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From Policy to Practice: Exploring Principals' Experiences in Facilitating the Implementation of Cross Curricular Literacy Standards to Early Adolescents

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From Policy to Practice: Exploring Principals' Experiences in Facilitating the Implementation of Cross Curricular Literacy Standards to Early Adolescents

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

Research has shown that early adolescents continue to need literacy development in middle school. Furthermore, states that adopted the current comprehensive school reform policy must implement literacy instruction across content areas in grades six through twelve. This study will explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular literacy standards. Qualitative case study methodology will be used to examine the perceptions of seven middle school principals as they act as change agents in the implementation process.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my advisor and dissertation director, Dr. Ed Bengston, and dissertation committee members, Dr. Charlene M. Johnson Carter, and Dr. Kara Lasater. I truly appreciate each of you for your time and thoughtful consideration that you gave in regards to this study. I want to thank the research participants for consenting to allow me to probe into your professional experiences. I am also grateful to the University of Arkansas for all of whom I interacted with in one way or another for the completion of this study.

I want to thank my mother, Ira, my husband, Franklin and my sister, Kim for your encouragement and inspiration during the completion of this study. Finally, I want to thank my friends, colleagues, and other family members for your continued support.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Ira Brewer Betton and the late TeRoy Betton, Jr., for your love, and devotion. The foundation that you gave me will forever have a profound effect on my life.

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Chapter I

Introduction

It is common practice for elementary students to have a consistent English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) learning experience from a single teacher who provides instruction for the core content areas (ELA/L, Math, Science and Social Studies). However, when students transition to middle school, this is often not the case, which can result in inconsistencies in students' ELA/L experience, particularly in other disciplines. Additionally, federal school reform policies often require certain ELA/L standards to be implemented. Educators are then charged with making the appropriate changes many times without guidance in how it should be done. This gap between policy and the actual educational practice can cause rifts in reaching the policy's desired outcomes.

This qualitative multiple-case study seeks to examine how middle school principals facilitate implementation of comprehensive school reform (CSR) English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescent learners. The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. It is anticipated that the knowledge gained from this study will refine principals' understanding of how to improve implementing procedures related to early adolescent literacy. A qualitative multiple-case study is the selected methodology to illustrate this exploration. The seven participants in this study were selected by purposeful sampling; each participant is a middle school principal in the selected district. All principals are in the process of facilitating the implementation of the current ELA/L standards in accordance with state's choice to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

This chapter includes (a) an overview of the background and context of the study, (b) the problem statement, (c) the statement of purpose, (d) research questions, (e) discussion of the research approach and assumptions, (f) the proposed rationale and significance of the study, (g) researcher's perspectives, and (h) definitions of key terminology associated with the research.

Background and Context

Since the nineteenth century, the American education system, in parts or as a whole, has been in a state of reform (Duffy, 1990; Fullan, 2007; Russell, 1990). Included in the ongoing cycle of school reform is the consideration of the best way to provide English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) instruction. For secondary and post-secondary education, this change is most often a shift towards literacy skills being taught in English classes or literacy instruction being a shared responsibility of teachers across all disciplines. When there are policy revisions on the implementation of literacy standards, it is educators who are required to implement the policy changes. Many times, when governments require CSR, there is a disconnect between the intention of the policy and educators' interpretation of the policy. This disconnect can confound the implementation process and outcomes (Fullan, 2007); subsequently, matters are made worse, resulting in a "superficial, episodic reform" (Fullan, 2007, p. 28).

Furthermore, when it comes to ELA/L, it is understood that elementary students need to acquire ELA/L skills, and it is expected that the teachers at this level will provide instruction that will support the development of these skills. As students transition to middle school there seems to be an expectation that the foundational literacy skills taught in elementary school are sufficient for learning at the secondary and post-secondary levels, in spite of the growing complexity of the content knowledge the students are expected to learn (Duffy, 1990; Mërkuri, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Shippen, Miller, Patterson, Houchins & Darch, 2014). This mindset results in a

heavy dose of literacy instruction in early grades and then, too many times, the assumption that adolescent students do not need continued support for literacy development at the secondary level (Snow & Moje, 2010). Snow and Moje (2010) refer to this assumption as the inoculation fallacy or inoculation model. This has also been called the vaccination model (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Some specialists in adolescent literacy development say that middle school students need continued literacy instruction in order for them to become productive citizens capable of using numerous forms of texts (Faggella-Luby, Graner, Deshler, & Drew, 2012; International Reading Association, 2012; Shippen et al., 2014; Snow & Moje, 2010). Often times, if adolescent literacy programs are provided, they are only available for struggling readers. Although provisions should be made for this group of learners, all middle school students need ongoing literacy development (Faggella-Luby et al., 2012). Under the new policy, Common Core State Standards require that all secondary teachers share the responsibility of literacy instruction in their content areas (Council of Chief State School Officers & National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). This newly adopted policy requirement (adopted by this state in 2010, incremental implementation began in 2011, this district started focusing on ELA/L in 2015) means that the English teacher is no longer the sole provider of literacy instruction. Additionally, CCSS requires teachers to go beyond content-area literacy to a point of including disciplinary literacy strategies for students in grades six through twelve. Content-area literacy uses a general set of strategies to help students with reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and thinking in all subject areas (International Literacy Association, 2015). Disciplinary literacy asks teachers to develop strategies that may improve comprehension when students use text in specific subject areas (Buehl, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). To address the changes brought on by CCSS,

school principals are charged with facilitating the implementation of the new English Language Arts/Literacy standards, see Figure 1.1.

2010	• Adoption of CCSS
2011	• Incremental Implementation of CCSS
2014	• State began Revision Cycle for Academic Standards • Changed name to State Academic Standards
2015	• State Revised CCSS ELA/L Standards
2016	• State Board Approved Revised ELA/L Standards
2017	• State Expects Full Implementation of Revised ELA/L Standards
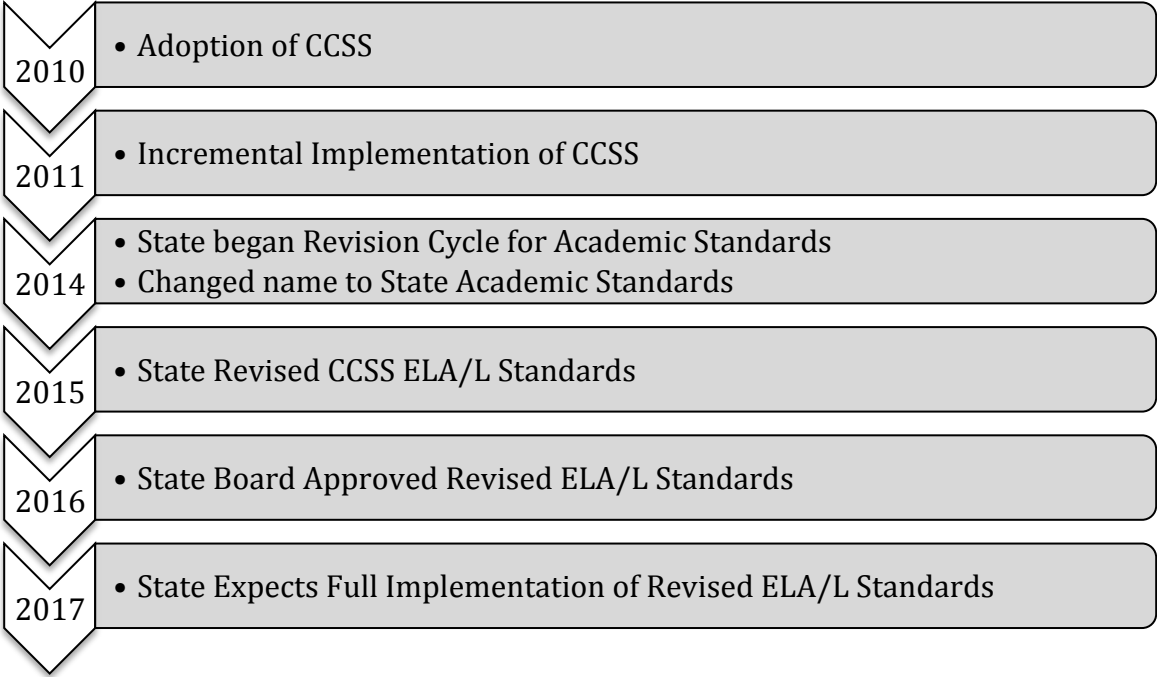
Figure 1.1. State Adoption and Revision Cycle

When studying comprehensive reform in education, researchers have found that change is most successful when policies are implemented by following a model for change (Cadwalleder, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2011; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Requirements for comprehensive school reform can be a daunting task for some urban school districts. At the frontline of these changes are the educators at the school level. Principals and other school-based educators need support, guidance, and meaningful strategies to implement changes required by comprehensive school reform policies (Fullan, 2007; 2010; Mitchell, 2011).

In general terms, the change process occurs in three phases, see Figure 1.2. According to Fullan (2007), phase one is the initial process leading to the decision to change or adopt the new

policy. Phase two is the actual implementation process, and it entails the first actions involved in putting the policy into practice. This phase tends to take two to three years. The final phase is the institutionalization or continuation process. This phase refers to the systematic change that is the result of sustained use of the practice to the point that it becomes routine within the organization and produces the original desired outcomes of the policy or change that originated in phase one. The three phases are not linear; each phase relies on the others and, as members of the change process proceed through the phases, it is possible that experiences may cause revisions to decisions made at earlier stages (Fullan, 2007).
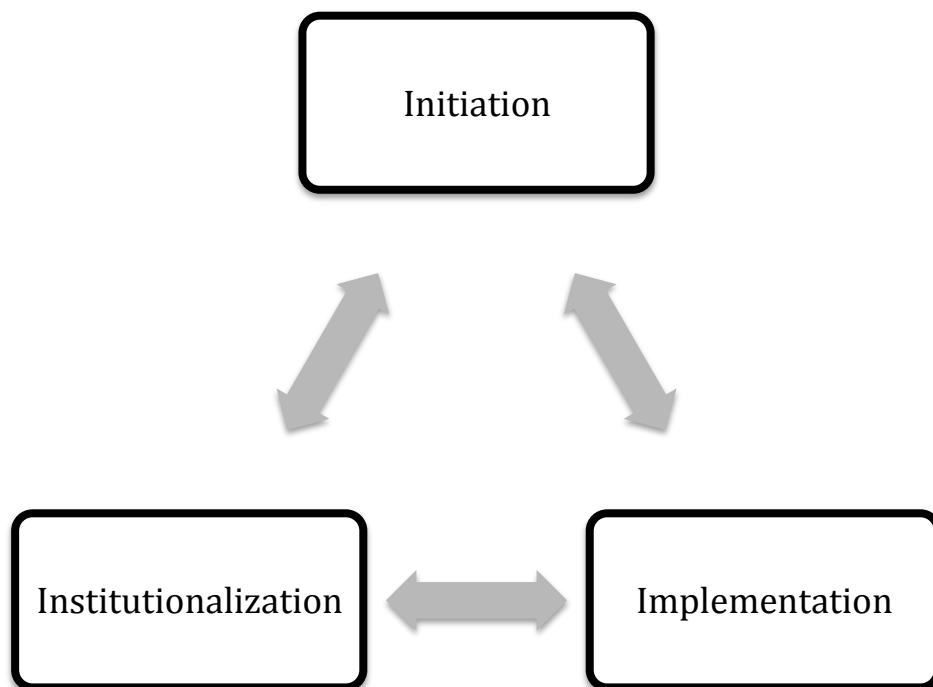
Figure 1.2. General Phases of Change (Fullan, 2007)

At the center of change is the desire to build organizational capacity and improve student learning (Fullan, 2007, 2010, 2014). Capacity building entails all variables that an organization uses to improve student outcomes. These components include:

- Ongoing professional development;

- Reflecting on practice and strategizing;

- Recognizing and sharing best practices in literacy content and change strategies;

- Providing resources for special issues, such as special education, English as a second language, or male students' relations with literacy;

- Having a lead literacy teacher to act as a secondary change agent; and

- Developing partnerships with agencies that can help facilitate improvements (Fullan, 2007).

Fullan (2007, 2010, 2014) goes on to state when schools have the tools that are needed to implement innovations, it increases the opportunities to improve student learning.

Problem Statement

Research indicates there is a discrepancy between what is known to be developmentally appropriate for early adolescent literacy instruction and the instructional practice that is actually implemented (Chang, 2014; Desimone, 2002; Duffy, 1990; Fullan, 2007; Hall, 2013). There is a vast difference in literacy instruction provided at the elementary level and the literacy instruction implemented at the middle school level, in spite of research stating that early adolescents continue to need literacy instruction. Researchers have investigated change, but there is little guidance on how to specifically implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards associated with the adoption of CCSS and the revision of the State Academic Standards for early adolescents.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle

schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. The goals of this study are to:

1. Learn how principals are prepared to lead ELA/L innovations for early adolescents.

2. Understand the leadership styles used as the principals guide changes in ELA/L.

3. Understand the strategies that principals use to facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards.

4. Allow the principals' experiences and insights to act as a guide for educational leaders as they facilitate change in the future.

It is anticipated that, through a better understanding of implementation strategies used by principals to facilitate how ELA/L standards are carried out for adolescent learners, more informed decisions can be made by other change agents on how to move from policy to institutionalized practice. To expound on the problem, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

Research Approach

The researcher will study the experiences, perceptions, and implementation strategies of seven middle school principals who are facilitating the implementation of the adopted cross-curricular ELA/L standards proposed by the Common Core State Standards initiative. This study is a qualitative multiple-case study, as the seven middle school principals are bound by one urban school district and are facilitating a change process for cross-curricular ELA/L.

Semi-structured interviews are the primary means of data collection. The interview process consisted of two pilot interviews, followed by a one-on-one interview with each participant. Pertinent documents, artifacts, and demographic data were reviewed. Pseudonyms have been assigned to identify the participating school district and the seven middle school principals. The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. After completing the interviews, a participant summary form was completed in the initial data review process. Following this process, the data was coded. Each of the coding categories was guided by the study's conceptual framework (see Appendices F & G). Each school's data was analyzed individually, and cross-case analysis was used to compare and contrast the experiences of each participant (Creswell, 2013).

Assumptions

As the researcher, I have several assumptions surrounding the study based on my experience and background as a teacher, school counselor, and a life learner. First, it is assumed just because a policy is adopted and perceived as implemented does not mean it is operating as intended. This assumption is based on research (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) and my observation of some teachers continuing the same lessons plans from previous school years in spite of the state's adoption of new academic standards.

Second, it is assumed that since districts must follow the state adopted comprehensive reform policy, a change model should be provided as a guide for the implementation process. This assumption is based on the belief that state and district level leaders of change should provide and follow a systemic model of change to assist with the facilitation of implementing new programs, including state mandated changes in cross-curricular ELA/L standards.

Third, it is assumed that a whole system model of change is not in use and therefore each middle school in the district has interpreted the policy requirements individually and each school is likely to be executing their instructional practice in a different manner. Research has shown that CSR policy intention and local education agencies' perceptions or interpretations of CSR policies are often disconnected (Fullan, 2007).

Fourth, it is assumed that the principals have positive intentions to facilitate change, but may not have been equipped with the tools needed to be a successful change agent as they facilitate the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. As an experienced educator, I have formed the opinion that most educators and educational administrators have a sincere intention to provide the best education possible for the students under their supervision.

This study relies on the participants' honest disclosure of the process they use (or lack of process) to implement the cross-curricular ELA/L standards presented by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative. It is assumed that the participants will provide accurate accounts of their process for implementing the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards. It is further assumed that an examination of the implementation strategies used by the principals to facilitate the cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district will provide information that other change agents can use to enhance change processes in the future; which in turn should have a positive impact on student achievement.

Rationale and Significance

When mandated innovations are presented to educators for implementation, it is important for policy writers to provide a model for implementing the required changes (Desimone, 2002). Comprehensive school reform is a massive undertaking that often requires change to an entire school system. Therefore, it will be useful for educators to have an implementation model guiding them on how to successfully carry out the policy in a manner that supports the primary function of schools, that being the educating of children. Our moral imperative is to educate our youth; we need strategies and resources so the policy can go beyond implementation to actual institutionalization with definitive outcomes of improved student learning, see Figure 1.3 (Fullan, 2007). This study will explore the process middle school principals have used to implement whole school reform prompted by the state's adoption of Common Core State Standards policy. After the adoption of the CCSS, the state revised the standards and now they are called State Academic Standards (state name purposefully withheld).

ELA/L Policy Changes

Leadership Approach to Facilitate
Instructional Alignment to new
academic standards

Addressing Needs of Early
Adolescents

Quality of Student Learning
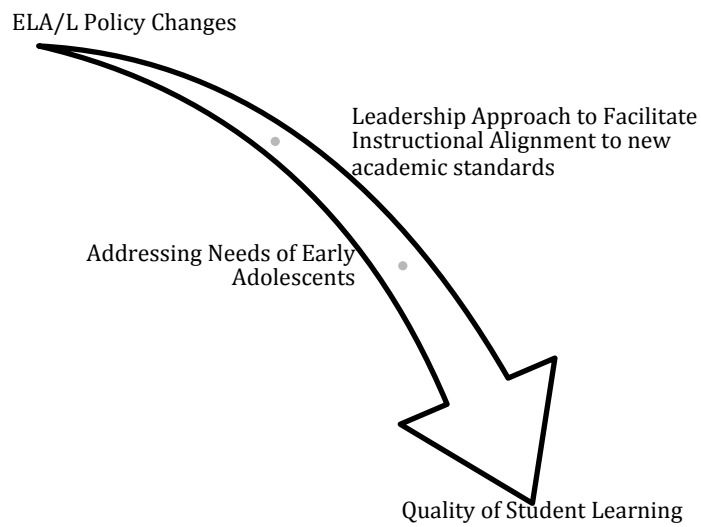
Figure 1.3. Three Essential Components to Achieving the Desired Outcome of Improving Student Learning

People can learn from other people's experiences and by sharing the process that principals use to implement cross-curricular ELA/L standards school wide, this research will allow other educators to learn from the participants' efforts. The reader can learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies used by the participants to facilitate the implementation process. It will also be possible for readers of this study to reflect and draw conclusions from the strategies used by the participants and transfer the knowledge to their process of facilitating change, be it change agents or professional development providers.

The Researcher

I am currently an Educational Leadership graduate student at the University of Arkansas, and I conducted this study as a requirement toward completing the doctoral program. Professionally, I am a middle school counselor. I have also worked as an elementary counselor, and I have taught kindergarten, first, and second grades. I have a Bachelor's degree in

psychology, a Master's degree in school counseling, and a Specialist degree in educational leadership. I have also earned a national board certification in school counseling.

My experiences as a teacher have afforded me the opportunity to take students from a non-literate state to the early stages of being literate. Once I started working in a middle school, I noticed that some students lacked literacy skills all together, and some students' skills were not sufficient to help them progress towards more complex requirements. As a pre-service elementary trained teacher, I also noticed that my pre-service secondary trained colleagues did not appear to have a knowledge base to successfully guide students with their literacy development. Please note, I am not saying that my colleagues are not capable. I am saying that most have shared that they are trained in their content area and they have not received training in literacy development. In addition to my experiences as an elementary teacher, and a school counselor, I am also a member of my school's leadership team. The principal leads the leadership team, but we collaborate and make decisions regarding all facets of the school, including curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Early Adolescent Literacy – The ability to read, write, comprehend, interpret, and discuss a variety of texts across many formats (International Reading Association, 2012).

Capacity Building – Providing the population of an organization with the resources and training needed for them to be able to perform.

Change – Porras & Robertson (as cited in Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 363) define change as "a set of behavioral science-based theories, values, strategies, and techniques aimed at the planned change of the organizational work setting for the purpose of enhancing individual development and improving organizational performance, through the alteration of organizational members'

on-the-job behaviors."

Content-area Literacy – A general set of strategies to help students with reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and thinking in all subject areas (International Literacy Association, 2015).

Disciplinary Literacy Standards – Reading and writing standards that specifically support acquisition of content knowledge in various disciplines (Buehl, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Inoculation fallacy/model – Providing a hefty dose of literacy instruction in early grades and then assuming that adolescent students do not need continued support for literacy development (Snow & Moje, 2010). This has also been called the vaccination model (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Shared responsibility – The process of several indicated classroom teachers partaking in the process of teaching ELA/L standards.

Shifted responsibility – The process of teachers from one content area having complete responsibility for teaching ELA/L standards; specific to this study, it has been seen as the English teachers' responsibility.

Introduction of Remaining Chapters

There are four additional chapters remaining. Chapter Two will cover the literature review. Chapter Three will provide the methodology used to conduct this qualitative multiple-case study. Chapter Four will cover the findings. Finally, Chapter Five will supply the analysis of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. For further analysis of the problem, the following will be addressed:

1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the new changes in cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

The review of literature was ongoing throughout each phase of the research process (i.e. proposal, data collection, data analysis, and synthesis). To carry out the literature review, I used several books, dissertations, professional journals, Internet resources, and periodicals. These sources were accessed through Google Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, and Ebsco. Keywords used in the searches were: principals and implementation strategies, leadership styles, writing across the curriculum, English language arts, change models, adolescent literacy, educating adolescents,

whole school change, and comprehensive school reform. The search resulted in several books,

dissertations, and peer reviewed articles (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Types and Number of Literature Reviewed

Type of Literature Source	Number of Sources
Peer reviewed journal articles	78
Scholarly books	23
Dissertations	66
Professional Journals	18
Book Chapters	11
Scholarly online material	8
Other	5

Writing Across the Curriculum

In the field of education, writing has been a key tool used to gage student comprehension

over the course of time. Social persuasions (i.e. political, economics, and cultural) have

influenced educational reform cycles in many ways, including how writing is taught and the type

of writing students are expected to produce (Russell, 1990). In light of the reform cycles,

instruction in writing has gone through shared or shifted modes of instruction (Bazerman et al.,

2005; Russell, 1990). Shared writing instruction refers to writing used in all disciplines or

departments as a means for student learning. Shifted instruction refers to a shift from all

departments using writing as a tool for learning to writing being taught in the English department

only. Although writing is one of the primary ways that knowledge is shared, writing has also

gone through intervals of being included or excluded as a form of communication due to reform

cycles (Bazerman, 2000; Bazerman et al., 2005; Russell, 1987; 1990). Often times, during the shared writing instruction cycles, teachers and professors from departments outside of English think shared instruction means grading papers in order to correct grammar, usage, and punctuation errors (Stock, 1986). James Britton, (as cited in Stock, 1986) and other members of his research team, coined the phrase "writing across the curriculum" (WAC) as a means to remind teachers at all levels that written and spoken language is an excellent means for student learning at all ages and WAC establishes the connection between language and learning.

To understand the history of WAC in the United States, one must start with the American university and the academic discourse community of the 19th century (Russell, 1990). The academic community of the early American universities excluded most people, but others were included based on linguistics. As stated by Russell (1990), standards of inclusion and exclusion were determined by linguistics, that is, "the one who uses language the way we do is one of us" (p. 53). This basically meant that during the origins of higher education, students were accepted based on their intellect and social class. At this time in history, those admitted to universities were affluent, intelligent, young Caucasian men who were generally extensions of religious organizations (churches), and represented approximately less than 1% of society. During this time, American institutions of higher learning had a liberal curriculum, also called a "uniform course of study" (Russell, 1990, p. 55), that was dependent on a single academic discourse and used methods such as recitation, disputation, debate, and oral examination. The old liberal course of study also included writing across the curriculum. Most of the teachers were ministers and they shared the responsibility of teaching WAC. Once the students completed their studies, they were "welcomed as a full member of the nation's governing elite" (Russell, 1990, p. 55).

In the early 1900s, the modern university was created in response to the new urban-

industrial economy and professions that controlled the economy (Russell, 1990). The American modern university was modeled after the German model. It did away with the single academic discourse and brought about compartmentalization. Teaching methods were also borrowed from the German model. These methods included the use of professional faculty, lectures, discussions, and objective testing. This era brought about a decrease in linguistic courses as well as an increase in higher education enrollment. Language instruction was placed in the English department as a freshman composition course (Russell, 1990). Because of this, WAC was not included in the modern curriculum as a stand-alone course. The faculty believed that the new population of students needed to learn to write. Writing instruction was then shifted to the English departments (Russell, 1990).

Around 1926, the next pivotal event in the history of WAC was Harvard declaring writing as *ding an sich,* meaning "thing-in-itself" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014). Essentially, Harvard's assumption was writing is not related to content and should be learned elsewhere, such as high school or freshman composition (Russell, 1990). This action released faculty from grading written assignments; they no longer had to pay attention to other disciplines, and it increased the time they had for research (Russell, 1990). Since Harvard declared writing as a thing-in-itself, language instruction, in fact, shifted to high school, or it was taught in freshman composition.

Deweyan progressives, who were in favor of a democratic society that fostered respect for all and human development that allows one to participate in the affairs of life, attempted a reform effort from Harvard's *ding an sich* model by pushing for WAC to no avail (John Dewey Project on Progressive Education, 2002; Russell, 1990). In 1929, there was an effort to return to an elitist form of higher education. Colleges used selective admissions and tried to return to a

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single academic discourse, but it was unsuccessful. Instead, general education became another compartment in the modern university (Bazerman et al., 2005; Grabowsky, & Harden Fritz, 2007; Russell, 1990). Several years later, Harvard changed their position on WAC. In 1945, a Harvard reform committee released General Education in a Free Society. This document proposed a program to unify the curriculum and increase shared writing instruction (Buck, 1945). The idea was not accepted; instead the reform efforts led to instructional methods that required students to read more literature (Buck, 1945; Garber, 2004; Russell, 1990). Other universities offered WAC instruction, but they too, did not lead to increased shared writing instruction.

At the end of World War II (1945), many of the returning soldiers sought higher education. As the soldiers began taking courses, professors noticed that the veterans had varying backgrounds, and there was a need for communication instruction (Russell, 1987; 1990). Consequently, the next reform movement started in 1947 at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) (Phillips, Greenberg, & Gibson, 1993; Russell, 1987, 1990). The CCCC was founded by the National Council of Teachers of English and the Speech Association of America (Russell, 1990). The central focus was to promote the importance of communication to all areas of teaching and learning (Bazerman et al., 2005; Phillips et al., 1993; Russell, 1987, 1990). Nevertheless, in practice, a majority of schools simply merged a speech and English class for freshman instead of actually implementing WAC. It can be accurately said that, the communications movement evaporated throughout the late fifties and sixties, and colleges became more selective about the students that were admitted to higher education programs (Russell, 1990).

Over time, WAC continued to go back and forth through shared and shifted responsibility

of providing writing instruction. Universities sought ways to handle the students who pursued a college education but lacked the academic discourse. A common solution was, and still is, to have graduate students, tutors, or part-time teachers provide remediation programs (Russell, 1990). Universities have also required freshman composition or English I classes. There was also a shift in responsibility from the colleges to the high school educators and eventually to the primary schools (Russell, 1990). These shifts in responsibility and the lack of teaching writing were major factors in colleges denying admission of students who could not meet the writing standards, fail students who did not acquire writing skills after remediation, or pass students with the hope they would eventually gain the communication skills to be successful (Russell, 1990).

Author and professor, Frederick Rudolph (as cited in Russell, 1990) said, "Unless handsomely funded and courageously defended, efforts to launch courses and programs outside the departmental structure [have] generally failed." Russell goes on to say:

> There is no specific constituency for interdepartmental programs within the structure of the American university, much less for interdepartmental programs which incorporate writing, because the academic community is fragmented. There is thus no permanent defense against the slow erosion of programs under the pressure of well-defined departmental interests (p. 59).

Today, most middle school, high school, and post secondary institutions continue to use some form of departmentalization. This trend continues to reinforce the practice of writing being taught in English classes.

External Mandates

Over the last fifty years, the federal government has taken a more significant role in the responsibilities state and local educational agencies must carry out when educating students who attend K-12 public schools. This section will cover education reform policies and how the

policies impacted instruction in English Language Arts, literacy, and writing across the curriculum.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted in 1965 under the leadership of President Lyndon Johnson (Thomas & Brady, 2005). At the time, John Gardner was the president of the Carnegie Corporation, an organization that promotes knowledge and understanding, and he was the chair of the ESEA/ Gardner Commission (Thomas & Brady, 2005). ESEA was created to improve the quality of education for disadvantaged students, and it determined how federal funds would be allocated to help these children (Thomas & Brady, 2005; United States of America, 1965). President Johnson's focus on educating disadvantaged children was a significant component of his War on Poverty policies (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

When passed on April 11, 1965, Title I was the largest financial commitment ever made by the federal government to education. Approximately one billion dollars was designated to assist local education agencies (LEA) having significant populations of students who were from families identified as having a low socioeconomic status (Thomas & Brady, 2005). While the intentions of ESEA were widely accepted, it was still met with criticism from the National Education Association (NEA), due to the fact that private schools were able to receive Title I funds (Thomas & Brady, 2005). In response to this concern, ESEA made an exception through Public Law 89-10, Section 604. Section 604 states that the federal government can not "exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel, of any educational institution or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or printed or published instructional materials by any education institution or school system" (United States of America, 1965).

There were problems with misappropriation of Title I funds as well (Brown, 2010; McClure, 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005). The Martin-McClure report of 1969, titled "Title I of ESEA: Is It Helping Poor Children?" illuminated the misuse of Title I funds due to ambiguity in the ESEA and a lack of congressional oversight of the funds (Brown, 2010; McClure, 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Ruby Martin and Phyllis McClure found that more than 15 percent of Title I funds were being used for purposes other than improving education for disadvantaged children (McClure 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Martin and McClure also found situations in which the state and local funding had been used to update school buildings, programs, and textbooks in middle class and affluent schools instead of covering the costs of the same changes in schools that served majority poor students (McClure 2008). This type of fiscal abuse caused Congress to amend ESEA four times between its initial enactment in 1965 and 1980 (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Goals 2000

Since the initial enactment of the ESEA, there have been several revisions and reauthorizations of the act. In 1994, President Clinton signed ESEA reauthorization called Goals 2000 (Austin, nd). In the reauthorization there were eight goals with two being directly related to literacy. Goal three states that students should leave fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades demonstrating mastery over core subjects including English. Goal six states that every adult should be literate by the year 2000. Austin (nd) explained at the time that only 52 percent of Americans were able to perform challenging tasks in literacy. Goals 2000 established a framework for academic standards, measuring student progress, and a requirement to provide assistance to students needing help in meeting the standards (Cross, 2010). Public school

educators were required to implement the Goals 2000 policies, including the goals related to literacy.

No Child Left Behind

In 2002, President Bush reauthorized and renamed the ESEA No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB required annual testing in literacy and mathematics in grades three through eight, an alignment of standards, and a measurement of schools and districts in order to chart adequate yearly progress (AYP). NCLB also required teachers of core subjects (English, math, science, and social studies) to be highly qualified in their subject matter, and states were required to publish annual report cards showing disaggregated student achievement data by specific subgroups. NCLB was originally touted as a bill with requirements that would finally close the achievement gaps in education. Instead, several schools were deemed as failing schools, by AYP standards (Michelman, 2012).

Common Core State Standards and Every Student Succeeds Act

Under President Obama's administration, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was introduced as a reauthorization of the ESEA and it replaces No Child Left Behind. ESSA requires that State Education Agencies (SEA) create a Title I plan and submit it to the United States Department of Education. In relation to ELA/L, states must adopt English language proficiency standards that include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The plan must also include a way to address English language learners and must be aligned to rigorous state standards (National Conference of State Legislators, 2015).

Prior to ESSA, states had the option to adopt CCSS, which also began to be implemented during President Obama's first administration. CCSS are a set of national mathematics and ELA/L standards outlining what is expected of students at the end of each grade level (Council

of Chief State School Officers & National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

Under this ESSA policy, the state adopted CCSS, and then revised the standards to create their own state academic standards. According to the state's revision cycle, the ELA/L standards where introduced during the 2015-2016 school year and expects full implementation of the ELA/L standards by the 2017-2018 school year. This research will focus on exploring implementation strategies of principals for the newly revised cross-curricular ELA/L academic standards in seven public middle schools in an urban school district.

Middle Level Education

Since the research will focus on public middle schools, it is important to understand best practices in middle level education. Middle school students are early adolescents falling between the ages of ten and fifteen. During this time, the students experience several developmental changes. Physically, their bodies begin to change, and they have a growth spurt. By this time in their intellectual development, educators often see an increased capacity to use reasoning and abstract thought processes (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Adolescent students tend to be curious about a wide range of interests, and they want learning experiences that are relevant to their lives. When student learning is connected to real-life situations, it increases the opportunities for them to gain knowledge and learning experiences become more meaningful (Association for Middle Level Education, 2012). As for moral development, adolescents begin to move away from the notion of automatically obeying and accepting what adults say, and they make their own choices about what they believe or value (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, 2012; Caskey & Anfara, 2014). To address this developmental stage, schools need to provide an exploratory curriculum and active learning to meet their intellectual growth (Association for

Middle Level Education, 2012; Caskey & Anfara, 2014).

Active learning is a process of instruction engaging the students by appealing to their senses, their intellect, and their social and moral inclinations (Association for Middle Level Education, 2012; Caskey & Anfara, 2014). The active learning classroom environment is a safe community whose foundation rests upon trust and democratic order. The classroom teacher is more of a facilitator and collaborates with the students when planning the learning process. The teacher continues to hold the lead responsibility as a professional, but must release control and allow the students to monitor their own learning. Examples of active learning include (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, 2012; Bonwell & Eison, 1991):

- Writing across the disciplines

- Debates

- Problem solving models

- Peer teaching.

Advisory programs and service learning projects are also helpful active learning strategies for students as they set out to make choices for their lives (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). Advisory programs are designated periods set aside for educators to form trusting relationships with students through an advisor/advisee format. Topics discussed can include interpersonal issues, schoolwork, and health related questions. Advisory programs are important to adolescents because they need guidance as they grow and develop emotionally and socially (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Service learning projects address adolescents' social and moral development. Additionally, successful middle-level education programs have several components that address the needs of adolescents.

Interdisciplinary Teams

Transitioning from elementary school to middle school is often an intimidating experience for students. In elementary school, students often have one primary teacher along with programs such as physical education, music, and art. Students then transition to middle school where they have multiple teachers and class changes along with other new experiences. The transition process can make a student feel lost and overwhelmed. One way to address this need is through interdisciplinary teams. Interdisciplinary teams provide a way of organizing and subdividing each grade level in the school into smaller groups that have at least two core teachers from different content areas collaborating and planning together on behalf of the students' achievement (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). Furthermore, interdisciplinary teams can help calm new middle school students' fears by placing them in a smaller grouping that is designed to build meaningful relationships between students and their peers and students and teachers.

In addition to supporting students, interdisciplinary teams:

- Get to know their students by analyzing data and by examining student work;

- Meet with parents;

- Integrate the curriculum and teach thematic units that involve two or more content areas;

- Plan together and reflect on their practice;

- Do not lose site of student achievement by staying focused on curriculum, instruction and assessment;

- Have a representative on the school leadership team; and

- Share the responsibility for literacy development and advocacy for their students

(Association for Middle Level Education, 2010).

While the opening example refers to a group of students transferring from elementary school, principles of interdisciplinary teams apply to all grade levels in a middle school setting.

Culture and Community

Before teaching and learning can take place, schools need to be orderly and the students need to be ready to learn. When a school is "in order," much consideration has been given to the environment. Safety for all is a top priority and deliberate measures are in place to ensure that the grounds, facilities, and human interactions are free from risk. In case an event does occur, a predetermined course of action is followed. A school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning is also inclusive of all and establishes fairness and mutual respect (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Cummings, 2014; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). Orderly schools provide the best opportunity for teaching and learning to take place.

Students who are ready to learn tend to be relatively stable in the areas of the affective domain. To assist and support the affective domain, programs and services are provided for middle school students and their families. School counselors provide a comprehensive guidance program that help address student needs. When student needs are beyond the school counselors' scope of practice, a referral should be made to appropriate community resources. Excellent middle schools also support health and wellness for the students through policy, curriculum, and school-wide programs (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010). Health and wellness is most often provided in health and physical education classes, services offered by the school nurse, health screenings, and community partners offering free or reduced price services at the school campus or schools are invited to a central location. Additional to health and wellness,

community and business partners can offer middle schools after-school programs, job shadowing experiences, and service-learning projects to middle school students, thereby extending the exploratory curriculum.

Finally, to support student development through school culture and community, it is appropriate and beneficial to provide an advisory program (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). An advisory program provides a way to form genuine, trusting, supportive relationships with middle school students. Research has shown that adolescent students perform better personally and academically when they are connected to the school and have a relationship with an adult advocate at the school (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). In an advisory or mentoring program, the students are further divided into groups that are smaller than their interdisciplinary teams (approximately eight to twelve students per group) and are paired with an advocate who has received professional development. The advisor and advisees meet on a regular schedule to discuss topics that will help students be successful in school and life. During the advisory sessions, if a concern comes up that is beyond the scope of the advocates' training, the student should be referred to the school counselor.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments

At the core of student learning is curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Curriculum encompasses all of the learning opportunities available to the students. Instruction is how teaching will take place, and assessment is the means to evaluate student learning.

Curriculum includes all educational experiences: academics, clubs, athletics, spirit clubs, after-school programs, etc. (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; English, 2010).

When planning and developing the curriculum it must first be based on the needs, interests, and abilities of the students served; it also must be research based (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; English, 2010). As for content classes, curriculum is based on standards, and the standards illustrate what students should know and be able to do (Jackson & Davis, 2000). In developing curriculum for students, a backward design is suggested (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli, 2003). In a backward design, educators start first with the standards, then they decide on the assessments that will measure mastery of the knowledge and skills, and finally the curriculum (i.e. instructional experiences) is developed (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Best practices recommend that the curriculum be (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Jackson & Davis, 2000):

- Challenging – to actively engage students, educators must use effective planning.
- Exploratory – the curriculum must be exploratory; the students need exposure to a variety of experiences.
- Integrative – adolescent students benefit from broad studies that integrate their interests into the curriculum.
- Relevant – middle school students need curriculum that is relevant.

Instruction

Instruction drives teaching and learning, and it prepares students to meet performance standards (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Instructional planning requires educators to use multiple teaching and learning approaches to address the diverse needs of adolescent students. Teaching approaches should be informed through various means, including measuring student learning styles, being aware of students' prior knowledge and abilities, and the use of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010). When teachers know

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their students, they are able to plan appropriate instruction. A variety of teaching strategies should be used, including collaborative teacher-student planning, experiments, demonstrations, surveys and opinion polls, question posing, simulations, inquiry-based and group projects, community-based services, independent study, and student reflection (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, 2012). Furthermore, instructional materials and resources need to support diversity and include technology (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Jackson & Davis, 2000). These teaching approaches are beneficial to adolescent students because they are interactive and engaging strategies that draw students into the learning process and increase the opportunities for knowledge gains (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, 2012).

According to Jackson & Davis (2000), there are three instructional models that are useful at tying together the elements of curriculum, assessments, and students: (a) authentic instruction asks students to produce knowledge that depends on disciplined inquiry, and it adds value beyond documenting competence; (b) the WHERE model guides instructional planning so lessons inform, engage, and guide student learning; and (c) the differentiated model provides details on how to instruct a heterogeneous group of students. It is not to be confused with tracking. As for the three models provided, one is not superior to the other (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Overall, instruction is linked to student performance, and educators have a duty to carefully plan for it.

Assessments

The teacher must be committed to providing ample opportunities for various, ongoing assessments because they provide significant information about teaching and evidence of student learning (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wormeli,

2003). Assessments are also a learning tool for students to monitor their progress. Assessments should be tied to standards in that they show if students learned what teachers want them to know and be able to do.   Wiggins and McTighe as stated by Jackson & Davis (2000) group standards in three ways:

- Enduring standards – anchoring content that students should know beyond the end of the unit.

- Mastery standards –information that students need as a prerequisite before learning enduring standards.

- Familiarity standards –information that students need to be aware of.

As teachers make decisions about what type of assessment to use, they can align the assessment to the category of standard addressed. For example, if a lesson is taught on farmers to test familiarity, a teacher may ask students if they know what a farmer is. To assess for mastery, the teacher may ask students about the decline in the number of farmers in the last ten years. Finally, to assess enduring standards, the teacher may ask the students to write a position statement on how the decline in the number of farmers affects them as a 7th grader (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Teachers need to use a variety of assignments to monitor learning. Because adolescent students are also able to gage their progress, the teachers should provide them with a rubric. A good balance of assessments will include pre-assessments (measure prior knowledge), formative (monitoring learning), summative (evaluation of the program), or authentic (produce solutions or products that show learning) (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Cummings, 2014; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Finally, English (2010) cautions (in light of accountability models) that teaching to the test only measures how well students learn the test items and misses opportunities for understanding how well students grasp concepts, processes, and ideas.

Early Adolescent Literacy Needs

Researchers generally agree that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to addressing adolescent literacy needs. Instead, Moje, Young, Readence and Moore (2000) state that educators need to be critical when selecting best practices to follow, and that principles should be linked to practice when planning literacy instruction. Snow and Moje (2010) go on to state that literacy instruction has three components:

- Sustained development of language and literacy skills;

- Integrating literacy into content-area instruction; and

- Providing guidance for distressed readers.

Likewise, Alvermann's (2002) position states that many factors must be considered while planning for literacy instruction. These factors include: (a) acknowledging that students' beliefs in their ability to complete a task will affect their motivation to complete the task; (b) literacy instruction needs to be embedded in content subjects; (c) using several forms of text for various learning situations, and (d) have a plan for addressing the needs of struggling readers.

Finally, the International Reading Association (2012) adds that adolescents deserve:

1. Reading specialists who can help struggling students.

2. Skilled teachers who facilitate instruction and study strategies across the curriculum.

3. Teachers who understand, respect, and address individual needs.

4. Communities and a nation that supports students and rigorous levels of learning.

After reviewing the literature, I summarize that there seems to be a consensus that adolescent literacy instruction needs to be comprehensive in order to promote deep student learning in all subject areas (Snow & Moje, 2010).

Leadership and Organization Characteristics

Each level of education (i.e. early childhood, primary, elementary, middle school and high school) has unique leadership and organizational characteristics and needs. Considering the focus of this study, it is important to understand the leadership and organization characteristics of middle schools for the purpose of understanding adolescent literacy needs and writing across the curriculum. It is also important to review middle school administration in relation to leadership styles that principals use to facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction.

Shared Governance

Middle schools are about teamwork and that applies to leadership as well. The principal should not make decisions and leave out input from other stakeholders. Instead, the school should function through democratic or shared governance. Democratic governance is the process of forming a team of school stakeholders along with the school principal to lead the school by focusing on teaching and learning and guiding implementation of new programs (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010; Jackson & Davis, 2000). All groups on the school's organizational chart should have representation on the site based leadership team. The leadership team should develop a shared vision for the school. The principal will have a personal vision that he or she sees for the school; but the development of the school's vision statement should be a collective process that includes all stakeholders (members of the community, teachers, students, parents/guardians, administrators and school-board members). While vision statements are personal to each individual school, they should be a living document that addresses:

- student learning;

- knowledge of adolescent growth and development; and

- accepted principles of learning (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010 & 2012).

When the vision statement is a living document, it is flexible and can be modified to meet the changing needs of the school.

Furthermore, the leadership team assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the school to develop a school improvement plan. All stakeholders should participate in planning the school improvement plan, and the leadership team should provide a format for their input. Once all stakeholders have provided feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the priorities of the school can be written. After the plan is reviewed and revised, the complete copy is used as a guide for the school.

Once the leadership team is set, the vision and mission is developed, and the school improvement plan is finalized, the team needs to have a frequently scheduled meeting time to continually address all facets of the plan with the emphasis placed on teaching and learning. When the team meets, an agenda is followed and the school principal does not dominate the sessions.

Leadership Styles

Transformational leadership is a useful approach for principals to employ when implementing change (Northouse, 2016). As the name indicates, transformational leadership is a method that seeks to change and transform people. In seeking to motivate people to change, the transformational leader is patient and considerate of opposing views; they are not dictators. They desire to gain the trust of their followers and motivate others to grow and develop. Transformational leaders facilitate shared visions and model what they expect from their followers. Finally, transformational leaders are authentic and encouraging. The characteristics of a transformational leader are key to systems that are facilitating change.

Models of Change

History has shown that implementing comprehensive school reform policy is a fairly common process in American education. Although change is common, it can present obstacles to those charged with the implementation of the policy. This study will focus on the challenge of implementing the CCSS instruction shift to ELA/L cross-curricular standards. While there are several experts of the change process, Michael Fullan specializes in whole system change within the K - 12 education systems. Therefore, I choose to view my study through the lens of Fullan's whole system change model.

Fullan (2007) states that one of the primary problems with CSR is that the federal government presents a policy that requires change and then expects the educators to follow the standard processes associated with change (changing beliefs and values, along with knowledge and skills will produce desired outcomes). Nevertheless, intentions of the federal policy are often disconnected from the conceived notions that educators have when implementing change; resulting in a "superficial, episodic reform that makes matters worse" (Fullan, 2007, p. 28). Not to mention, if the policy is ill informed from the start, then the intended outcomes will not be met (Fullan, 2007).

To address these problems, Fullan (2007) gives two conditions that must be understood in order to have successful change:

1. The theory of education (what changes are to be implemented) and
2. The theory of change (how to implement the changes).

Fullan (2007) goes on to give ten elements of successful change (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

Elements of Successful Change

Ten Elements of Successful Change

1. The main goal has to be closing the achievement gap.

2. Attend to the three basics of literacy, numeracy, and student well being.

3. Make people's dignity and sense of respect a priority.

4. Use the best people to work on the problem.

5. Success is socially based and action oriented (action over elaborate planning).

6. Assume lack of capacity is the main problem and continue to address it.

7. Good leaders will develop leaders.

8. Use internal data to master external accountability (know your data).

9. Use positive pressure to motivate the people.

10. Use the first nine elements to gain public support.

Summary

My personal experiences as an educator and a life learner, as well as my knowledge of the applicable literature, informed my understanding of how the study should be examined. The literature presented in this chapter provides a foundation for exploring the relationship between early adolescents' literacy needs and how middle school principals facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L instruction. Five major areas of literature were carefully reviewed: (a) writing across the curriculum, (b) external mandates, (c) best practices for educating early adolescents, (d) leadership styles, and (e) Fullan's model of change. These areas of interest also created the conceptual framework for the study.

The five components of the conceptual framework are interrelated (see Appendix F). First, the curricular change (i.e., writing across the curriculum) is an external mandate associated with the Common Core State Standards. As an external mandate, wiring across the curriculum requires a certain degree of change in the way teachers approach their work.

Second, change in a school setting requires certain organization characteristics and leadership impacts those characteristics. Change requires transformation, and leadership is essential in transforming organizations. In this study, the transformation is one of curricular change that can only be accomplished through leaders who not only understand what transformational leadership is, but how to be a transformational leader.

Next, the new ELA/L academic standards carry a reciprocal relationship to middle level education, in that they both affirm that early adolescents need literacy instruction across the curriculum. A common and approved practice in middle level education is interdisciplinary work. Writing across the curriculum not only allows for additional literacy experience for students, but can also allow for additional strategies for content area teachers in relation to how students report and document their learning experiences in all of their classes.

Fourth, leadership must understand and support best practices in middle level education. The uniqueness of the middle level education experience is not isolated to the student. Middle level teaching also is unique. It is imperative that school leaders understand and embrace the characteristics of not only the middle level student but also the middle level educator. In addition, school leaders are charged with leading the development of, and understanding of, the philosophy that supports the education of adolescents, which permeates the culture and climate of the successful middle level school.

Finally, leaders need awareness of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards as they are charged with the responsibility of being a change agent. Principals are considered to be the instructional leaders of their building. When a curriculum change is at hand they wear the hats of both instructional leader and transformational leaders. To facilitate the change that leads to effective implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards, leaders need an awareness of what the new standards require, as well as what teachers need to effectively participate in the change process.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. It is anticipated that, through a better understanding of implementation strategies used by principals to facilitate how ELA/L standards are carried out for early adolescents, more informed decisions can be made by change agents on how to move from policy to institutionalized practice. To expound on the problem, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is a naturalistic form of inquiry that seeks to understand and describe the participants' beliefs and behaviors within the context of the natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Draper, 2004; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative research allows for the

researcher to examine social situations with a focus on obtaining and interpreting the meaning of

the participants' experiences in real time (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This is a contrast to

quantitative research in that quantitative research seeks to explain phenomena with numerical

data (Muijs, 2011). Purely numerical data will not allow for a thorough exploration of the

strategies that principals use to facilitate the implementation process of cross-curricular ELA/L

instruction and their influence on the culture of learning in the public middle schools. Therefore,

the proposed study employs qualitative research methods that will allow for rich descriptions of

the participants' perceptions and experiences with the implementation process. Figure 3.1 depicts

the study design, illustrating the components of this qualitative multiple-case study (Maxwell,

2005; Maxwell, 2013).

Goals of the Study:

1. Learn how principals are prepared to lead ELA/L innovations for early adolescents.

2. To understand the leadership styles used as the principals guide changes in ELA/L.

3. To understand the strategies that principals use to facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards.

4. To allow the principals' experiences and insights to act as a guide for educational leaders as they facilitate change in the future.

Conceptual Framework:

Fullan's Whole System Theory of Change

Exsiting Literature on facilitating change to cross-curricular literacy instruction

Exsissing Literature on early adolescent learners

Exsisiting Literature on Transformational Leadership

Personal Experiences as an educator

Research Questions:

1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

Methods:

Multiple Case Study

Semi-structured Interviews

Action Plans

Critical Incident Documents

Comprehensive School Improvement Plans

Review and Analysis of Data

Validity:

Triangulation of data sources

Researcher Subjectivity

Participant Reactivity
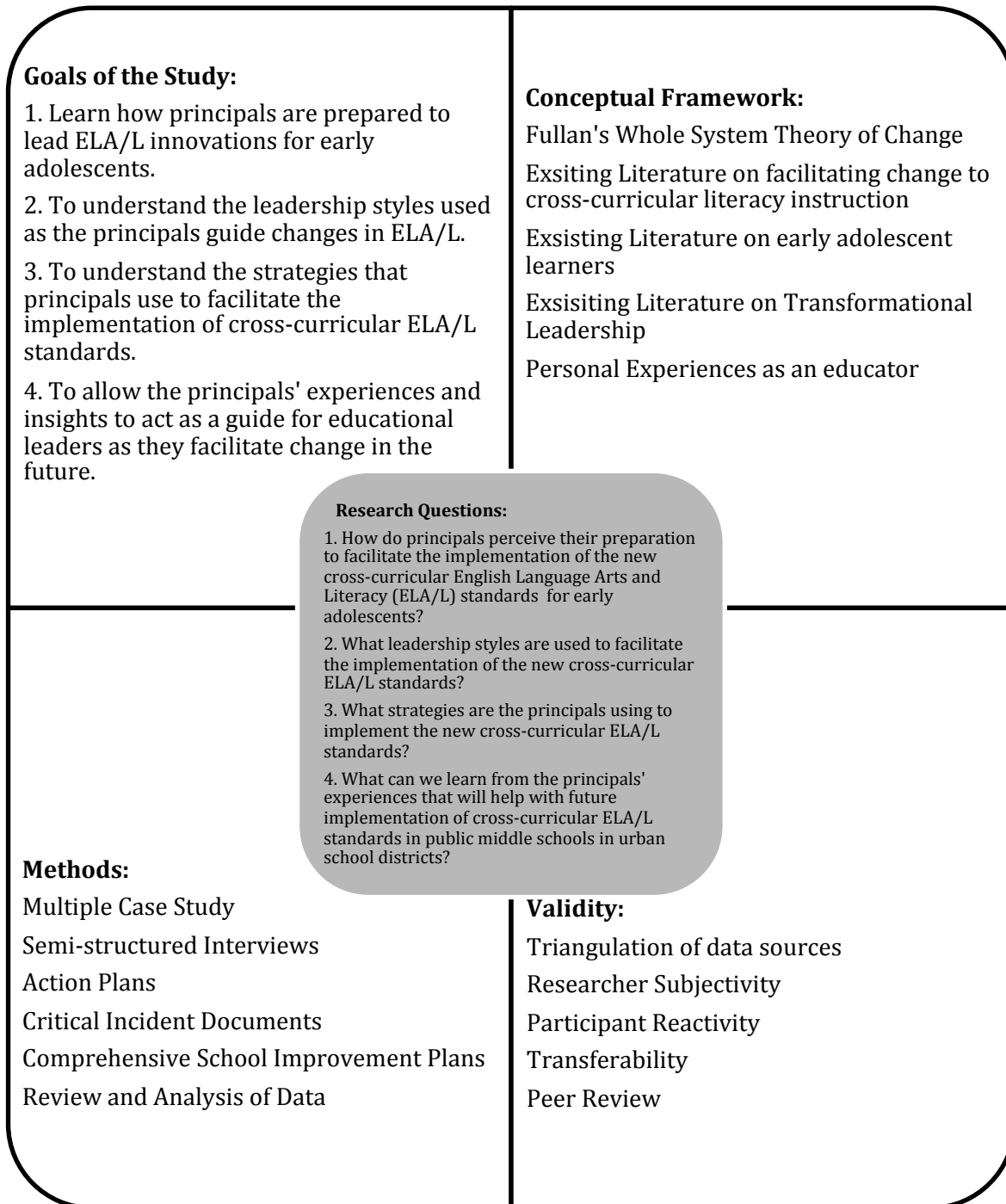
Transferability

Peer Review

Figure 3.1. Research design showing the five major components of a qualitative study

Rationale for Multiple-Case Study Methodology

A multiple-case study design is the most appropriate qualitative approach for this study.

Multiple-case study methodology explores a phenomenon, a system or a social unit that is linked

by time or place, in context as it occurs (Creswell, 2007; Draper, Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Merriam (1998) goes on to say that qualitative multiple-case study methodology is fitting for comprehending and describing educational phenomenon. Examining the process that middle school principals use to facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards aligns with multiple-case study criteria; the research will seek to answer "how" and "why" questions about a current event (Yin, 2014).

Chapter Outline

This chapter expounds on the research methodology for the study. The chapter covers the: (a) research sample, (b) research design overview, (c) data-collection methods, (d) data analysis, (e) ethical considerations, (f) trustworthiness, (g) limitations of the study, and (h) timeline.

Research Sample

The site for the research study will be called School District (pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality). The school district has approximately 28,000 students. Seventy-one percent of the students participate in the free or reduced price lunch program. The racial composition of the district is 67.1% African American, 19.4% Caucasian and 13.5% other. This school district was selected for the proposed study because it is in the process of implementing the cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards.

The participant selection process was governed by using the purposeful sampling strategy and comparable case sampling. These sampling strategies were appropriate for qualitative research methods because the individuals selected for this study were able to specifically provide information that assisted with the understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Plus, the use of comparable case sampling (a process that is used when

researchers are studying multiple sites) is beneficial in that it allows for the researcher to select

participants or sites that share similar characteristics and make comparisons (Roulston, 2010).

Specific to this multiple-case study, middle school principals are the selected participants (see

Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Gender	Highest Level of Education	Professional Experience	Certification
1	M	Ed. D.	History Teacher, Assistant Principal (AP), Principal	History, Building & District Level Administrator
2	M	M. S.	Teacher, Instructional Coach, AP, Principal	History, & K-12 Administration
3	F	Ed. D.	Teacher, AP, Principal	K-9 Teacher, Building & District Level Administrator
4	F	Ed. S.	Special Education (SPED) Teacher, AP, Principal	K-12 SPED, K-9 Building Level Administrator, & K-12 District Administrator
5	M	M. Ed.	Math Teacher, Instructional Coach, AP, Principal	4-8 Math & Science, K-12 Building Administration
6	M	Ed. D.	Social Studies Teacher, Instructional Coach, AP, Principal	Social Studies, Administrator, & Superintendent
7	F	M. S.	SPED Teacher, AP, Principal	K-12 SPED, Secondary Building Administration

I also collected essential documents and artifacts (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014).

The purpose of the documents and artifacts is to collect:

- Disaggregated assessment data to provide contextual information.

- Each Comprehensive School Improvement Plan to review goals related to literacy.

- Action Plan(s) in relation to the implementation process.

- Pertinent state and district procedures for contextual and implementation information.

- Critical Incident forms to notate actions that are related to the implementation process.

- Participant demographic data supplies contextual information.

- School demographics to provide contextual information.

- Researcher's memo notes to help with coding categories in data analysis phase.

Research Design Overview

To organize the research, I created a sequence table (see Table 3.2) to summarize the steps needed to complete the multiple-case study. While I have planned an orderly study, I was flexible in accordance with qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Table 3.2

Sequence Table

Action
Conducted a relevant literature review.
Following proposal defense, obtained approval from Institution Review Board (IRB).
Obtained consent from school district Superintendent.
Met with Associate Superintendent to solicit support for research study.
Attended principals' meeting to introduce the study and to invite principals to participate in study jointly with Associate Superintendent.
Followed-up with an email and/or a telephone call to request participation.
Upon agreeing to participate, I emailed cover letter, consent forms and interview questions to participants in advance.

Table 3.2 (Cont.)	
Action	

Conducted pilot interviews.

Scheduled participant interviews.

Obtain Signed-Consent forms from interview participants.

Collected and reviewed documents and artifacts.

Conducted individual semi-structured interviews.

Reviewed and explored data.

Data analysis and synthesis.

Methods of Data Collection

The use of multiple data collection methods and triangulation is essential to understanding the experiences of middle school principals as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools (see Table 3.3). Using triangulation as a data collection strategy adds rigor and depth to the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Triangulation also authenticates the data by providing a layer of certainty that the exploration of the phenomenon was thorough (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Table 3.3

Overview of Information Needed

Research Questions	Information Needed	Method
1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?	- Participants' perceptions about their preparation to lead an instructional shift to cross-curricular ELA/L in middle school. Pre-service training, Professional Development, experience and frequency of training will provide this information. - Vision for middle school literacy instruction.	Interview Documents Review Critical Incident Reports Participants' Demographics
2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?	- The participants' leadership style, skills, attitudes, plans, and methods used to facilitate the implementation process.	Interview Documents Review Critical Incident Reports
3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?	- Strategies used by principals to facilitate implementation.	Interview Documents Review Critical Incident Reports
4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?	- Principals' perception of implementation process.	Interview Documents Review Critical Incident Reports

Pilot Test

Prior to conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants, two separate pilot

interview sessions were conducted. The first pilot interview was conducted with the English

Language Arts specialist for the state department of education. This session provided clear

information about the state's ELA plan and how local education agencies are to complete the

CCSS adoption plan. LEAs had the option to complete an immediate adoption or to phase in the

adoption process. The state specialist also stated that regardless of the adoption process that is

selected by the school districts, the standards must be in place by Fall 2017. The second pilot

interview was conducted with two volunteers. They are district level specialists who are responsible for providing training to the middle school principals and teachers for disciplinary literacy. One specialist oversees secondary English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L), and the other specialist oversees secondary social studies. This pilot interview allowed the researcher to practice asking the research questions as if it were an actual participant interview, in order to determine needed revisions (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2013).

To accommodate the two specialists, I interviewed them together at their office. The pilot-test was a flexible process; I used my interview protocol as a guide to ask each question. The pilot interview resulted in meaningful feedback in the form of:

1. The specialists answering the questions according to their experiences with the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards.
2. The specialists offering suggestions on how to change the wording of some of the questions so they would align to terminology that is used in the district.
3. The specialists gave me a copy of the district's disciplinary literacy implementation guide.

Semi-structured Interviews

Upon receiving initial consent, I scheduled the interview time and emailed a participant packet to each principal. The packet included a cover letter, a participant informed consent form, the demographic data form, a critical incidents form, and a copy of the interview questions. On the day of the scheduled interviews, I had a general conversation with the participant. I also reviewed the forms in the participant packet, making sure to answer questions as needed. I then collected the informed consent forms along with the other documents in the packet. At this point, once the participant was ready to start, we began the interview. The interviews were semi-

structured, and I exercised flexibility throughout the process. Each interview was recorded, and I used an interview protocol with open-ended questions. The design of the interview protocol was formatted to gather rich data regarding the participants' experiences with strategies used to facilitate the implementation process of the cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). The interview protocol also served as an organizational tool to stay focused (yet flexible) on the primary research questions (Yin, 2014). Each of the interviews was conducted using a one-on-one, face-to-face interview method.

Documents and Artifacts

The following artifacts were collected: (a) participant demographics, (b) school demographics, (c) disaggregated assessment data, (d) state academic standards revision cycle plan, (e) district's disciplinary literacy implementation guide (f) school action plans (g) documentation of critical incidents, (h) 2015-16 and 2016-17 Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, (i) 2015-16 and 2016-17 District Course Catalogues and (j) memo notes. The artifacts are critical to the study because they will provide relevant background information to the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2007) as well as useful information during the analysis phase of the study (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4

Documents and Artifacts Needed

Document or Artifact	Information Provided
Participant demographics	Gender, Educational employment experiences, Degrees held, Certifications and Licenses.
School demographics	Number of students receiving free or reduced lunch, race and gender.
Disaggregated assessment data	Contextual Information. Percentage of students scoring at or above expected performance level. Percentage of students scoring below expected performance level.
State academic standards revision cycle plan	Provides dates when committee began revising academic standards (for each subject area), year state board approved revisions, expected dates for full implementation.
District's disciplinary literacy implementation guide	Provides core actions for implementing disciplinary literacy practices in secondary classrooms, indicators are included.
Action plans for implementing Disciplinary Literacy	Course of action steps specifically related to disciplinary literacy and/or writing across the curriculum.
Documentation of critical incidents	List of any critical processes, planning sessions, action steps, trainings, etc. that contributes toward implementing disciplinary literacy academic standards at each school.
2015-16 and 2016-17 Comprehensive School Improvement Plans	Annual comprehensive, structured, action plan, addressing implementation goals, instruction, programs, and strategies to meet student needs.
2015-16 and 2016-17 Middle School District Course Catalogues	Identify courses offered at each middle school.
Researcher memo/journal notes	Researcher notes on what is going on with the data. Used as a tool to assist with findings, interpretation and conclusions.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Data Collection Methods

The data collection plan for this study carries some strengths and weaknesses that are common to qualitative data collection methods (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011 Maxwell, 2013). First, the use of semi-structured interviews presents several strengths for this study. Semi-structured interviews help to facilitate the gathering of a large quantity of information in a relatively short period of time. Next, the use of interviews gathers first-hand accounts of the participants' experiences with facilitating the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. Finally, semi-structured interviews allow for the flexibility to follow-up for clarification during the interview process.

In light of the strengths with semi-structured interviews, there are also some limitations associated with this data collection method. In relation to this study, the researcher will have to rely on the interviewees to answer questions truthfully, and the participants may be hesitant to answer questions honestly for fear of some form of retaliation or adverse effects on their professional evaluation. Therefore, careful consideration was used in planning how to carry out all contact with the participants. First, I sought support from the associate superintendent. With his support, we decided that I needed to attend a principals' meeting to introduce the study. Attendees for the meeting were the middle school principals, the secondary social studies specialist and the associate superintendent for middle schools. The associate superintendent introduced me to the attendees and he informed them of his support of my research. Then I provided an introduction to my research and informed the principals of their potential involvement should they decide to participate. I assured the principals that the study was not to evaluate their performance. I tried to be thoughtful of the wording used while developing the interview questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Additionally, the interview questions and other

documents were giving to the participants before the interview. This was done to allow the participants an opportunity to reflect on their answers prior to the interview, and it was done with the hope that it would possibly ease uncertainties.

Collecting documents and artifacts affords me the benefit of accessing data with minimal disturbance to the daily activities of the people involved. The interpretation of the artifacts relies on the researcher, which can lead to possible misinterpretations; therefore it is a weakness that will have to be accounted for (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) through peer reviews.

Methods for Data Analysis

Data Management

I used a manual data analysis process. I first started by reviewing and exploring the data to identify central ideas. Then I studied the data several times to apply pattern codes and codes from the conceptual framework. The data was placed in categories and I created electronic data summary tables. I studied the data again prior to reporting my findings and prior to interpreting the findings. A data analysis flow chart was developed to help with the organization of the data analysis process (see Figure 3.2).
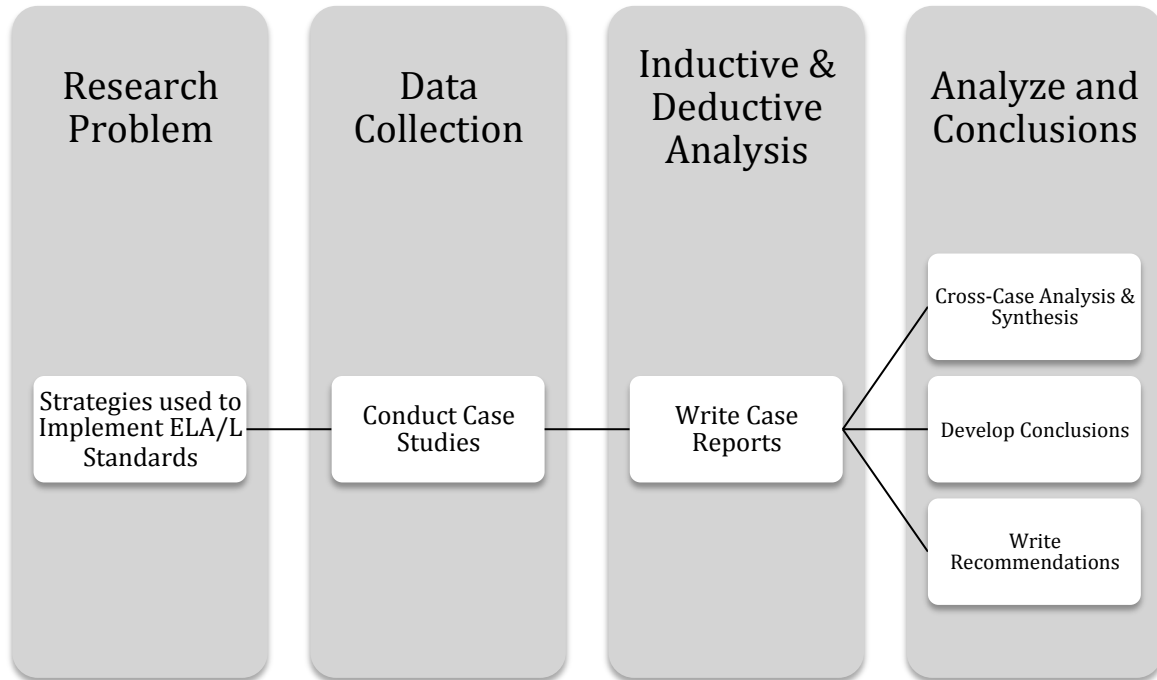
Figure 3.2. Data Analysis Flow Chart

Review and Explore Data

I listened to the digital recordings of the interviews and took memo notes in my research journal on the same day that the data was collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Maxwell, 2005). The memo notes were the first step in the data analysis process. This step permitted an initial review of the data and began the data management process (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, I used the research journal throughout the analysis process. The research journal was used to document the researcher's thoughts and questions regarding the data. The research journal was also used to take memos while coding the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Maxwell, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Inductive Analysis

For the inductive analysis phase, I studied my memo notes, documents and artifacts and re-read the interview transcripts (Bloomberg &Volpe, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This

phase created flexibility in the coding process. The use of the data from the research journal, memo notes and codes from the winnowing process allowed relevant categories and sub-categories to emerge from the data. Thoughts and memo notes were continually recorded in the research journal throughout the study. At this point, pattern coding was used for the second cycle coding to reduce the data during the inductive analysis phase. Pattern coding is the process of applying category labels to the participant statements that bring a better understanding of an organization (Saldaña, 2009, p. 150). Data summary tables (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) were kept to record and analyze this phase. Inter-rater reliability was used to validate this phase of the analysis process.

Deductive Analysis

At this phase in the analysis process, coding was done according to the conceptual framework and the research questions. First, the researcher used the winnowing process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007) to reduce the data to the pre-conceived categories (codes) found in the conceptual framework. Using the conceptual framework also allowed the researcher to use deductive analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) to stay aligned to the research questions when analyzing the data.

A data summary table (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) was used to organize and analyze the data. The researcher used inter-rater reliability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) to have a peer check the coding process used at this point. The research journal continued to be used to record memo notes and document thoughts regarding the data analysis process.

Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case analysis was used to interpret the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Data summary tables were used to analyze the individual data from each site and the group data as a

whole. Data summary tables were used to determine which participants said what and how many times similar statements were made; thus providing descriptions of the emerging themes from each school. This stage of analysis is called within-case analysis (Creswell, 2007). After the within-case analysis was complete, the data from the seven sites will be compared and contrasted for a thematic analysis followed by interpreting the meaning(s) of the multiple-case study for lessons learned (Creswell, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

Identification of Ethical Issues

In planning this study, I knew that I must provide ethical considerations that will inform the participants, ensure confidentiality and protect the participants. Considering that the study is designed to explore the principals' strategies used to facilitate the implementation process of the cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards, some of the participants may have felt:

1. As if they were going to be scrutinized.

2. As if they were going to be evaluated on their leadership skills.

3. That some of their answers may cause them to receive retaliation from their superiors. Furthermore, after the study, the participants need to be able to resume their lives without having been harmed or having a fear that their participation in the study will cause them harm.

To address the identified ethical issues, I remained conscious of how to protect the participants throughout the research design phase and the actual research process. I followed ethical guidelines that kept the participants from harm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). First, the participants were adequately informed about the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Plans were made to introduce the study to the principals in a principals' meeting along with the associate superintendent for secondary education. This allowed the participants to be aware of what their

involvement would entail prior to giving their consent to participate. I also knew that I had to ensure confidentiality, and I had to let the participant know that I would provide confidentiality (Creswell, 2007). Confidentiality provides the participants the assurance that their identity will remain anonymous, thereby, protecting their privacy. Specific to this study, pseudonyms were used; I used a region of the United States instead of naming the actual state; I used my personal password protected computers; and I kept all collected data at my private home office.

Identification of Methods to Ensure Safety

To ensure the safety of the participants, an informed consent was used, thereby providing assurance of confidentiality and protecting them from harm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). An information session was scheduled with the participants to adequately explain the purpose for the study and review what is expected from participants. All of the principals that agreed to participate received an informed consent and participants' rights to review prior to the interview. Additionally, an explanation of methods used to ensure safety and confidentiality for the participants and the schools were stated (Creswell, 2007). Those methods include: (a) the researcher designing a study (including data collection) that protects the participants from harm; (b) naming a region of the United States instead of naming the state; (c) using pseudonyms for the school district, the school names, and the participants; (d) storing collected data on a computer with a passcode; and (e) locking hard copies of data in a file cabinet at the home office of the researcher. Finally, to ensure safety, participants were able to ask questions and gain further clarification on any possible concerns during the introduction session, the data collection sessions, or any time in between.

<p align="center">**Trustworthiness**</p>

In a qualitative, multiple-case study, trustworthiness is a matter of accurately representing

the issues being examined while also protecting the participants from harm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Research studies that are trustworthy have credibility, dependability, and reliability built into the design of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In regards to this study, to show credibility, I stated my opinions toward the implementation of change innovations in public school settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Maxwell, 2005). Another useful method is to utilize multiple data collection sources, which is called triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) or crystallization (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Specific to this study, data was collected through transcriptions from semi-structured interviews, and by gleaning data from multiple documents and artifacts.

Furthermore, trustworthiness was exhibited by using honesty and integrity regardless of the results with the researcher's subjectivity statements (indicating bias on the part of the researcher). This will be supported by employing *writ large,* also known as member checking (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this study, member checking was used to allow the participants to review the preliminary data analysis to see if the researcher has accurately captured the reality of their experiences with implementing the state required instructional shift to disciplinary literacy development (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Finally, peer-debriefing sessions were used to allow fellow researchers to complete an external check of the research process and procedures (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

Lastly, to show dependability and trustworthiness, a research journal was used to record notes for each stage in the research process and to keep an audit trail. An audit trail is a way for the researcher to keep track of the data collection and data interpretation process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). To further demonstrate dependability, peer-debriefing sessions were utilized to

allow fellow researchers to review the data analysis process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Ultimately, the researcher plans to provide a study that is transferable to other settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Therefore, rich and thick descriptions of the data were used so the reader could easily visualize the multiple-case studies and appropriately transfer ideas or processes to their own setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Limitations of the Study

This study contains certain limitations that are common to qualitative research methodology. The limitations related to this study are researcher subjectivity, participant reactivity, and transferability. Consideration has been given on how to minimize the effects of the limitations.

Subjectivity

One person is responsible for analyzing and interpreting the data; therefore the researcher's assumptions, experiences, and interests related to the principals' facilitation of the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards might have an impact on the data analysis process. This is known as the researcher's subjectivity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Maxwell, 2005, Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Due to the nature of the study, it is also likely to have participant reactivity. Participant reactivity is the influence that the researcher has on the participants (Maxwell, 2005). Specific to this study, the participants may have been reluctant to give completely honest and transparent responses for fear that they may be judged if all of their experiences have not been optimal, positive, and progressive. Finally, due to the small sample size, there may be a concern from some readers that the study lacks transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), but the data descriptions are thick, rich, vivid accounts of the

participants' experiences and the context of each case.

Due to the foreseen limitations, the researcher built measures into the design of the study that address the concerns. The researcher will be open and honest with subjectivity statements. When subjectivity statements are known, "they are more manageable and the reader of the final report can assess how those elements of identity affected the study" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 97). To reduce additional biasness, the researcher will allow the participants to review the data and check for accuracy. This is called member checking, and it helps the researcher to stay focused on the participants' point-of-view. Finally, peer-debriefing sessions will have multiple functions. To address subjectivity limitations, these sessions will be used for inter-rater reliability, data review, coding review, and review of the analysis.

Participant Reactivity

To account for the participant reactivity, the informed consent will be thoroughly explained. The participants will be told that pseudonyms will be used for the settings, artifacts, and participants to ensure confidentiality. The participants will also be told that their participation will add to a wealth of knowledge that will be available to help improve the quality of education. This assurance hopefully helped them to feel comfortable with providing an honest disclosure about their experiences.

Transferability

Qualitative research is different from quantitative research. One of the differences is qualitative research tends to have limited sample sizes; therefore, the results may not be seen as generalizable to some readers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Qualitative research methodologies adjust for this through transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). By using rich, detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences related to

facilitating the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards, the reader will be able to understand the concerns thus allowing readers to apply the findings appropriately (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provides a detailed account of this study's research methodology. Qualitative multiple-case study methodology was used to explore the participants' experiences with facilitating the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L instructional standards in seven public middle schools in the southeastern region of the United States. The participant sample included seven principals that were purposefully selected. Two primary data-collection methods were used (semi-structured interviews and collection of documents and artifacts). The data was coded and then reviewed against the conceptual framework and the research questions. Ethical guidelines were considered to ensure the safety of the participants. The research was carried out with honesty and integrity in order to present a trustworthy study. The intent of the study is to contribute to administrative practices related to change innovations in early adolescent literacy development and research in the area of implementing cross-curricular ELA/L standards to early adolescents. The goals of the study are to:

1. Learn how principals are prepared to lead ELA/L innovations for early adolescents.

2. Understand the leadership styles used as the principals guide changes in ELA/L.

3. Understand the strategies that principals use to facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards.

4. Allow the principals' experiences and insights to act as a guide for educational leaders as they facilitate change in the future.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. I believe that this study will provide insight and guidance for educational leaders and principals as they plan for and facilitate implementation of required changes brought on by state and federal policies. The specific change focused on for this study is the implementation of state adopted academic standards in English Language Arts/Literacy. This chapter presents the key findings gathered from seven detailed semi-structured interviews, along with data collected from documents and artifacts representing details related to each participating school and principal. Five major findings emerged from this study:

1. The overwhelming majority of the participants indicated that they were unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

2. All seven participants indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

3. The overwhelming majority of the participants indicated that they are applying leadership styles that are applicable to change.

4. All seven participants indicated that they are using strategies for change.

5. A little over half of the participants perceive the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as not effective; the other participants perceived the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as somewhat effective.

Following is a discussion of the specifics that support and expound on each finding. By using rich descriptions (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014) the researcher documents the participants' experiences, and provides a way for the reader to enter into this study and better know the experiences of the research participants. The focus throughout is to let the participants speak for themselves. Revealing quotations taken from the interview transcripts and documents attempt to illustrate multiple participant perspectives and acquire some of the richness of the subject matter. Following is an account of each participant's perspective followed by a summary of the overall findings for the district.

Participant One

Participant One is a male principal. His highest level of education is a doctorate (Ed. D.) in Education Administration. He also has a Bachelors Degree in Political Science and a Masters Degree in Education Administration. He has twenty-one years of experience as an educator (sevens years as a teacher, eight years as an assistant principal, and six years as a principal). He is certified in History, Building Level Administration, and District Level Administration.

School one is a new school that first opened for the 2016-17 school year. School one has approximately 450 students in grades six and seven. 52 percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch and the majority of the students scored at or above expectations on the state accountability assessment (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

School 1	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	69%	64%	85%	54%	67%	57%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	31%	36%	15%	46%	33%	43%

Finding 1: Participant One indicated that he was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant One said that he had to teach himself about writing across the curriculum because he did not receive any training from the state or district. He said:

> Really, most of my training, to be totally honest with you, is I've not had any from the school district. But that's not a problem. I mean, I can get there very quickly. …I've had a lot of interaction in some PD [professional development] in my last district with DBQs [document based questions], and working with the Social Studies Department about bringing their writing up and helping out.

Finding 2: Participant One indicated that he is addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

Participant One thinks that it is important for early adolescents to receive literacy instruction in every class. He said for a middle school setting, he envisions literacy instruction as something that is taught in every class:

> I think literacy needs to be taught in every classroom. I think that students need to be able to explain in written expression everything that they're doing in every classroom. In the math, I know that obviously in No Child Left Behind and the tests that we take, students have to explain their work, but they should be able to explain their work anyways, whether it's a national norm-referenced test or not… But now in middle school, I'm able to hopefully mold the students to get ready for that college and career readiness. So

students, whether they're a welder who makes a lot more money than we do as educators, they still have to be able to read a manual. They still have to write and explain what they are going to do to a homeowner if they're building a house. So I think it's very, very important that they do everything across the board.

School One has interdisciplinary teams and shared governance according to the 2016-17 comprehensive plan. The plan states:

- A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

- Teachers are organized into grade-level, grade-level cluster, or subject-area Instructional Teams.

- Instructional Teams meet for blocks of time (4 to 6 hour blocks, once a month; whole days before and after the school year) sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.

- Instructional teams meet three times per week to develop instructional units and review student learning data.

- Teams have the option of meeting additionally as needed.

- A Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting).

- Finally, the 2016-17 Curriculum Catalogue states that distressed readers have the opportunity to take a Read 180 class, nevertheless, there is no evidence of ongoing literacy instruction.

Finding 3: Participant One indicated that he is applying a leadership style that is applicable to change.

When I asked Participant One about the leadership style that he uses to facilitate change, he said that he seeks to have teacher buy-in and he wants to provide the teachers with an equal voice. Participant One also said that he uses a servant leadership style. He stated:

> I'm a firm believer. I prescribe to Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership. I believe that I am a resource... I think I must be very supportive. But by golly, we set the tone... these are my standards for myself, and if I have high standards and high expectations, I think teachers follow along... I'm a firm believer, as a leader, you have to have teacher buy-in. Now, we might agree to disagree on some situations, and I'll be the one who finally makes that decision, but pretty much every major decision that comes across, I talk with the [teachers]... We're continually talking and continually bouncing ideas off of each other. Yes, I do have a doctorate in educational administration, but that doesn't mean anything. It does not mean that I have all the answers. I've got professionals in this building that are true professionals, and they have better ideas than I do, and I respect them, and I want to listen to them. So that's kind of how we run here as far as leadership goes, is everybody has an equal voice when we're in a meeting.

Finding 4: Participant One indicated that he is using some strategies for change.

Participant One provided strategies that he is using for change. On his Critical Incidents Form, he stated that he provided a professional development in July that included training on literacy across the curriculum. In August, he provided professional development on common formative assessments and summative assessments and that training including writing components. He also listed on the Critical Incidents Form that his school uses a writing program.

Participant One went on to say that his school decided to write their own curriculum maps because the district curriculum maps were hard to follow. He said:

> ...the curriculum guide is not done, social studies is okay, math is still kind of out there. So our curriculum maps as a district are all over the place. They're not finished works. And I understood that, and it was a real struggle. So that's why we decided to say, 'Look, we're going to develop our own,' and if I get my hand slapped, I get my hand slapped. But we know here are our standards. We're going to follow those standards. We're going to follow the key concepts within those maps that are finished, but we're going to fill in

those gaps… everyone is going to interact with literacy, everything that you do. So we're going to have writing assignments in every class.

Finding 5: Participant One perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as somewhat effective.

Participant One perceives his school's implementation process as somewhat effective. He states that his teachers are onboard and ready to implement the new standards. Participant One goes on to say that his challenge is his young teachers and the fact that 50 percent of his students read below grade level. He said:

> As far as a school… I've got a great faculty that has buy-in to what we're doing. They do, and they love being here, and they love our children… So that's where the preparation for change-- as a leader, I don't have to take a bullet or get out there and fight fights. Say, 'Guys, I believe in this. What do you think? Are there any holes in this program, as far as Writing Across the Curriculum or Step Up to Writing? What is it, and how do we fix those?' And they know that they have a voice, so that's the easy part of it. That's where it's really not a difficult component as far as change goes, because that's where our strength is. We're all on board.

Participant One went on to say, in regards to change in the curriculum frameworks, that his school has some concerns that they have to address:

> …you're dealing with some young teachers who were just fresh out of college. They're great, but they're young, they're green, and they're just trying to get a grasp of their own curriculum. So you want to spoon-feed them. So those are the challenges. We had challenges. We have students here reading at the third-grade level. And we're having pullouts with our facilitators, but yes, we've got challenges. We're not the perception out there that we're this country club that has steak and lobster everyday. We're 50-50. And then we've got, like I said, some really top-notch students. But we've got some students that have some holes, and we believe in teaching the holistic child, and we're going to get them exactly where they need to be. So yes, we've got some issues.

Participant Two

Participant two is a male principal. He has a Masters degree in Educational Administration and a Bachelors Degree in Political Science with a minor in Pre-Law. Prior to

becoming a principal, participant two worked as an elementary and middle school teacher, an

instructional coach and an assistant principal. Participant two has approximately twenty years of

experience in the field of education.

School two has roughly 800 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 53 percent of

the students received free or reduced lunch. The principal said the school demographics are

changing. Consequently, the scores on the state accountability assessment are lower than what

the staff has been use to (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Assessment Data for School Two

School 2	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	55%	49%	71%	45%	44%	42%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	45%	51%	29%	55%	56%	58%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	45%	49%	76%	44%	35%	46%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	55%	51%	24%	56%	65%	54%

Finding 1: Participant two indicated that he was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant two indicated that he received some training on disciplinary literacy. He said that the district training was minimal therefore he had to seek out his own training through book studies:

> There has been no state training. There have been a few district trainings that I've attended as a principal. Those district trainings were surface level at best. They didn't go deeply into what disciplinary literacy looks like fundamentally in the different content areas. Collaboration of reading materials have probably composed the greatest introduction and understanding of disciplinary literacy to me. And as I collaborate with the experts, with the teachers in their classroom, with the facilitators, or those people who've implemented disciplinary literacy before on a district level, then I begin to learn more about it… I don't think that, from my standpoint, I don't think administrators in the district have received adequate training in disciplinary literacy. I think that the training we received has kind of been surface level.

Finding 2: Participant two indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

Participant two shared that he thinks that literacy in all content areas is critical for the middle school setting. He said:

> Well, first of all, I think it's critical. Because what we encounter most oftentimes in the middle school setting, particularly in the content areas of social studies and science, is that while students may have the ability to read and comprehend to an extent with the English, with the literacy itself, they don't necessarily have the skills to do so in the content areas of science and social studies. Or for that matter, CTE [career technical education] or any other courses that they may be involved in. And so it's very important and very incumbent upon us to make certain we model, and teach those skills to all students on how to read and comprehend in those content areas. As well as how to learn, how to read for information. So it's critical to our efforts here at this particular school.

In addition to prioritizing literacy in all content areas, school number two offers a Read 180 class for distressed readers (2015-16 and 2016-17 District Course Catalogue) and the

number of students that need the class is increasing. Participant Two shared that his school is

going through a demographic evolution:

> As far as the school is concerned, and this may be a little bit transparent, but you can do
> what you want with it. This school is going through probably a demographic evolution.
> And as we begin to get more students in who are not as prepared for middle school as
> traditionally this school has gotten, then the teachers, the administrators, everyone
> involved in the school, has to make somewhat of an adjustment.

To address the demographic evolution, Participant Two shared that his staff has to make

adjustments to meet the students' needs:

> It doesn't mean that you have to lower your standards. It doesn't mean that you have to
> have a change in the culture of the school or the climate of the school. But what it does
> require you to do is meet those kids at the point of their needs. So as we begin to get
> more kids in that are not as high level as the school has normally gotten, and there's
> several reasons for that outside. Our main competitions will be charter schools, will be
> private schools, and then this area in terms of middle age kids, it's the older area now. So
> the demographics in terms of our base has kind of gone down just a little bit. So we're
> going to be getting kids from other areas who don't necessarily have the values, or the
> preparation, or have not been in a school with a culture where the climate was about
> teaching and learning.

Participant Two suggested a response to the change in demographics:

> So the staff has to position itself to not be nostalgic, but to be willing to evolve, not only
> in terms of their thinking about who they're teaching, and that's the key. Thinking about
> who they're teaching. But most importantly, what their approach to teaching is as the
> demographics of the school goes through a shift.

Furthermore, School Two has incorporated shared governance and interdisciplinary teams in

order to meet the needs of early adolescents at School Two. The 2015-2016 and 2016-2017

Comprehensive Plan shared the following:

- A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

- Teams exist or have been created to include Academic Leadership Team, Building Leadership Team, Grade-Level and Departmental Teams, Principal/School Improve Spec. [Special] Team, District Leadership Team…

- Instructional Teams meet for blocks of time (4 to 6 hour blocks, once a month; whole days before and after the school year) sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data…

- All English collaborative teams will incorporate Disciplinary Literacy into collaborative planning…

Finding 3: Participant Two indicated that he is applying leadership styles that are applicable to change.

Participant Two indicated that he has a collaborative style of leadership. He includes the faculty in his decision-making process and he believes in two-way communication. He said:

> I believe in collaborating with my colleagues. I don't make absolute decisions by myself unless I just necessarily have to… Because the teachers are the experts. The teachers are the ones on the front line. We also have, in this district, instructional facilitators in math and literacy. So I listen to a lot of people. And together we formulate an idea about what our action plan should be and what directions we should go on with regards to any decisions that we make. Not just pertaining to literacy across the curriculum, but any instructional decision that we make, we do so as a team.

Finding 4: Participant Two indicated he is using some strategies for change.

Participant two indicated that he has strategies that he uses for change. He has a format for shared governance through the school leadership team. He also supports collaboration; he uses data and has provided some professional development. When asked what strategies he uses to facilitate change, he said:

> Well, the first strategy is to develop the vision. Develop the mission. Articulate that vision and that mission in a manner that will encourage others or inspire others to buy into what the vision is. Then you develop your action steps, your plans. How are we

going to get where we want to be? And that involves collaboration with the colleagues who have bought into the vision. So again, it's about being able to articulate the position or the status that you think the school should be at. And then to get other people who could make it happen for you or give you some type of advice as to how it can be facilitated. So bringing everybody together, all stakeholders together, the parents, students, teachers, facilitators, counselor. Everyone has a say so in terms of how we move towards the vision that we have collectively adopted.

Participant Two went on to say that he monitors the implementation of disciplinary literacy through collaborative participation:

On the front end, we monitor it through collaborative participation. There are four administrators. We have four content core subject areas, and each of us participates in those collaborative sessions with those teachers. And so we get the opportunity to participate as the teachers interpret and dissect their curriculum, and as they develop those activities and the assessments that the students are going to be involved in. So we get the opportunity to monitor whether or not the disciplinary literacy piece is being put in place in the planning stages, and we document that.

Participant Two also monitors implementation through observations in the classroom:

Secondly, as we visit our classrooms through our classroom walkthroughs, through our drop-ins, informal evaluations, formal evaluations, we, again, are able to monitor whether or not the teachers are implementing what they planned in their lesson. And whether or not the implementation is having any type of effect, if it's been successful for a great number of students.

After observing in the classrooms, Participant Two follows up with the teachers with additional collaboration:

Then back in collaboration, we're able to monitor how the teachers plan for the next steps for that group of students who may have not been responsive to the instruction, may have not experienced some success with the instruction. What are the next steps for you as a teacher as it pertains to disciplinary literacy or anything else for that matter? So we involve ourselves as instructional leaders throughout the entire process.

Finally, Participant Two the following strategies are included in School Two's comprehensive plan (2015-16 and 2016-17):

1. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

2. The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly.

3. Using the data from the classroom observation summaries, instructional facilitators will provide, design, assist in providing teachers PD [professional development] opportunities through collaborative meetings and one-on-one assistance. Collaborative meeting forms will serve as documentation.

4. All grade level core subject teachers will participate in a book study *Disciplinary Literacy*. Collaborative meeting forms will serve as documentation.

5. The school monitors progress of the extended learning time program and other strategies related to school improvement.

Finding 5: Participant Two perceived the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as somewhat effective.

Participant Two stated that his school has not received any training from the state, but the school's literacy facilitator has been proactive in providing training for the teachers. He said:

> …they [teachers] have not received state training. They have received district training. The PLCs [professional learning communities] have probably been the most informative for the teachers because, again, we had our literacy facilitator. And we also had another individual to assist her with that in introducing disciplinary literacy concept for a specific content area. And that was key for us.

Participant Two went on to explain the training process:

> Because the way we designed our PLCs is that we had our collaborative teams to come down. So we had same subject, same grade level content area teachers, who visited with the literacy facilitator and another support person from downtown. And then they were able to involve themselves with materials that were specific to that content. And they were able to model to those teachers. This is how disciplinary literacy would look in science. This is how disciplinary literacy would look in social studies or math. So that has been the greatest training that my teachers, I think, have been involved in. And when I see examples of disciplinary literacy in the classroom, I'm seeing examples of what they were exposed to in those PLCs.

In spite of not receiving follow-up professional development sessions from the state or the district, Participant Two shared that the teachers continue to follow-up and collaborate through their own initiative:

> The collaborations are also very key for us because three times a week those teachers get an opportunity to interpret or dissect a curriculum. And then determine those activities that they're going to involve their students with to teach the curriculum. And in doing that, there's always a reading component. There's always a disciplinary literacy component. And the reading materials that the teachers have been involved in are pretty much the same ones I have. You can only gain so much from that. You have to really see how it's done in your specific content area in order to then go to the classroom and implement it with any type of fidelity… We've not received any follow-up sessions from the state or the district. But we have provided follow-up sessions for our staff through our literacy department.

Participant Two continued by stating that some of the teachers are implementing the ELA/L standards with fidelity and some of the teachers have a grudgingly approach. He said:

> Well, honestly this is a teacher-by-teacher thing. It really is. There are some teachers who are doing it with fidelity. They plan for it. They indicate that I'm going to – the teacher will model. The teacher will present. The teacher will be actively involved. And demonstrating to students how to read within a content area. But I do still see teachers who will rely on the way they were taught or who, quite frankly, just won't do what their students need them to do. And they're still saying, read this. Fully understanding that many of the students that they're teaching are two or three years below the text that they're studying. So that's irritating because we're setting kids up for failure when we do that… The implementation of it is not 100%. There are some teachers who do it, again, with fidelity and some teachers who do it grudgingly. So, again, this is a process that we're evolving in.

Finally, Participant Two went on to elaborate on his thoughts regarding the preparation for teachers at his school and in the district as a whole. He said:

> I'm not comfortable that, or convinced that all of the teachers in this building or this district really understand Common Core. I don't think that we ever received adequate training on Common Core. I think that we were provided with the Common core curriculum and said go do it. I don't think that anybody has ever explained to teachers, or administrators, or districts for that matter, with the new standards that you are now adopting, the requirement is for you to teach differently as well. So essentially what I feel

we have done, is I feel as though we've adopted Common Core standards, but we've not changed the way we instruct kids. So we're still instruction kids operating under the original, the former curriculum that we already designed. I think that our teachers need more training and understanding on the rationale for Common Core, number one, and how Common Core instruction looks inside each individual classroom. That is what they need to see.

Participant Three

Participant Three is a female principal. She has an Ed. D. in Education Leadership. She also has Bachelors Degree in Elementary Education and a Masters Degree in Education Leadership. She has a total of twenty-eight years of experience in the field of education. She has worked as an elementary teacher, an elementary assistant principal, and an elementary principal, an instructional facilitator and as a middle school principal.

School three has approximately 600 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 44 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch and the majority of the students scored at or above expectations on the state accountability assessment (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Assessment Data for School Three

School 3	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	71%	69%	87%	41%	54%	62%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	29%	31%	13%	59%	46%	38%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	70%	64%	88%	57%	41%	59%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	30%	36%	12%	43%	59%	41%

Finding 1: Participant Three indicated that she was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant Three indicated that she has only had one professional development on literacy. When I asked her what types of preparation or professional development she has had in regards to disciplinary literacy or writing across the curriculum for early adolescents, she said:

> I would say that for the district as a whole, we're doing it in administrative meetings. The head of the literacy department met with us, basically, to discuss the literacy at the elementary and at the middle school level as an overview of what the district looks like. And we know which books we use for content. We're able to go on the website and to look across reading assignments… But we also find that it's kind of open at the middle school level about due dates on certain things, more of a pacing guide. But other than that, I've had one literacy PD this year.

As for PD for her teachers, Participant Three said that the literacy coach (site based instructional facilitator) trains the teachers and provides information on what's to come to the leadership team. She said:

> My literacy coach is able to attend the coaching sessions. She actually comes back and trains the teachers on what's expected, whether it's with how literacy is changing or spelling words. But she actually comes back and facilitates the professional development with our staff at our monthly meetings. During our leadership team meetings, she's able to share with the leadership team about what's to come, or what strategies or what we're adding to the curriculum. And she's able to go in and to help teachers implement those processes in the classroom.

Participant Three also stated that she has not received any meaningful follow-up sessions to the one PD that she attended. She stated:

> I have not received any follow-up sessions, not at the district level. No. I basically communicate with my literacy coach, or I call if I have a question, but as far as receiving administrators and district PD, no. We've had that one. Just during our principals' meeting, but that's about it.

Finding 2: Participant Three indicated that she is addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

When I asked Participant Three about her vision for literacy instruction in the middle school setting, she said:

> First of all, we work with our teachers to make sure that when they're teaching the literacy instruction and framework, they're looking, first of all, at a background approach to learning. They are assessing students… with the pre-assessment and then post-assessment along with the common formative assessment to make sure that we have our students grouped in the right placement or in the proper regular English class or pre-AP English class at the middle school setting. And then we also look at different strategies that the teachers implement, let's say, for well-rounded learning of all the students

Participant Three also believes that early adolescents must have authentic, real world experiences when learning. She said:

> I think that learning is a flexible process. I believe that in order for it to be effective, we have to be authentic and have real world experiences in the process, because we have to make sure that the students are being prepared for the 21st century away from pencil and paper. So I believe whatever unit of instruction that you're teaching a student, you should be able to bring that learning, and it'd be challenging and give students authentic chances to perform. Because I believe that it helps them remember the process better when you make it real for them, when you're doing your lessons, and then when you're implementing the lessons in the classroom. So we do a lot of real world learning here.

Participant Three did not give any indication of providing ongoing ELA/L development; nevertheless, school three has a Read 180 class for distressed readers (2016-17 Curriculum Catalogue). Participant Three also stated that they look at students' performance and provide interventions for students that are not performing. She said:

> I will continue to look at students' performance. Every five weeks, I pull up grades. The leadership team meets. We look at students that are not performing. The counselors have sessions with those students. We highlight them, and we meet with those students to try to see if it's something that we're missing or not missing. And then as a team, we know as administrators, Okay, these are the students that we need to keep an eye on. And our teachers have meetings with the students… and then we continue to monitor those

students that are not performing, and we're able to monitor their progress closely and to look at grades.

Participant Three said that literacy instruction occurs in all of the content areas. She said:

It's (referring to literacy instruction) shared across the content areas. The English teachers have a curriculum as the other teachers have for their core subject areas. But when we do that integration and effective questionings and writing and prompts, I think that gets into that disciplinary literacy. But it comes to play in all subject areas. However, the English teacher is responsible for implementing the Common Core, but their writing approach and some of those skills are shared among our grade levels. For instance, I know we have a math teacher that's studying some terminology in math, and the students are having difficulty in writing and spelling and in finding that information. So during collaboration time, she was able to collaborate with the English teacher… So she [English teacher] was able to set up writing in her English lesson using some math terminology to reinforce the learning that they were giving in the math classroom. So we have to be strategic in our school setting to make sure the needs are met across the curriculum. So each teacher, they are responsible for their core content areas, … it's all of our responsibilities to implement it.

Participant Three's Comprehensive Plan (2015-16 and 2016-17) indicated that her school has shared governance and interdisciplinary teams. The plan states that:

- A leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff, meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting.

- The 2016-17 Comprehensive Plan adds the following statement: Using the available data, leadership will determine next steps in technical support for individual and groups of teachers and students in terms of professional development and remediation efforts.

- A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

Lastly, Participant Three states that her teachers use collaboration:

My teachers collaborate. They actually have a built-in schedule. My teachers have a prep time. Then they have a team time. And then they have 45 minutes of just collaboration in their schedule every day. So they're able to collaborate at the middle level vertically and

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horizontally across the curriculum… they're able to meet and work on the curriculum and discuss standards and call the district personnel if they need to.

Finding 3: Participant Three indicated that she is applying a leadership style that is applicable to change.

Participant Three said that she is a transformational leader. She stated:

As far as education and instruction, I am a transformation leader. I believe in change. I believe that we have to differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of our students. No teacher is the same. No classroom is the same. I believe we have to monitor the process. I'm a data-driven principal. I believe in data. We cannot meet unless there is data to speak about because I believe that in order for us to meet the needs of students, we're looking for growth… whether it's a new teacher, a veteran teacher, I have to adjust my approach in working with them to make sure that we're all on the same page… So I am a transformation leader, and I believe that we have to change in the classroom, as a teacher, to meet the needs of the students. And I have to change as a leader to make sure that my faculty and teachers are getting those resources and professional development that they need to enhance the learning process in the classroom.

Finding 4: Participant Three indicated that she is using some strategies for change.

Participant Three indicated that she is using some strategies for change. She stated that she is a transformational leader. She provides professional development based on the needs of the teachers in the form of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She uses collaboration, data, shared governance, and she has an afterschool-tutoring program. When asked about the strategies that she use for change, she said:

Well, first of all, I'll begin with PLCs, Professional Learning Communities. We have four scheduled this year… we meet in sessions with teachers for 45 minutes by their grade level during the PLC process… We do a climate survey. And then we also have a literacy and math coach that goes in, and then we meet with them as a team, and we design our PLCs based upon the needs of the school and the teachers. What we have found is those meetings are very comprehensive. And the teachers are able to collaborate and to obtain feedback from one another, and we actually have the time to sit down and look at the data that they have from their assessments.

Participant Three went on to say:

I believe that teachers have to monitor learning on every student in the classroom, whether they do small group instruction, or they're pulling students in. Our teachers do give up a lot of time during their lunch, and they work with students before and after school. But I believe that data drives instruction. It has to be meaningful. We do not collect data just because it's numbers, but it's meaningful data. And we use that data to drive our instruction, decision-making.

Finding 5: Participant Three perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as not effective.

Participant Three perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as not effective. She feels like her and her staff have not received enough information to implement disciplinary literacy with fidelity. She said that the teachers are flying solo and she has no way of knowing if what they are doing is right or wrong. Participant Three also said that the district and schools need more support from the state's department of education. She stated:

I would say, with the Common Core and the implementation of the disciplinary literacy approach, I would say we need more conversations around literacy. We often hear that students are not performing well on the state assessments, but what are we doing? That would be my question. What are you offering the schools and the district as a support, that's ongoing deeply embedded training to focus on the content areas for literacy to make sure that we're integrating the process? …So to me, there's a gap that's not closed because we constantly say every year, well, performance is dropping, or we moved up a little. We have 5 percent. But what are we doing actually at the state level, to make sure that at the district level, we have those processes in place where it's understood, and it is embedded, it is a practice for us to implement… But as far as implementation of the new strategies, I think that, as a state, once again, we need to look at, what does that implementation of disciplinary literacy actually look like in a classroom? We have the research. We have the reports. But what's the requirement at the district level when you assign a district literacy department? Where is the focus to work with principals in the schools? We used to do walkthroughs. Those don't occur anymore. We've gotten away from that with district personnel. So we're just working on a day-to-day basis and hoping that we're implementing things correctly.

Participant Three went on to say:

Basically, the communication, I feel, from the district level, our teachers do collaborate a lot. But sometimes, I really feel like, especially at the middle level, they're flying solo. They're pulling what's available on the website, but that communication—we're able to

get information about writing across the curriculum from our social studies department, but that literacy piece integration at that level, I feel that the teachers work closely together, and with their colleagues and at the schools, to make it what it is today and that's by them collaborating and working among themselves… I'm not quite sure if we are at a place to where they-- no, I'll speak for my teachers. There's not a clear focus for them on, oh, what do we do? We read a novel. This is what we can do with this learning. So if the teacher's not creative enough to make the school come alive within reading, those strategies, it could be a downfall for a classroom because that support—we can call and have people to come over, but being as large of a district as we are, I feel that the teachers learn from each other, and they depend on each other for that support. As far as training in the schools, I just think that we're too broad spread and the teachers are not really getting the reinforcement that they need across the literacy curriculum overall. And I think that our test scores show that across the district and the grade levels, that that's an area that we've really got to work on. Even within our professional development sessions-- I really believe we need a strategic action plan for our teachers to follow other than just the monthly PD that they get, that they can attend to get a better hands-on learning approach for them… I just believe that as we continue to prepare our teachers and students for learning, to become real, to become authentic, to be a focus practice, we have to continue to prepare our teachers with a proper professional development that's monitored, that's assessed.

Finally, Participant Three said that they need more support at the district level so they are not in a position of making "fly-by decisions." She said:

I feel that we need that support at the district level even though we cover the curriculum. This is what the standard says. We're not able to get the feedback we need. Okay, what does that really look like in a classroom setting? What does that look like for my teacher? How do I know this is a disciplinary approach that's going on in this classroom? That's the support that's needed. The visits to the teachers—I know as administrators we have to be on task to know what the Common Core standards are. But if we did not get the disciplinary literacy training or make an attempt to go to some of the professional developments, we're at a loss, because it's too broad for someone to come out and to visit the classrooms.

Participant Three said that she could call district personnel to assist when they have specific problems, but she also thinks that is not enough:

We have had district personnel to come out to assist when we've had concerns in a classroom, to say, are you seeing what I'm seeing and then what support can you offer? Although it's short-term support, like I said, because the district is so broad, but what does this disciplinary literacy really look like in our school? And if I've ever had anyone at the district level to come in to say, oh, they're really implementing that, there is no

evaluative piece of support umbrella as a district to say how we're really implementing the process of that literacy curriculum. And I can't personally say—I feel as though we're doing it well, because we're trying to provide everything that we know from the Common Core standards, and best practices, and strategies, as a school family to make sure they're implemented, focused, reading everything on the district websites, getting expertise from others.

Ultimately, Participant Three feels like her and her teachers could have benefited from observing and collaborating with a model school or a model teacher:

Because Common Core has set in, and we've got to change the way we do things. I can only say that the results from the district formative assessment shows our strengths in that area, and so I currently say I feel like we're doing things well based upon that assessment. But as far as modeling to make sure that we're on task, there's no data at the district level that I've seen that supports how well it's working as a district. It's just kind of like a fly-by decision. But I would love to see or have a model school or model teacher to know if there is someone in the district that I could send a teacher to. But I have not heard of such; I haven't been provided such information.

Participant Four

Participant Four is a female principal. Her highest level of education is an Educational Specialist degree (Ed. S.) in Education Leadership. She also has a Bachelors Degree in Education and a Masters Degree in Administration. She has a total of thirty years of experience as an administrator. She has also worked as a special education teacher, and an assistant principal.

School four has approximately 570 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 93 percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch and the majority of the students scored below expectations on the state accountability assessment (see Table 10).

Table 4.4

Assessment Data for School Four

School 4	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	29%	17%	45%	18%	28%	16%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	71%	83%	55%	82%	72%	84%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	23%	16%	41%	20%	15%	11%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	77%	84%	59%	80%	85%	89%

Finding 1: Participant Four indicated that she was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant Four indicated that she was willing to lead the change with the cross-curricular ELA/L standards for early adolescents, but she feels she did not receive adequate training and support to facilitate the process with fidelity. Therefore, she feels like they had to rely on themselves. She expressed her unpreparedness in the following ways:

> Whenever professional development is offered, especially when it comes to disciplinary literacy, I always try to stay abreast of whatever the latest research is on it. But for one thing, I don't want to overwhelm the teachers. It always seems to be something new coming out. So, in order not to overwhelm them, I try to stay one up on them and working with my literacy coach and my department chairs. So that if we are to implement something new, it's to work with what we already have so that they [the teachers] don't feel that we're adding one more new thing… But let's figure out how we're going to use disciplinary literacy to get to the goals that we want for our kids… And now that our district—we keep cutting back on people, so we don't necessarily have the department

chair of literacy like we've had before. So we rely more on ourselves. We look at our weaknesses and strengths and data.

Participant Four went on to say that another challenge is the teachers' knowledge level. Stating:

Teachers are reluctant, because I think they don't feel knowledgeable enough to do it. What are the steps to teach writing? So I think that's a challenge. They just don't feel adequate. Lack of skills on the teacher's part.

She went on to say that the district leaders for social studies and literacy come to the school to provide step up to writing training.

Finding 2: Participant Four indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents sporadically.

When asked about her vision for literacy instruction in the middle school setting, she said:

Of course, our students are reading at 3rd-4th grade level… So it's difficult to separate it. They've got to read. They've got to write. So we've got to do it simultaneously, and that being said they've got to write in every content: PE and of course is being done in social studies and in English. But we are beginning to teach reading again at the middle-school level. We've got Read 180 and Math 180. In Read 180 it has a very strong writing component to it, while it is also teaching our kids some of the very basic components to reading, a phonics-based for the students that need it. So it's just ingrained in part of all of the contents, but it has to be taught. They cannot be left to just get it. It has to be taught. It has to be taught. It has to be taught with steps. And it has to be taught pretty much the same way in all the classrooms, so they're not learning something different from each teacher.

Participant Four has help for distressed readers, as indicated, in the form of Read 180 but she does not have ongoing development of ELA/L skills. She said:

Kids, students that are still not on grade level in middle school, they all still need reading instruction. They all need it. All of them. How can we send them to high school reading on the third and fourth grade level? Can they have literacy, English? Yes. But they got to still have reading. Give them reading still. You might have to take another elective away, add another elective, give them that and some. Just let them still read. Have a reading course for them at the middle level…

Participant Four also shared that if her students do not get continued literacy development, they may drop out of school:

> I just think that if they go to high school not reading and there's no success, chances are, if they get a chance, they're going to drop out of school… No success, they're going to drop out. And we have failed them. And I say, We. We have to own it, because I think if their parents knew how, they would. They would teach them. They don't know how. They're leaving it up to us. So I just think they need reading sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. So what kind of job are they going to do? What kind of college are they going to go to? What kind of school? They can't write. Look at the writing. When I get kids to write a statement, and I'm thinking they're in the eighth grade. If they go to high school, we're sending them there. Who did this? Who did this? We did. Writing has to be taught… But it's such a disservice, isn't it? Such a disservice. And there's a difference in like to read and can't read. Why would you go to school when you can't read? Why? And you got all these books in your face—

Plus the comprehensive school plan states that the school has interdisciplinary teams but it is not as effective as it could be:

- Collaboration and teaming schedules have been developed. Standing agenda items were developed and revised to guide teams in efficiently and effectively analyzing and measuring the goals outlined by the data. Data is looked at, but needs to be used more effectively by all teams to plan lessons, differentiate, design intervention strategies and guide professional development.

- There is a Leadership Team in place.

- There were no indicators of ongoing ELA/L development; and literacy is addressed more so in the English and Social Studies classes, than in math and science.

Finding 3: Participant Four indicated that she is sporadically applying a leadership style that is applicable to change.

> When asked what leadership style she uses to facilitate change, she said:

> I'm certainly not a dictator. I'd like to involve my teachers in the collaborative approach and decisions that will involve the people that will have to implement. So I think I'm pretty good about bringing out the best in the people that I lead, so I think that my

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leadership style tends to be one that I can bring out the best in the people that I'm… I'm a facilitator.

Later in her interview, she went on to say that she is only able to sporadically be the change agent that she wants to be due to other responsibilities. She said:

> People outside of the school, they really don't want to hear the truth. Because then they say you whine and complain, but it's the truth… The truth is the things that we try to do to keep our school from being in the paper, discipline. And that's just a piece of it. The needs of our kids, legitimate needs, basic needs. Parents and their needs, teachers and their needs. And sometimes when there is a normal day, it's normal, but I haven't planned for normal. And then I've got to shift my mind for normal, because I haven't planned for normal. So now I've got a normal day and I've got to get a plan for normal. And then I have to go and do observations and try to get normal in my head, because normal hasn't been there. So I go try to figure out what normal is. Because there are ways of normal days, but normally they're abnormal days. And I'm thankful for normal days, but they're rare.

Finding 4: Participant Four indicated that she is using some strategies for change.

Participant Four provided strategies that she is using for change but the strategies are only used episodically. On her Critical Incidents Form, she stated:

- The Instructional Facilitators met with all core (English, Math, Science and Social Studies) teachers to guide them through the writing across the curriculum process.

- She has a leadership team that can plan for the change and communicate the information back to the team members.

As the facilitator of change, Participant Four wants to "spend 50 percent of her time working directly with teachers to improve instruction, including classroom observations" but due to "too many mandatory meetings and administrative duties" this only occurs "35-40 percent" of the time (2016-17 & 2015-16 Comprehensive Plan). Participant Four's comprehensive plan states that "the principal challenges and monitors unsound teaching practices and supports the

correction of them" but due to "too many mandatory meetings and administrative duties" this only occurs "35-40 percent" of the time (2016-17 & 2015-16 Comprehensive Plan).

In regards to using data, the 2016-17 & 2015-16 Comprehensive Plan states "data is looked at, but needs to be used more effectively by all teams to plan lessons, differentiate, design intervention strategies and guide professional development." In regards to professional development, Participant Four did not receive any formal training from the state department of education or from the school district central office personnel. Nevertheless, Participant Four shared that the teachers did receive some training "from the district office our social studies and the literacy instructional facilitators… the social studies coordinator and the literacy coordinator. They both come out and provide the step up to writing training.

Finding 5: Participant Four perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as not effective.

Participant Four states that her and her teachers need assistance in breaking down the ELA/L standards and she needs help on how to teach the standards to students who are reading below grade level. She said:

> Sometimes, the common core standards are broad. And I think they're broad, teachers sometime tend to want to build their own thing. And you can't really do your own thing when they're going to be tested on a specific standard. So I think we need help in those broad Common Core Standards. How do I teach that to students who's reading level is really, really low? But I've got to teach them how to write to the standard. So you can't read, but you're going to have to write to a standard. So how do I have the content where it's interesting? But you're reading down here and you've got to read and think up here, and write. So we struggle with that.

Participant Five

Participant five is a male principal. His highest level of education is a Masters Degree in Education Administration. He also has a Masters Degree in the Art of Teaching and he has a

Bachelors Degree in Middle Level Math and Science. Participant five has worked as a math teacher, an instructional facilitator, as an assistant principal and as a principal.

School five has approximately 700 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 84 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch and the majority of the students scored below expectations on the state accountability assessment (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Assessment Data for School Five

School 5	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	32%	18%	53%	23%	24%	15%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	68%	82%	47%	77%	76%	85%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	24%	18%	46%	22%	12%	13%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	76%	82%	54%	78%	88%	87%

Finding 1: Participant Five indicated that he was somewhat prepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant Five indicated that he was somewhat prepared to facilitate the implementation of the new ELA/L standards. He said that he received his training by participating in the trainings provided for the teachers. Participant Five also said that he and his teachers received meaningful follow-up sessions from the district level social studies specialist. He stated:

The preparation I received is being in the PD with the teachers. If you're not in the PD with the teachers, then why would they think it's anymore important than you think? So your visibility is very important. You need to be in the PD as well. If you're not in the PD, then you don't know what to observe or what you're looking for as well, so you need to be going through the – the principal needs to be going through the training as well.

When I asked Participant Five about the preparation that the teachers received so they could implement the new ELA/L standards, he said, that the master schedule allows for the collaboration and professional development. Participant Five shared that:

The professional development. It contains professional development and the feedback… Well collaboration is actually when they use their PD. So since sixth grade social studies and sixth grade science teachers have an opportunity to collaborate, that's when their PD will actually take place. And that also gives them an opportunity to do their lesson design together and have some common languages about some of their own terms that will be used so that they're consistent. So that all teachers are consistent with the terminology for disciplinary literacy and that it's consistent with some of the practices as well.

Participant Five also said that he and his staff have received meaning follow-up sessions to the PD:

Our district social studies specialist has done an awesome job at following up. I have an email from her now to determine when we will follow up again for second semester just to make sure it's not something that they do every so often. That it actually become a practice. Science and social studies are charged with more than just content now. You have to be able to write in science and social studies.

Finding 2: Participant Five indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

When I asked Participant Five about his vision for literacy instruction in a middle school setting, he said:

Any kind of instruction in the middle school setting needs to be engaging, number one. So regardless of if its literacy in the middle school setting, kids that are [ages] 11 – 15, there has to be something that is engaging. And my preference, I would like to see something that's engaging; also using technology, but that can't always be the case. Also, in terms of literacy, it needs to be – what I'm finding out, it needs to be something where kids can actually look at a passage, develop their own opinion, use their own experiences,

but also be able to use the passage or the text to take evidence from whatever their answer or what ever their stance may be. Actually take textual evidence and use that to back up what they believe to be correct or believe to be their stance.

School Five helps distressed readers in the Read 180 class (2016-17 Curriculum Catalogue), but there was no indication of ongoing ELA/L development. School Five's 2015-16 and 2016-17 Comprehensive Plan includes a shared governance structure that incorporates a Leadership Team and Instructional Teams. The plan states:

- A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

- A Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting).

- The Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

- Instructional Teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data… Data and student needs drive each planning meeting… Teachers continue to be challenged to make direct ties between data and a change in instructional practices, although efforts are being made.

Finding 3: Participant Five indicated that he is applying leadership styles that are applicable to change.

Participant Five said he is a servant leader, but he also engages other leadership styles as needed (transformational and transactional). Participant Five also said that his personal attributes contribute to his leadership. He said he leads with integrity, he holds intellectual conversations, and he uses his coaching training to coach his teachers. He said:

Servant leadership. Just one word, and that's all. I believe in servant leadership. You can engage other leadership styles. I think leadership should be somewhat differentiated, but if I have to go with one particular, and me mentioning integrity as a key attribute, I would say servant leadership. And within servant leadership, you can then encompass some transformational leadership. And then also sometimes, I actually need to be transactional leadership. But I would stand with servant.

Participant Five also shared personal attributes that contribute to him as a leader. In addition to integrity, he said:

I think the ability to stimulate some intellectual conversation, as far as curriculum instruction. The ability to push people's thinking is involved with curriculum instruction. I guess another personal attribute since I've had the training [coaching] is the ability to coach, lead people to their own train of thought as supposed to actually giving advice… I think I'm pretty good at motivating parents and not just parents, students and teachers.

Finding 4: Participant Five indicated that he is using some strategies for change.

When asked about strategies used to facilitate the change process he said that he works to get teacher buy-in and he seeks to motivate people. He stated:

The number one thing to facilitate change is you have to have people buy into whatever the change is, and to be able to motivate people. If it's giving a rah-rah, or if it's providing research and data to let people know why things need to change for the better… You have to be able to, with that buy-in; you have to be able to change people's mindset. Because there can be no physical change without first there being some mental change. So regardless, if it's disciplinary literacy strategies and you're changing some teacher practices to these disciplinary literacy strategies, number one thing is convincing them that this is going to work. This will have better success with students and then this will make you a better teacher. So you have to be able to create that buy-in and make them feel like it's somewhat their idea that they can take ownership of it.

Specific to disciplinary literacy, Participant Five said he worked with the district's lead social studies teacher to discuss a plan. He said:

I met with our lead social studies teacher. We talked about the disciplinary literacy foundation: what it involves, children, how it involves teachers, how we can change practices. And so we looked at dates where she would come out and meet with teachers and start the PD process. First, start getting their buy-in, letting them know about the process. Secondly, after that, then – that threw me off. First, getting their buy-in, sharing the process with them, sharing the research with them. Then, after that, taking them through some PD, letting them know how the disciplinary literacy looks like in the classroom, what it'll look like. The teachers, what they're planning it will look like. And

then, actually going into classrooms and observing the practices in action. After observing the practices in action, then planning, if more PD is needed, evaluating the program, if it's something that should be scrapped, thrown out and re-do something else, or just basically determining next steps since we have some observation data.

Participant Five said that changing mindsets was the greatest challenge for the implementation process but he uses classroom observations to gage the change process. He stated:

> Mindset is the biggest challenge. We tend to teach like we were last taught, and we were all last taught in college. So, some of us tend to want to lecture and only give content in since and social studies when there's been a paradigm shift in education and it requires more than that… there are some challenges. But you can control your own visibility. You can definitely do that. You can step away from whatever it is, every once in a while to make time for what's important. And if you feel like disciplinary literacy is important; if PE [physical education], Art or Music is important, you make time to get into the classrooms to see instruction.

Participant Five's Critical Incidents Form included the following steps:

1. Buy-in with the staff for disciplinary literacy. Allow staff to have input.

2. Planning the PD.

3. Provide the PD.

4. Observe the Practice.

5. Follow-up and determine next steps.

6. Observation. Collect qualitative data and quantitative data.

Finding 5: Participant Five perceived the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as somewhat effective.

Participant Five perceives the implementation process of the new ELA/L standards as somewhat effective. He had an opportunity to plan with and have the guidance of the district's social studies instructional facilitator. After working the plan, he said that the implementation of the ELA/L standards varies from no change in instructional practice to change in instructional

practice. He also said that his staff is shifting to approximately 60 percent of the teachers still see literacy instruction as the English teacher's responsibility and 40 percent see literacy as a shared responsibility across content areas. He stated:

> At this juncture, because we're still engaging in it, it's going to be a spectrum of what I see. In some classrooms, I might still see where it's still just content heavy. In other classrooms, I see where they're moving forward and I can see disciplinary literacy strategies involving vocabulary… Just depending on that teacher's readiness for disciplinary literacy, and then also my own feedback to that teacher, depends on where they will be on that continuum of readiness.

Participant Five went on to say:

> It's a shift. I think right now, we're kind of 40, 60 [percent] still see it as the responsibility of the English teacher. But we're working on that shift, and the only way we get there to see it as a shared responsibility, is my continual inspection of the expectation.

> When I asked Participant Five to tell me the areas where he and his teachers need more assistance, he said he is not sure that they need assistance; he thinks they need more practice. He said:

> I don't know if it's more assistance, I would just think it's more practice, more repetitions. The more comfortable they get with the various strategies involving disciplinary literacy, the more apt they are to be comfortable with it, so we've been working with it for a year. And so, like I said, there's different levels to where people are, and a lot of that is just basically their zone of proximal development. When they reach that point where they're ready and they're comfortable, you see some acceleration in those practices, and, in my opinion, a lot of it is repetition of using those practices. Instead of doing definitions, let's use this practice now, and the more they continue to use that practice, the more it'll just inherently become part of their arsenal.

Participant Six

Participant six is a male principal. His highest level of education is a Doctorate Degree (Ed. D.) in Education Administration. Participant six also has a Bachelors Degree in Liberal

Arts, a Masters Degree in Education Administration, and an Education Specialist Degree (Ed. S.) in Education Administration. Participant six is certified in Social Studies, Administration, and as a Superintendent. Participant six has worked as a secondary social studies teacher, a secondary athletic coach, and a middle school and high school assistant principal.

School six has approximately 830 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 70 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. On the state accountability exam, the majority of the students scored at or above expectations on English sub-test and the 2017 ELA test. The students scored below expectations on the rest of the sub-tests (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Assessment Data for School Six

School 6	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	53%	44%	70%	40%	42%	40%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	47%	56%	30%	60%	58%	60%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	49%	38%	71%	39%	24%	34%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	51%	62%	29%	61%	76%	66%

Finding 1: Participant Six indicated that he was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant Six indicated that he was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. He stated he was told to do it without any training or preparation; therefore, he sought resources on his own. He said, "I don't think I received any preparation. They [district officials] just basically said, you got to do it. They didn't tell you anything, just said, do it." In regards to professional development for his teachers, they received a one-hour training. He said:

> Well, I could say that what I've decided when it was embedded and when we were informed, I decided to reach out to the people who brought it to the associate superintendent for middle school, and I hit them to come over to educate and teach – excuse me, to train, but it's hard to train a staff in one hour. So my plan now is to still dive a little deeper, collaborating with another middle school and how we could do it within three hours. And hopefully, with the two schools coming together, teachers can break off in their content. If they could share feedback, I think they could do it together.

Participant Six went on to say that the only follow-up training to the initial one-hour PD is the PLC that he provided. He said:

Well, we have [follow-up training] because we turned around and we followed up with the PLC. But the thing is, again, like I said earlier, you still got teachers who present good questions and good challenges, and the only one who can answer that is central office, and I don't think they know how to answer that.

Finding 2: Participant Six indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

When asked how he envisions literacy instruction in the middle school setting, Participant Six said:

> I envision literacy instruction as using different instructional strategies to address all of the learners… We're collaborating, utilizing our literacy facilitator, utilizing the resources that we have, utilizing the online resources that we have with the… blended

instruction with the online resources and the teacher-led, and then I envisioned those strategies moving from teacher-led to student-led with high engagement with students and how they engage me with the accountable talk. So they're constantly talking, but they're constantly talking about staying on task, not talking about something that's not on task. And then I have – my envision is that they will be able to come back and just teach the class and with the teacher acting as a true facilitator.

School Six did not give any indication that they provide ongoing ELA/L development. Nevertheless, School Six does have help for distressed readers in the form of a Read 180 class (2016-17 Curriculum Catalogue). When asked about literacy across the content areas, Participant Six said that his teachers think that literacy instruction is still the responsibility of the English teacher. He said, "I think… they [the teachers] think it's the English teacher. I mean, I think that's – and just listening to what some of the comments are… we've got to get them to shift their thinking."

Finding 3: Participant Six indicated that he is applying leadership styles that are applicable to change.

Participant Six said that he sees himself as a transformational leader. He also leads by collaborating with others, but when necessary he will be the decision-maker. To facilitate change, Participant Six said:

> I'm more of a transformational leader. Its collaborative, collected decision-making. Now, at some point, when I found out in this job, it's not always going to be a collaborative. Sometimes, you just have to go ahead and be the true decision-maker. And so I'm more of a transformational leader… but I'm a true team player. I like to push, and I like for my staff to be able to lead… So that's more of what I am, and I'm not afraid to make that big decision. So if we can't come together and make a decision, it's my job to make a decision that's best for the school.

Finding 4: Participant Six indicated that he is using some strategies for change.

Participant Six provided strategies that he is using for change. He stated that he is a transformational leader and he has a shared governance policy at his school. School Six's 2015-16 and 2016-17 Comprehensive Plan states:

- A team structure is officially incorporated into the school governance policy.

- The Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly.

- Most teachers work on two instructional teams: collaboration and interdisciplinary. Teachers are placed in collaborative groups by subject and grade level. The collaborative groups are guided by the [district's] curriculum maps, which determine the units of study, standards to be taught, and performance-based tasks used to demonstrate mastery of standards.

- Teachers use collaboration to plan lessons, create common assessments, and gather resources to be used in the implementation of highly engaged activities.

- Currently, interdisciplinary team time is used to plan incentives for students, conduct parent conferences, and plan other activities.

The 2016-17 Comprehensive plan also list some tasks that the teams plan to complete:

1. Schedule all teachers to an instructional team.

2. Identify and schedule on-going professional development on designing interdisciplinary teams and lessons/activities.

3. Administer learning style or multiple intelligences inventories to all students.

4. Implement disciplinary literacy strategies.

5. When possible, plan lessons that cross the disciplines.

When asked about the strategies that he uses to facilitate change, Participant Six stated

that he likes to have a culture and climate that supports the needs of the students. He said:

> Well, it's different. I'm sure that every leader's different. But for me, the building, it was different. So from my previous building, this building was different. I knew that there was a culture and a climate issue, so I had to get them to shift their thinking in changing the culture and the climate… once they actually saw… in terms of not supporting culture and the climate, they were willing to change that. And once we were able and willing to change that, now we were able and willing to address our kids' needs.

Additionally, Participant Six said that he wants to implement disciplinary literacy with fidelity.

He stated:

> Now, that's one of the biggest things, too, to my staff. We got to make sure we implement this with fidelity. And of course, the administration can't be in every class, every day, all day. So we don't want you to be trying to say this is just a compliance issue. We want you to really do it with fidelity. Now, I'll tell you something that we did use, too, to also enhance the disciplinary literacy is the criteria in writing. The criteria in writing allowed us to be able to—the key is to write and the teachers don't have to necessarily grade it because it'll grade it for you. So that also will help us with the disciplinary literacy piece as well.

> Finally, School Six's Critical Incidents Form for Implementing Disciplinary Literacy

Instruction included the following:

1. One half day of professional development for 3 hours.

2. Professional Learning Communities.

3. Observations to provide Feedback.

4. Writing prompts for students.

5. Collaboration and Teaming.

Finding 5: Participant Six perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards as not effective.

Participant Six states that the implementation process has not been what he would have

liked it to be. He said that central office should have provided more support. He also said that

central office should have shown him and his staff what disciplinary literacy looks like in each content area. When Participant Six compared lesson plans to actual classroom instruction, he does not see enough change. He also said that they need more time to work on incorporating the new ELA/L standards. He stated:

> I don't see enough of it. I don't see enough, but we're spending a lot of time addressing that. And that's how the feedback, and that's the data that I've collected because the teachers say, "I don't know how to write any better. So now, you got PE (physical education) we can't write the disciplinary literacy in. So now, and that's why I spoke earlier about it, in my opinion, what they should have done is broke it down by content areas from the central office… showing them [the teachers] how to embed the disciplinary literacy.

> Furthermore, Participant Six shared that there are other factors that impede their progress.

He said that his team needs more assistance:

> I think that we could use more assistance… just implementing that with fidelity. Because you're talking about four people, just administration, and one literacy facilitator. Well, that's five. Then you're talking about trying to have six English teachers. Well, out of the six English teachers, you may not have – three of them may not be strong. They should know, but they don't know. So now, you still have to have the support to be able to go. And with the life of an administrator, we just got so much going on. Our day is not the same. Every hour is not going to be the same. So it's just you're still falling short. So I think just coming in, help training the teachers, making sure then, they'll allow us to be able to hold them accountable, versus we trying to also train, then be able to do our jobs, and then be able to check. It's just beyond. It's just the reality. It's just not enough time in the day to get all that done.

> In regards to the overall implementation process, Participant Six said that it's been a slow process and they have not had support from central office. He said:

> Well, first of all, the process has been not like I wanted. It's been slow, but the support from the central office has not been there either. In my opinion, it should have been. Because in my opinion, they don't know. So they basically said, "Look, this is what we want you to do. You learn how to do it. So that's basically how I feel. Now, I may be wrong. But our implementation has gone fairly well, not like I wanted, but that's because teachers don't know exactly, and I can't come and teach them the way that we want to do it. The way the district wants us to do it is number one is utilizing the disciplinary literacy in their own content… But I think, too, that the district should have had all of that worked out, so how they are going to break it up in each department, each content, and embed the disciplinary literacy. Now, you bring it back to the school, then we can reinforce what

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you just shared with each content area. But it's there, they're the opposite. So you'd embed it, and you'd tell me [referring to the associate superintendent] how you going to do it. And so now, basically, what we got now is a catch-22. So we basically depended on our literacy to try to educated them and say, Look, you got to do this within your content because they don't have the specialties in their content. Does that make sense?

When I asked Participant Six, what type of help he would ask for from the policy writers, he

said:

> First of all, I would want to know what were they thinking when they wrote this. What was their vision? And then I would ask them to come in to show me or provide the support so that we can be able to get and reach their vision. So the common core. So basically, that's what I would do because I think that we need to find out what were you thinking. So if you were thinking that you wanted all the kids to be college/career ready, then come and make sure that our curriculum maps mirror that. And then the test, the assessment that you want us to take will reflect that. Don't give us an exam that doesn't reflect that, but then tell me to go back and try to incorporate that, those standards or skills. That's just a lot of work.

Participant Seven

Participant Seven is a female principal. Her highest level of education is a Masters Degree is Secondary School Leadership. She also has a Bachelors Degree in Special Education K-12. She has eleven years of experience in administration. She has also worked as a special education teacher, and as a middle school and high school assistant principal.

School Seven has approximately 620 students in grades six through eight. In 2017, 89 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. The majority of the students scored below expectations on each of the subtest except for English (see Table 13).

Table 4.7

Assessment Data for School Seven

Participant 7	ELA	Math	English	Reading	Writing	Science
2016-17 At or Above Expectations	31%	29%	51%	22%	27%	14%
2016-17 At or Below Expectations	69%	71%	49%	78%	73%	86%
2015-16 At or Above Expectations	25%	20%	54%	20%	12%	14%
2015-16 At or Below Expectations	75%	80%	46%	80%	88%	86%

Finding 1: Participant Seven indicated that she was unprepared to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents.

Participant Seven was hesitant to say that the district did not provide training to the middle school principals. She said:

> I will tell you it hasn't been a lot. The district has not trained the principals as much as—probably middle and high, not as much as they have done elementary principals… I'm just saying that it has not been a lot, but one of the things that I did when I went to state training last week is I-- last year, excuse me, last [crosstalk] I actually went through some disciplinary literacy training through the state just to familiarize myself with it. It hadn't been a lot, though. But I had to seek it out in order to get the training that I need.

When the recording stopped, Participant Seven went on to say that she did not receive any training from the district. She said they were told what to do without being taught how to

implement disciplinary literacy. She also said she could have benefitted from a model and resources, but she did not receive either.

In regards to the teachers, Participant Seven said and shared on her Critical Incidents Form that this process required a lot of teacher initiative:

> They have received district trainings, basically to start over. What is disciplinary literacy? They have been given strategies to work in all content areas. There have been resources that are provided. [inaudible] came and actually showed them the site where they could go and get the resources for themselves. It takes a lot of teacher initiative in order to get it because the district don't really come out anymore and say, 'Hey this is what you can use.' You've got to take it upon yourself to infuse it in your content areas because there's so many different things that you can use.

Finding 2: Participant Seven indicated that they are addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents.

When asked about her vision for literacy instruction in the middle school setting, she said that she wants to see literacy used in all content areas:

> My envision is teaching literacy strategies and skills in all content areas that will help students listen and understand, and particularly, think critically about any type of content whether it be a math problem, whether it be science, being able to critically think in that particular subject area, and just as important throughout the whole content area.

The 2015-16 and 2016-17 Course Catalogue indicates that School Seven offers Read 180 for distressed readers but they do not have ongoing course to help develop ELA/L throughout middle school. The 2015-16 and 2016-17 Comprehensive Plan indicates that they have interdisciplinary teams and a leadership team:

- School Seven has an established meeting time which is every other Wednesday (two times per month) from four to five o'clock or one hour per meeting.

- The membership of the meeting includes the principal, assistant principals, the literacy facilitator, the math facilitator, district personnel (guest), teachers from each content area and a counselor…

- Content instructional teams will meet 3 times per week for 45 minutes each.

- School Seven offers a Read 180 course to help struggling readers, but there was no indication that ongoing literacy instruction is provided.

Finding 3: Participant Seven indicated that she is applying a leadership style that is applicable to change.

When asked what leadership style does she use to facilitate change, she shared that she likes to use a collaborative style, she also said that she does not believe that she knows all of the answers just because she is the principal:

> …I try to be collaborative. I try to do so in my administrative staff, not that I'm just the only one that knows everything or because I'm the principal, I'm the one that does everything. I try to spread the wealth and get everybody's expertise, whether it be from the faculty, from the instructional leaders, the counselors, or everybody that's involved in the process of teaching and learning. I try to get everybody involved in the collaborative process. …I communicate frequently, and I try to be enthusiastic about whatever I'm communicating. I like to build a team structure. I think I'm people-oriented, and I like to build relationships…

Finding 4: Participant Seven indicated that she is using strategies for change.

Participant Seven said that she uses shared governance through her leadership team. She also listed some strategies that she is using for change on her Critical Incidents Form. She listed that she:

1. Defined Disciplinary Literacy with her faculty.

2. Trained teachers on how they are already using disciplinary literacy in content areas.

3. Provided training on strategies that can be used in all content areas across the school.

4. Provide resources.

5. Monitor through observations and support.

6. Provide feedback.

7. Retrain as needed.

Participant Seven also indicated that she uses data, professional development, and after PDs, she

likes to follow up with observations. She said:

> Well, the first thing I try to look at is the data, and access what's going on with the
> students or what's going on with the staff. And just like the whole mindset of even going
> to disciplinary literacy, that whole process has been a process.
> And so it always involves first assessing, talking with the staff about it, training them,
> and then follow through with observation, and supporting them in their endeavors of
> carrying out the literacy or disciplinary literacy law… Last week, I did monitor lesson
> plans for literacy skills that are taught, learning vocabulary-- just continue to review and
> provide support for those that are not using it as efficiently as others, or as they should.

Finding 5: Participant Seven perceives the implementation process of the ELA/L standards

as not effective.

Participant Seven feels like she was not adequately trained to facilitate the

implementation process. She stated that she needed more intense training from the district or the

state on how to implement disciplinary literacy. She preferred to have a model to follow. When

asked what type of help does she need, she said, "More intense training on specific skills…

United States is trying to do so much to beat other countries… But we are lacking in just the

basic, basic skills that our kids need, and we've gotten away from it."

She also indicated that the teachers at School Seven still see literacy development as the

responsibility of the English teachers. She said, "I think they think it is a responsibility of the

English teacher, honestly. But I think Social Studies has really grasped the idea that it's their

responsibility also to help out."

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the five findings revealed by this study. The findings were presented according to the research questions. Data from the semi-structured interviews, critical incidents forms and the documents and artifacts uncovered the perceptions of the research participants as they facilitated the implementation of the state ELA/L standards. Keeping in line with qualitative research methods, a considerable amount of quotations from the participants are included (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Using the quotations is a way for the researcher to accurately depict the accounts of the participants and to build confidence with the reader.

The primary finding of this study is that the principals were not adequately prepared to facilitate the implementation of the new ELA/L standards (6 of 7 participants, 85%). This finding came from the participants' descriptions of their experiences as they discussed their perceptions of what they needed to facilitate the implementation of the new ELA/L standards. In discussing why they felt unprepared, the participants overwhelmingly stated that they did not receive adequate training from the district or the state level. Even though some of the participants stated that they received one training from the district, they also shared that it was not sufficient.

The second finding was that all seven of the participants indicated that they were addressing the ELA/L needs of early adolescents. Most of the participants (6 of 7, or 85%) provided documentation that indicated that they are using shared governance and interdisciplinary teams. One of the participants indicated that she wants to use shared governance and interdisciplinary teams but they are not functioning as planned due to various situations that occur randomly on any given day. Four of the participants did not say or provided documentation of using literacy in all of the content areas. Two participants said their staff does practice using literacy in all content areas and one participant said that they use literacy in English and Math

but need to improve their practice in science and social studies. All of the participants (100%) provide help for distressed readers in the form of a course called Read 180. None of the participants are providing ongoing development of ELA/L for the students.

The third finding was an overwhelming majority (6 of 7, 85%) of the participants indicated that they are applying leadership styles that are applicable to change. Two of the participants shared that they are a transformational leader or they use a transformational leadership style to facilitate change. The one participant that does not use a leadership style that is applicable to change said that she desires to use characteristics that are applicable to change but she only sporadically applies them due to unforeseen circumstances that arise often. She went on to say that she rarely has a normal day where she can do the things that she knows she should do as a change agent.

The fourth finding was that the majority (6 of 7, 85%) of the participants use strategies relevant to change. One participant has a desire to use strategies that are suitable for change but the needs at her school require her to focus on problems that often need immediate attention.

The fifth finding was that a little over half (4 of 7, 57%) perceive the implementation process of the new ELA/L standards as not effective; the other (3 of 7, 42%) participants perceive the implementation process as somewhat effective. One of the three that perceived the implementation process as somewhat effective said that they should have had a model or a guide to go by and she hopes they are doing it right. All four the participants that perceived the implementation process as not effective stated that neither the principals nor their staff received proper training. They did not know what disciplinary literacy was supposed to look in each of the content areas. One participant said that it would have helped if the district had provided examples of what disciplinary literacy looks like in each of the content areas.

Chapter V:

Analysis of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore principals' experiences as they facilitate the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L instruction in public middle schools in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. It was hoped that this study would provide insight and guidance for principals and other educational leaders as they facilitate the implementation of required ELA/L changes brought about by state and federal policies. Such findings are significant because our moral imperative is to educate our youth; we need strategies and resources so educational policy can go beyond implementation to actual institutionalization with definitive outcomes of improved student learning (Fullan, 2007).

I used a naturalistic inquiry to collect qualitative data by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews and by collecting documents, artifacts, and critical incident reports. Seven middle school principals participated in the study. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized by the research questions and the conceptual framework. The study was based on the following four research questions:

1. How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

2. What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

3. What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

4. What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

The findings presented in Chapter 4 fulfilled the four research questions. The prevailing finding in this study revealed that the participants perceived that they did not receive adequate preparation to facilitate the new changes in cross-curricular ELA/L standards for early adolescents. As a consequence, the principals were left to rely on themselves (and their leadership team) to interpret the state's adopted (and later revised) ELA/L standards and to facilitate the implementation process at their school. This chapter provides cross-case analysis of the findings from the seven participants. It is organized by the research questions and interpreted through the lens of the conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework shows the relationship among the essential components that are necessary for facilitating the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards for early adolescents. First, the new ELA/L standards have a reciprocal relationship to middle level education. Interdisciplinary work is an accepted practice in middle level education. Additionally, the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards require instructional approaches that incorporate common literacy strategies across all content areas along with disciplinary literacy i.e. developing literacy engagement that is course specific (International Literacy Association, 2017). Next, leadership must discern and back middle school philosophy. This means that the leader must understand two essential components: (a) early adolescents' developmental needs and (b) appropriate instructional practices that are designed precisely for early adolescents. Third, change requires certain organization characteristics and leadership influences those characteristics through cultivating transformational relationships with their followers. Finally,

leaders need to be knowledgeable of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards so they can effectively facilitate the implementation process.

Research Question 1: How do principals perceive their preparation to facilitate the implementation of new cross-curricular English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA/L) standards for early adolescents?

Research Question 1 was designed to gather the participants' perceptions about their preparation to lead an instructional shift to cross-curricular ELA/L in a middle school setting. To answer this question, I divided the information needed into two parts. The first component asks what preparation did the principals receive to facilitate the implementation of the ELA/L standards and their perceptions of the preparation. The second component needed was the principals' visions for early adolescent literacy instruction and how the school is meeting those needs as indicated through their semi-structured interview and other documents and artifacts that were given to me or I collected the information from state educational databases.

Research Question 1, Part I

I was seeking to understand the types of professional development that the principals received and the frequency of the PD as they lead an instructional shift to the new cross-curricular ELA/L academic standards. I also wanted to explore how the principals used their professional development to facilitate change at their school. Finally, I wanted to know the principals' overall perception of the training they received in preparation to facilitate the implementation of the new ELA/L standards. The principals indicated that they did not receive adequate professional development or support to properly facilitate the change in the cross-curricular ELA/L standards at their school. Four of the principals said they did not receive any training from the district, two principals said they received one PD, and one principal said that he

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did not have a formal training but a district level instructional facilitator met with him personally

to discuss disciplinary literacy (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Knowledge Acquisition Descriptors Related to Implementing ELA/L Standards

Acquisition Descriptor	Number of Participants Reporting
Received Professional Development from School District	2
Did not Receive Professional Development from School District	5
Sought Training on their own	2
One-on-one Meeting with District Instructional Facilitator	1
Feels Prepared	0
Feels Somewhat Prepared	1
Feels Unprepared	6

After looking at the first finding, there are inconsistencies concerning the professional

development provided for the participants. First, participant five received a one-on-one meeting

with the district's social studies instructional facilitator, and he is the only participant that feels

somewhat prepared. Second, two participants said they received one PD from the school district

and five participants said they did not receive any professional development on the new cross-

curricular ELA/L standards. I noted that there was a lack of consistency with the minimal

training that was provided. Overall the principals did not feel that they received proper training

and continued support to adequately facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular

ELA/L standards. I think the reflection from Participant Six summed up the need of the principals in this district:

> First of all, I would want to know what were they thinking when they wrote this. What was their vision? And then I would ask them to come in to show me or provide the support so that we can be able to get and reach their vision.

Additionally, two of the principals said that they are told what to do and then they are expected to do it. Participant One said that they receive their "marching orders." Participant Two said that CCSS was adopted, but they (their school district) have not changed because they have not received proper professional development. In this study, due to a lack of professional development, the participants were put in a position to interpret the new standards and they led the change as they saw fit. Fullan (2007) stated that often times, there is a disconnected understanding between the policy writers' intention and the interpretation of the policy by the educators who actually have to implement the change. To address these types of problems, the conceptual framework gives two conditions that must be understood in order to have successful change (Fullan, 2007):

1. The theory of education (what changes are to be implemented) and

2. The theory of change (how to implement the changes).

Again, an overwhelming majority of the participants did not receive professional development on what to change (ELA/L academic standards) or how to implement the changes.

Research Question 1, Part II

The second part of question one was to explore how the principals were addressing the needs of early adolescents at their school. I specifically sought to understand how the literacy needs were addressed. The research provided in the literature review specifies the importance of providing teaching and learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate for early

adolescents. The learning environment needs to cater to the needs and interests of the students, thereby increasing the opportunities for student engagement and student achievement. Please note this study did not seek to make judgments about the degree or extent of the indicators. I used the data that I gleaned from the interviews, documents, and artifacts and compared it to the early adolescent needs found in the conceptual framework (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Meeting the Needs of Early Adolescents

Participant	Shared Governance	Interdisciplinary Teams	Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	Literacy In all Content Areas	Help for Distressed Readers	Ongoing Literacy Development
1	X	X	X	X	X	
2	X	X	X		X	
3	X	X	X	X	X	
4	Sporadic	Sporadic	X		X	
5	X	X	X	Somewhat	X	
6	X	X	X		X	
7	X	X	X		X	

Each of the participants has shared governance in place. They have interdisciplinary teams, and they have a curriculum with teachers providing instruction and using various forms of assessments. Participant Four was honest and shared that her school has a large amount of extenuating circumstances that keeps her from using strategies that she knows are beneficial to early adolescents. She said that she wants to and knows that she should have regularly scheduled leadership meetings and team meetings, but she is not able to because she has to be reactive most

of her school day. She went on to say that a "normal day" is so irregular that when it occurs, she has to regroup because "normal" is so unusual for her.

In regards to literacy, three of the participants provided data that shows writing across the curriculum as a priority at their school. The literature review states that early adolescents need to write across disciplines (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, 2012; International Reading Association, 2012). Writing across disciplines engages students and is a tool that can be used to monitor learning. The other four principals are working to shift the thinking of their teachers towards a view that literacy instruction is the responsibility of all teachers, not just English teachers. Frederick Rudolph said it is hard to incorporate literacy in subjects outside of English because of the departmentalization mindset (Russell, 1990).

All of the schools provide help for distressed readers, but none of the schools offer ongoing literacy development. As noted in Chapter 1, often times, the inoculation model is used, which provides elementary students with ongoing literacy development. Nevertheless, when elementary students transition to middle school, literacy development is often not addressed, in spite of research stating that early adolescents need ongoing literacy development (Snow & Moje, 2010). Furthermore, the conceptual framework emphasizes the reciprocal relational between the ELA/L standards and middle level philosophy.

Research Question 2: What leadership styles are used to facilitate the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

Research question two was designed to gather information about the participants' leadership style used to facilitate the implementation process. Northouse (2016) states transformational leadership is a useful approach for principals when implementing change. To

analyze the data, I compared the participants' responses to Northouse's characteristics of a

transformational leader (see Table 5.3).

Each of the participants said that they are applying a leadership style that is applicable to

change. Only two of the principals specifically said they are using transformational leadership as

a strategy to facilitate the implementation of the ELA/L standards. One principal said that he is

flexible with his leadership style, and fluctuates between transactional and transformational

based on the needs of his teachers. Participant Four stated that she likes to use transformational

leadership strategies but due to circumstances at her school, she can only use these strategies

sporadically. Communication and shared governance were the number one characteristics used

as a leadership strategy to help facilitate change. Patience is the only characteristic that was not

mentioned by any of the participants. Finally, the following transformational leadership

characteristics were only mentioned once: modeling expectations, trustworthiness, and open to

opposing views.

Table 5.3

Participants' Leadership Style compared to Northouse's Transformational Leadership

Northouse's Transformational Leadership Style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transformational			X		X	X	
Shared Vision		X		X		X	X
Model Expectations	X						
Trustworthy					X		
Patient							
Open to Opposing Views	X						
Motivate Others					X		X
Other Comments	Communication	Communication	Data Driven	Sporadic	Communication		Communication

The conceptual framework defines leadership as the process of a person influencing a group of people to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2016). Generally, leaders need to build rapport with their teachers in order to influence them. For this reason, trustworthiness, patience, and openness to opposing views are traits that should be acknowledged when facilitating change.

Research Question 3: What strategies are the principals using to implement the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards?

The aim of research question 3 was to understand the strategies that the participants are using to implement the ELA/L standards. This question was informed by responses collected during the semi-structured interviews and by reviewing documents and artifacts. First, I reviewed the school district's guide to implementing disciplinary literacy. The guide was a one-page document and provided some key points for each school to consider as they created their own

action plan for disciplinary literacy; nevertheless, none of the schools had an action plan. Therefore, I used the information provided during the interview and the information provided on the critical incidents forms, and the comprehensive school plans to understand each school's implementation plan. Listed below is a summary of each school's implementation process:

1. Participant One – Provided PD for teachers in July and August. Teachers wrote their own curriculum maps, because district curriculum maps were not available. Writing in every subject area is a priority at school one.

2. Participant Two – Used shared governance, developed a vision and steps used for change. Comprehensive school plan stated that PD was in the form of a book study on disciplinary literacy.

3. Participant Three – Principal used transformational leadership style. The teachers have four professional learning community (PLC) meetings every school year. She uses data for all of her meetings. The teachers collaborate and monitor student learning.

4. Participant Four – Administrators met with core teachers (English, math, science, and social studies) to guide them through writing across the curriculum. The district instructional facilitators for English and social studies provided training for the teachers.

5. Participant Five – Principal sought buy-in from the teachers and wanted to motivate them. He worked with the district social studies instructional facilitator to create a plan for the school. He planned the PD, provided the PD, observed teachers, gave follow-up to the teachers, and created next steps. Participant Five also collected qualitative and quantitative data on the implementation process.

6. Participant Six – Principal said that he wants to implement the standards with fidelity. The teachers received a 3 hour PD and followed up with PLCs. The administrative teams

observed lessons and provided feedback. They are focusing on lessons that cross

disciplines. The school uses collaboration and interdisciplinary teaming.

7. Participant Seven – Principal said that they first wanted to define disciplinary literacy.

Then she had the social studies and ELA instructional facilitators provide training for the

teachers. The principal gave resources to the teachers. She observed the teachers and

gave them feedback and support. She said they would retrain as needed.

The conceptual framework provides strategies that administrators can use when facilitating

change for early adolescents. Table 5.4 shows strategies from the conceptual framework and an

"X" mark indicating which strategies were used by each of the participants.

Table 5.4

Strategies Used for Change by Participant

Strategy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of a Model for Change							
Transformational Leadership			X		X	X	
Addresses the needs of Early Adolescents	X	X	X		X	X	X
Shared Governance & Communication	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Action Plans							
Collaboration	X	X	X		X	X	X
Use of Data	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate Professional Development (Capacity Building)							

The participants are missing key strategies that help educational change. Fullan (2007) states that districts that do well with change have taken action based on four strategic themes:

1. They lead with purpose and focused direction.

2. They design an orderly strategy, coordinate implementation, and review outcomes as they

   go.

3. They develop precise knowledge, skills, and daily practices that improve learning.

4. They build relationships by sharing responsibility.

When these four strategic themes are in place, educators have an opportunity for capacity building (resources and training needed for them to be able to perform), which yields an increased opportunity to implement change innovations with fidelity.

Analysis of Finding Four shows that six of the seven participants have some basic strategies in place but key elements that help with educational change are missing. The participants did not have a model to follow. The district provided a one page guide, but it was not thorough enough to be considered a strategic action plan. Professional development is a key strategy for implementing change, however, the participants stated that they did not have adequate training. As well as the participants did not have an action plan to guide the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. Without proper training or support, it is possible that the participants were not able to write an appropriate action plan for implementing the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. Finding four illuminated two additional concerns:

1. Participant One said that his school had to write their own curriculum maps.

2. Participant Four likely needs intensive support. Fullan (2007) proposes using a turn around program for schools that have urgent concerns. A turn around program is a program where educational specialists from outside the school, partner with a school for three years with the goal of refocusing the school to improve instruction and student learning.

Research Question 4: What can we learn from the principals' experiences that will help with future implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L standards in public middle schools in urban school districts?

This research question was designed to understand the participants' perception of their experiences with facilitating the implementation of the state adopted ELA/L standards. Three of the seven participants expressed that they think the overall process was somewhat effective, and four of the participants said the implementation process was not effective (see Table 5.5). I have summarized the perceived needs of each participant.

Table 5.5

Principals Perceived Effectiveness of Implementation Process

Participant	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective
1		X	
2		X	
3			X
4			X
5		X	
6			X
7			X

Participant One

Participant One sought information to train himself, and he has buy-in from his teachers. Additionally, the school elected to write their own curriculum maps. This may contribute to his perception that the implementation process was somewhat effective. Participant One did offer suggestions of what he thought would help him facilitate the implementation process. He said,

"…give me consistency and then give me full implementation. Don't give me a little one hour PD on it. Let's have consistent, ongoing professional development throughout the year."

Participant Two

Participant Two also thought the implementation process of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards was somewhat effective. He too, went beyond what the district offered and used a book study on disciplinary literacy as a form of professional development. When he reflected on his needs, he said that he and his teachers did not receive adequate training on the CCSS (as of 2017-2018 school year, the standards are called State Academic Standards). He said:

> …we've adopted CCSS, but we've not changed the way we instruct kids. So we're still instructing kids operating under the former curriculum that we already designed. I think that our teachers need more training and understanding on the rationale for CCSS, number one, and [two] how CCSS instruction looks inside each individual classroom.

Participant Two went on to say, internally, within the school district, he would like the freedom and flexibility to alter his master schedule to allow more time to provide quality literacy instruction.

Participant Three

Participant Three did not feel that the implementation process was effective. She said that the implementation of the new ELA/L standards requires a shift in the way that educators think about literacy and disciplinary literacy. She said that she needs support at the district level. She understands that her position as a principal requires that she has to be "on task to know what the CCSS are." She also chose to do Internet searches to find out more about the CCSS standards. She would like a rubric or some sort of evaluative instrument to help guide her. She went on to say,

It's just kind of a fly-by decision. But I would love to see or have a model school or model teacher… but I have not heard of such; I haven't been provided such information… how do we know we are getting it right?

She added that she needs the following:

- She needs to understand exactly what is disciplinary literacy.

- She thinks the state education department should give the school district more support.

- She would like to have a guide and other resources, so she can know if they are on target.

Participant Four

Participant Four did not perceive the implementation process as effective. She said that her teachers need more training, "Teachers are reluctant, because I think they don't feel knowledgeable enough to do it." She also said that the standards are too broad. She shared,

…When they are broad, teachers sometimes tend to want to build their own thing. And you really can't do your own thing when they're going to be tested on a specific standard. So we need help [understanding] in those broad standards.

Participant Four also said that she needs the resources (funds for a teacher and a curriculum) to provide her students ongoing literacy development.

Participant Five

Participant Five perceived the implementation process as somewhat effective. His training was a personal meeting with the district level social studies instructional facilitator. He feels that his teachers need more practice working with the cross-curricular ELA/L standards and then they will get comfortable with the teacher expectations.

Participant Six

Participant Six perceived the implementation process as not effective. He said that the teachers at his school need to shift their thinking to understand that literacy instruction is

everyone's responsibility; it is not just the English teacher's responsibility. He also shared that he and his teachers need more training, more assistance, and time.

Participant Seven

Participant Seven did not see the implementation of the ELA/L standards as effective. She feels like there needs to be more consistency. She thinks by the time they are close to mastering one curriculum framework, the policy changes. She also said that she needs time to address the gaps of learning for her students, and she needs more technology for her students and teachers. Finally, she said her teachers' need more training; they still see literacy development as the responsibility of the English teacher.

Summary of Participants' Perceived Needs

The findings for research question four revealed a list of needs based on the perceptions of the participants' experiences as they facilitated the implementation of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards. The participants' needs were quite similar, regardless of the contextual differences between demographic information and school settings. First, the participants said that they need comprehensive professional development that covers the new ELA/L academic standards and how to facilitate the implementation process. The participants felt as if they did not completely understand the cross-curricular ELA/L standards well enough to properly facilitate the implementation process. The second need that the participants shared was their need for more support in helping to shift teacher mindsets to a shared responsibility for literacy instruction. Although each of the schools were at different stages of incorporating literacy in social studies, science and other technical subjects they agreed that their teachers need guidance with this process. According to the conceptual framework, improving this instructional practice is

consistent with the reciprocal relationship between the new cross-curricular academic standards and the middle school concept.

Conclusions

The first major finding of this research was that the majority the principals in this study indicated that they did not receive adequate professional development to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. The conceptual framework indicates that leaders need awareness of writing across the curriculum so they can understand the essential components needed for facilitating the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. Additionally, it is not clear why some participants received training or a one-on-one planning meeting, but a conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that system leaders need to be consistent when providing resources. Finally, mandated change is a daunting task, often leaving educators feeling overwhelmed. Using a collaborative approach to change can allow for the participants to share the related responsibilities, counter the feelings of pressure, and build capacity simultaneously.

This study's second finding was that all of the participants stated that they are addressing the cross-curricular needs of early adolescents. The conceptual framework shows that middle level education must be developmentally appropriate for early adolescents. When I compared the findings to the conceptual framework, as a whole, the participants are not completely providing literacy in all content areas. Furthermore, none of the seven schools provide ongoing literacy development. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that the schools need to conduct an internal needs assessment and evaluation of instructional programs on a regular cycle. This will allow the participants to evaluate what they offer their students and monitor if the offerings are appropriate for the needs of early adolescents.

The third finding for this study was that the majority of the participants indicated that they are applying leadership styles that are applicable to change; however, several key factors from the conceptual framework, in regards to transformational leadership were not apart of the methods the participants said they use. Therefore, a conclusion drawn from this finding is that leaders need to always be mindful to cultivate relationships with the people who follow them (see Figure 5.1). Building rapport with one's followers will increase the opportunities for leaders to influence and motivate their followers. The environment needs to be safe so followers will be comfortable to share opposing views or to ask leaders for help. The leaders at each level should take the initiative to be well informed and provide quality training, tools, and resources for their followers.
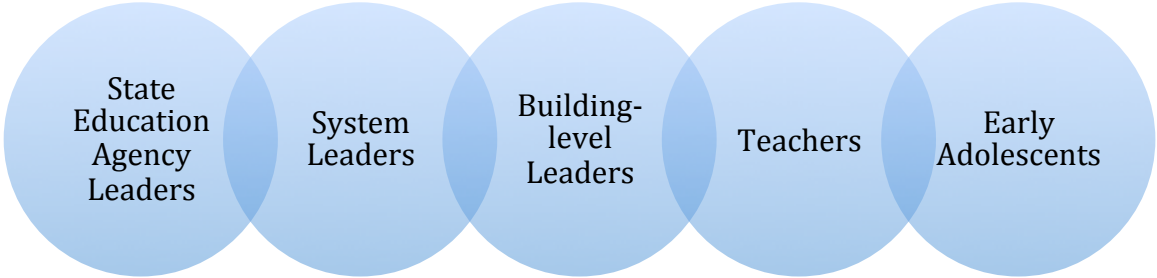

Figure 5.1. Effects of Professional Relations on Student Learning

The fourth finding for this study was the majority of the participants perceive that they use strategies relevant to change. Each of the participants had their own process they used to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. After comparing the participants' responses to the conceptual framework, it was revealed that three key change strategies were not being used (use of a model for change, action plans, and ongoing,

meaningful, professional development/capacity building). A conclusion drawn from this is that leaders at each level must monitor and assess their strategic plans for change innovations so they do not become complacent. Additionally, the findings show that some participants seem to have more of an idea of strategies that may be helpful in the change process. A conclusion drawn from this is that the principals need to collaborate and share strategies.

The fifth finding for this study showed that a little over half of the participants (4) perceive the implementation process of the cross-curricular ELA/L standards as not effective, and three of the participants perceived it as somewhat effective. When I compared this finding to the conceptual framework, several of the interrelated components were missing as the participants facilitated the implementation process. Two key conditions that were missing were a lack of awareness of the ELA/L standards and lack of preparation to facilitate the process. Each of the participants is missing key organization characteristics that are required for change. A conclusion drawn from this finding is that we educators need to always be student centered in all we do and with all the decisions we make. The participants shared ideas about what would help them with the change to the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. They mentioned that they need consistency, policy changed but not practiced, needing a model, needing PD, and training for teachers. All of the missing factors are the results of decisions that were made at various administrative levels, which is why I conclude that we need to be mindful of students when making choices that effect student learning. System leaders have to support building-level leaders build capacity so they can adequately facilitate change.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it sets forth the theoretical idea that is supported by the conceptual framework that multiple concepts have to work together in order to have an effective

implementation process that produces the intended change. When certain approaches do not exist, the outcome is likely to be inadequate. This study proposes that the new ELA/L academic standards share a reciprocal relationship with the middle level education. Leaders must understand and support the middle level concept. Leaders must develop professional relationships with their followers through the use of a transformational leadership style. Finally, leaders must have a comprehensive understanding of the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards in order to facilitate the change process.

Another significant aspect of this study is that building-level leaders cannot be expected to function in isolation when trying to facilitate change, particularly when the change is an unfunded mandated change for implementation throughout the whole system. This study shows that there is a need for more engagement from the system level. The system leaders did not provide a strategic plan for the building-level leaders and they did not provide opportunities for collaboration. This left the build-level leaders without the needed capacity necessary to facilitate the implementation of new cross-curricular ELA/L standards.

Recommendations

As the researcher, I offer recommendations for both professional practice and future research based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of this study.

Recommendations for professional practice:

1. School leaders must be cognizant of educational practices that are developmentally appropriate for early adolescents. Specifically to this study, building level leaders must ensure that the essential components for change function simultaneously in order to impact instructional practices related to the new cross-curricular ELA/L standards. The

essential components include: (a) writing across the curriculum, (b) middle level concepts, (c) leadership, (d) organization characteristics, and (e) change strategies.

2. System leaders should provide comprehensive professional development to assist principals with implementing new cross-curricular literacy standards required by mandated reform policies. The participants in this study felt like they, and their teachers were not properly equipped to complete the implementation process with fidelity. Adequate training, underscores the value in adopting externally mandated reform initiatives, which can help with capacity building.

Recommendations for future research:

1. Conduct a study with system leaders on their experiences with facilitating a shift to cross-curricular literacy standards. The participants in this study shared their perception on what they felt would have helped them with facilitating the cross-curricular ELA/L standards. Some of their needs were tied to their system leaders. A study on the experiences of the system leader(s) as he/she guides building-leaders through the implementation of cross-curricular ELA/L literacy standards will give an understanding of how upper management handles mandated changes.

2. Conduct a study on secondary teachers' perceptions of their experiences with implementing literacy instruction in content areas outside of English. I suggest this study because some of the participants' shared that they are having a hard time with shifting the mindset of some teachers' instructional practice to include cross-curricular literacy. Understanding non-English teachers' perceptions and experiences can provide useful information to formulate strategies that can facilitate this change.

Researcher Reflections

As this study comes to a close, I want to reflect on the study from start to finish. I appreciate the participants for granting us the opportunity to have a glimpse into their professional experiences. This study would not be meaningful without their willingness to participant and their willingness to share honest responses. Their candor has given me a better understanding of their experiences as a change agent for early adolescents in an urban school district. I hope this qualitative multiple-case study let's other educators learn from the voices of the seven participants. The data collection process, the findings, and the cross-case analysis of the participants' lived experiences can give us a better understanding of how to plan for change with cross-curricular ELA/L instruction for early adolescents.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

October 5, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sherri Betton
Ed Bengtson

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-09-103

Protocol Title: *From Policy to Practice: Principals' Strategies for Facilitating the Implementation of Cross-Curricular Literacy Standards to Early Adolescents*

Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 10/05/2016 Expiration Date: 10/04/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 6 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

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The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.

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Appendix B

Information Statements to Participants

IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ

Since education is an ever-changing arena, I want to explore strategies that principals use to facilitate change. As I said in the principals' meeting on November 9th, in order to condense the study, I plan to focus on literacy.

While reviewing the questions and reflecting on your experiences, please consider the following:

➢ I am conducting a multiple-case study whereby each school will be an individual case.

➢ As the researcher, I am not seeking or expecting perfection with the events surrounding changes in literacy at your site. As we know, change tends to happen in stages over time. Therefore, I hope you will be willing to share your successes as well as your roadblocks in regards to implementing disciplinary literacy instruction at your school.

You should have the following items:

1. Participant Informed Consent (My university requires that you have a copy and that I have a signed copy. I'll bring a copy for your signature.)
2. Participant Demographic Sheet
3. Interview Questions
4. Sheet for listing critical incidents related to implementing disciplinary literacy instruction at your school.

Thank you for your help and support!

Appendix C

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym_____

Gender:

Educational Employment Experiences:

Degrees:

Certifications and Licenses:

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Pseudonym: _____   Date: _____

Start Time: _____   End Time: _____

_____

Interview Questions

1. When did the school district first start work with disciplinary literacy instruction?
2. As a principal, how do you envision literacy instruction in a middle school setting?
3. From your perspective, what is the role of the principal as the district makes changes in early adolescent literacy instruction?
4. What are your personal attributes that contribute to you as a leader?
5. What leadership style do you use to facilitate change?
6. What strategies do you use to facilitate the change process?
7. Please tell me about your school's implementation process of cross-curricular literacy and disciplinary literacy instruction (including action plans).
8. Professional Development:
    a. What types of preparation have you received in regards to cross-curricular ELA/L instruction for early adolescents (including state and district training, collaboration, and reading materials)?
    b. What types of preparation have your teachers received in regards to cross-curricular ELA/L instruction for early adolescents (including state and district training, PLCs, collaboration, and reading materials)?
    c. Have you and your teachers received meaningful follow-up sessions?
9. Teaching and Learning:
    a. How should the shift to disciplinary literacy change classroom instruction and assessments?
    b. When comparing how disciplinary literacy is reflected in teacher lesson plans versus the instruction that actually takes place, what do you see?

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     c. What are you next steps?

10. How do you monitor the implementation of disciplinary literacy instruction?

11. How do your teachers use collaboration to work towards full implementation of cross-curricular literacy and disciplinary literacy instruction?

12. Strengths and areas of need:

     a. When thinking about your preparation for change, where do you feel your strengths lie (personally and as a school)?

     b. What challenges have you faced during the implementation process?

     c. Do you have other responsibilities that keep you from concentrating on changes in literacy instruction? If so, please elaborate.

     d. Does your school see literacy instruction as the responsibility of the English teacher or as a responsibility that should be shared across the content areas?

     e. When leading federal/state reforms, such as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) required shift to disciplinary literacy instruction, in which areas do you and your teachers need more assistance?

13. If you had an opportunity to speak to federal or state policy writers in regards to early adolescent literacy instruction,

     a. What type of help would you ask for?

     b. Would you add additional comments?

14. Do you have any final thoughts?

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in my research project!

Appendix E

Critical Incidents (or actions) for Implementing Cross-Curricular ELA/L Standards

Please list any critical processes, planning sessions, action steps, trainings, etc. that contributes toward implementing cross-curricular literacy and disciplinary literacy instruction at your school.

1. _____

    _____

    _____

2. _____

    _____

    _____

3. _____

    _____

    _____

4. _____

    _____

    _____

5. _____

    _____

    _____

6. _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix F

Conceptual Framework
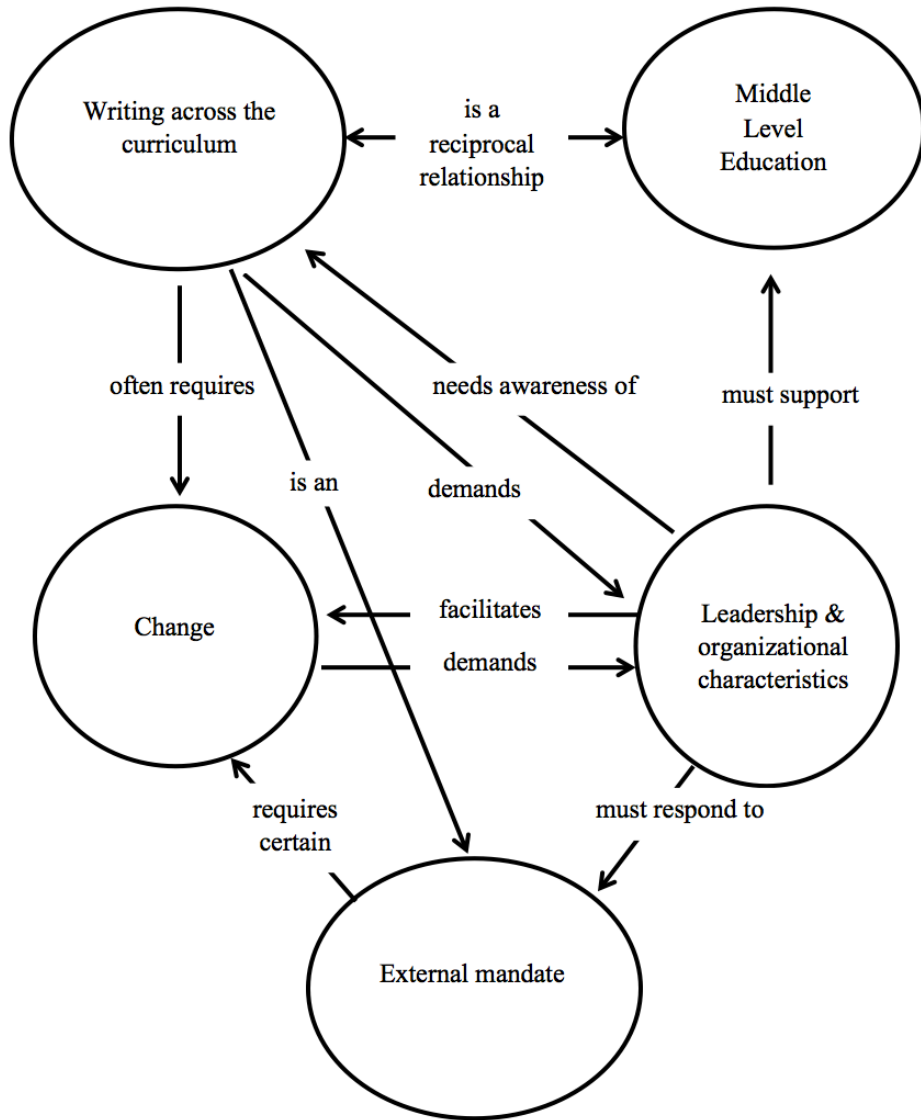
Appendix G

Coding Legend/Schema

Knowledge about Implementing state adopted cross-curricular ELA/L academic standards

KICS1   Very Knowledgeable
KICS2   Somewhat Knowledgeable
KICS3   Unprepared

Meeting the needs of early adolescent students

EA1   Shared governance
EA2   Interdisciplinary teams
EA3   Affective domain
EA4   Curriculum, instruction, and assessments
EA5   Sustained development of language and literacy skills
EA6   Integrating literacy in all content area instruction
EA7   Provide guidance for distressed readers

Leadership style

LS1   Applying leadership style applicable to change
LS2   Sporadically applies leadership style applicable to change
LS3   No evidence of using a leadership style applicable to change

Uses Strategies for Change

SC1   Model for change
SC2   Transformational leadership skills evident
SC3   Applying best practices for academic achievement of early adolescents
SC4   Shared governance and communication
SC5   Use of action plans
SC6   Use of collaboration
SC7   Use of data
SC8   Adequate use of professional development

Principals perceived effectiveness of implementation of ELA/L standards

PE1   Very Effective
PE2   Somewhat Effective
PE3   Not Effective