best suited for your students and the curricula/units you've been working with for our PLC?

Meeting 4: Content Depth – Questioning and Synthesizing

1. Explain what you think the pertinent points are in planning instruction that asks students to engage in deep thought when they question or synthesize in ELA.

2. Create at least one example of an instructional activity, question, or the like for each kind of thinking (synthesizing and questioning) that shows evidence of how students would need to be thoughtful to complete the tasks successfully. Include what your instruction would be like surrounding the implementation of these activities to show how you would scaffold the instruction toward deep thought.

3. What made you decide on these instructional practices as best suited for your students and the curricula you're working with?

Appendix L: Final Reflection Questions

1. If anything, what have you learned about planning cohesive instruction you did not know prior to the training?

2. If anything, what have you learned about planning integrated instruction you did not know prior to the training?

3. If anything, what have you learned about planning deeply thoughtful instruction you did not know prior to the training?

4. If at all, how will the planning practices involved in the training enable you to plan more meaningful instruction for your students than you did prior to the training session?

5. If any, what aspects of planning cohesive, integrated, or deeply thoughtful ELA instruction from the training are you are unclear on?

Appendix M: Effectiveness of the PLC Survey

Directions: Now that you have completed your participation in the PLC on instructional planning practices, those of curriculum cohesion, integration, and content depth, please provide me with your honest feedback on your experience with the training.

1. How comfortable were you sharing your ideas with the group?

Not comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Usually comfortable	Very comfortable
○	○	○	○

2. What would have helped you feel more comfortable?

_____

Next

0% (_____) 100%

3. How well do you think people listened to and valued your ideas?

Not listened to or valued at all   Infrequently listened to and valued   Usually listened to and valued   Often listened to and valued

○   ○   ○   ○

4. What would have helped you feel more listened to and valued?

Back   Next

0% [ ] 100%

225

5. How often did you actively participate?

Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Very often
○	○	○	○

6. What would have helped you actively participate more?

[   ]

Back   Next

0% [■■■■   ] 100%

7. How satisfied were you with the time we had in the meetings to address the learning goals for each session thoroughly and allow everyone to speak?

Not at all satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied
○	○	○	○

8. What would have helped increase your satisfaction with the time?

Back   Next

0% ▐████▌_____ 100%

9. How satisfied were you with the time you had to complete reflection/planning work between our virtual meetings?

Not at all satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied
○	○	○	○

10. What could have helped to increase your satisfaction?

Back   Next

0% �◻ 100%

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11. How difficult did you find it working with the Zoom technology?

Not at all difficult	A little difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult
○	○	○	○

12. What would have helped to make the Zoom technology easier to use?

_____

Back   Next

0% ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ 100%

13. How did this kind of professional development compare to other professional development you've experienced in being relevant to your needs?

Worse

No change

Better

○

○

○

14. What specific reasons do you have for your opinion?

Back

Next

0% 100%

15. How did this kind of professional development compare to other professional development you've experienced in matching with your availability?

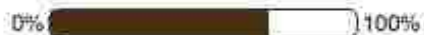| Worse	No change	Better
○	○	○

16. What specific reasons do you have for your opinion?

[   ]

Back   Next

0% ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ 100%

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17. What, if any, suggestions do you have to improve the training?

18. What did you find to be the most beneficial component to the training?

Back   Next

0% [_____] 100%

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19. Do you feel this kind of PLC is a type of professional development that is feasible for you to participate in?

No	Somewhat	Yes
○	○	○

20. Lastly, what specific reasons do you have for your opinion about the feasibility of this kind of PLC?

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We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

0% ████████████████████ 100%

<h1 style="text-align:center">VITA</h1>

<h1 style="text-align:center">Adrienne L. Kotsko</h1>

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EDUCATION
Lehigh University – Bethlehem, PA   July 2008 – August 2017
Ph.D. in Learning Sciences and Technology
    Interests: Preservice/in-service teacher education,
        instructional technology, curriculum/instruction
    Dissertation: A Professional Learning Community Approach to
        Improving English/Language Arts Instructional Planning

Wilkes University – Wilkes-Barre, PA   January 2007
M.S.Ed. in Educational Development and Learning Strategies

Millersville University – Millersville, PA   May 2003
B.S.E. English, *magna cum laude*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA   August 2016 - Present
    Graduate/Research Assistant, College of Education

East Stroudsburg University – East Stroudsburg, PA   August 2011 – May 2015
    Instructor of English, English Education Specialist

Pocono Mountain School District – Swiftwater, PA   July 2003 – June 2011
    English teacher (Grades 8 and 9)

East Stroudsburg University – East Stroudsburg, PA   January 2010 – March 2010
    Cooperating/mentor teacher for ESU student teacher

CERTIFICATION
Level II PA Secondary English, Grades 7-12

AWARDS/HONORS
Millersville University and Department Honors, May 2003
Honors Thesis: Little Red Riding Hood's Life Sentence: A Study of Fairy Tale Censorship

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS
Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo and Conference
    Presentation: Uses of Technology to Induce Critical Thought
    Co-Presenter: Dr. Scott Garrigan
    February 2017, Hershey PA

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association for Educational Communications and Technology
National Council of Teachers of English
       Conference on English Education
National Education Association
Pennsylvania State Education Association