Administrative Support in an East Tennessee Rural School District During the Change to Common Core State Standards

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Dedication

A dissertation is a challenge not fully understood except by those who have undertaken the endeavor. Without the help and support of certain people, I never would have overcome this challenge. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to several people who have been very important to me during this long journey.

The first people to whom I would like to dedicate this work are people I would have never met if I had not decided to attend the University of Tennessee. First is Dr. Pamela Angelle, for supporting me during all of the change and turmoil throughout my dissertation process and for never giving up on me. I never would have made it to the end if not for her support and patience. From my cohort is Cherie, who encouraged and supported me throughout the entire process and helped me when I thought all was lost. Words are not enough.

Secondly, I dedicate this work to my friends and family at Harriman Middle School, who have stood beside me, always reminding me that I am good enough. Also to the members, past and present, of SYGC, who have helped me stay sane through our Tuesday night gatherings—especially my dear friend, Emily, who always knows how to make me laugh, and who also came to be my moral support during my dissertation defense. I don't know if I would have made it through that day without her.

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Abstract

Common Core State Standards (CCSS), an initiative for standardizing learning in a more in-depth, analytical way, have been adopted by 45 states, Washington, D.C., and four United States Territories. When implementing such changes, rural schools face their own unique challenges, where principals and administrators play an important role in the successful culture of change. The purpose of this study was to examine how the principals and district-level administrators in Mountain View School District, an East Tennessee rural school district, supported teachers during the transition to CCSS. In this qualitative study, three principals, two assistant principals, and three district-level administrators were interviewed and provided artifacts in this multi-site exploratory study. Findings indicated that resource limitations forced Mountain View School District to rely heavily on generic training and technological resources provided by the state to support their teachers during the transition to CCSS. Principals and district-level administrators provided support in the forms of communication and collaboration. The findings from this study have implications for education policy makers, district-level administrators, and principals. Policy makers have insight into expectations of implementation and training compared to the reality of implementation and training; district-level administrators have insight into gaps between state training and district implementation, especially for new administrators; and principals have insight into the lack of parent communication. Recommendations include increasing variety in state training, a more realistic implementation timeline, and funding from the state; providing a mentoring program for new administrators and more frequent training within districts; and providing more support for parents and students through communication from principals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Leadership takes on several meanings within the context of organizations. One can think of the typical definition of leadership as the person in charge or one could determine the leaders as those who take charge and do what needs to be done, benefiting the organization (Heifetz, 1994). These definitions differ because the former is a person in charge by position or title where the latter may be any member of an institution who steps up to handle situations when necessary to ensure the best outcome for the organization. At times, it is necessary for a leader to provide guidance in bringing about change in his or her organization. In education, administrators facilitate change by ensuring that faculty and staff have the tools they need to carry out change. These leaders can react differently when faced with change. Some will force changes to occur, while others provide support to the faculty and staff allowing them the freedom to make changes happen (Fullan, 1999).

When changes are mandated in education, they can originate from the school level to the federal level (Fink & Stoll, 2005). From wherever these changes come, implementation often takes place at the teacher level. Bailey (2000) refers to teachers as "the rank and file implementers of change" (p. 112). Some teachers can be considered pioneers, forging ahead and making the changes, while others are considered settlers, set in their ways of working (Hargreaves, 2005a). Teachers who fear change may do so because "it presents them with something new, uncertain or unclear—because it has no obvious or common meaning for them" (Hargreaves, 2005b, p. 2).

Many principals who are responsible for supporting the change process often do not know how to respond to changes because they do not have a full understanding of what is occurring (Hargreaves, 2005b). When spearheading the implementation of change, a principal's vision of the change may not match that of the teachers. Fink and Stoll (2005) indicate that teachers and principals often see the aspects of the school differently; therefore, the principal must provide the meaning of the change and support the relationships of the staff to promote learning. The principal should create an environment where the staff can work together to ensure the success of the change. For change to be successful, everyone on the staff must be cooperative and provide input and support (Fink & Stoll, 2005).

If teachers feel resentment toward a change or toward each other, the process of implementing change will be more difficult (Hargreaves, 2005a). Teachers need to be comfortable with each other and the process in order to have successful change. Teachers need to be shown how the change will be beneficial and given the opportunities to work together to progress through the change successfully (Hargreaves, 2005a).

Rural schools, in particular, face challenges during the change process. In Tennessee, approximately 66.39% of the residents are in an urban setting while 33.61% reside in rural areas (United States Census Bureau, 2010). School reformers as far back as 100 years ago indicated that rural communities do not have the appropriate resources to run their own schools, and they cannot prepare students for a modern world (Schafft & Jackson, 2010).

Due to vast differences in funding between urban/suburban schools and rural schools, such as lower tax bases, a tendency to work more minimum wage jobs, and population migration from the rural community for cities, rural systems do not always have the same funds to offer

needed resources for the teachers to implement new programs (Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Howley & Howley, 2010; Schafft; Killeen, & Morrissey, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Even students in rural schools are perceptive to the way rural societies are viewed and the shortcomings of the education system. Theobald and Wood (2010) cited a student who said rural youth were "well aware that we don't have the best schools, we don't get the best teachers or the best education. We know that we're going to have to catch up when we go to college" (p. 17). With these opinions regarding rural schools, implementing change can be challenging.

Historically, several court cases throughout the United States have challenged the funding system that requires the majority of school funding to come from local tax bases, which puts rural areas at a disadvantage to urban and suburban areas due to the significant lack of industry and lower property tax rates in these areas (Budge, 2006; Dayton, 1998; Howley & Howley, 2005). In Tennessee, per-pupil expenditures vary from district to district. According to the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) Report Card, Mountain View School District, a rural school district, had an average per-pupil expenditure of $8,597.90. The three major urban school districts, Davidson County, Shelby County, and Knox County spent $11,496.30, $11,221.60, and $9,043.0 per student, respectively, in the 2013-2014 school year (TDOE, 2015a). A portion of this money is used by the school districts for instructional support, which includes professional development opportunities.

Because of these financial shortfalls, rural school districts have difficulties providing high-quality professional development opportunities for their teachers (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Chance & Segura, 2009; Eppley, 2009; Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009). Since high

quality professional development plays an integral role in the education of students (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Hickey & Harris, 2005), bringing about change without the resources available to properly train teachers can be difficult. In these situations, the principal's role in providing the proper support for teachers to foster success of change is even more necessary (Barley & Beesley, 2007).

A change currently faced by educators is the implementation of Common Core State Standards. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a recent educational change that has been adopted by 45 states (including Tennessee), Washington, D.C., four United States Territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (CCSSI, 2012). The standards were created to outline the information students should know at the end of each school year and ensure that high school graduates have the necessary skills to be successful regardless of where they graduate (CCSSI, 2012). In the states that have adopted CCSS, teachers are undergoing training to learn the most effective ways to implement strategies for promoting CCSS in their classrooms.

Full implementation of CCSS standards has already begun in Tennessee (TDOE, n.d.). The standards have been adopted in all public schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade, statewide. There are no waivers for implementation for districts. Every district in the state is expected to comply with CCSS, which can be problematic for already cash-strapped rural school districts.

Statement of the Problem

Implementation of CCSS applies to all community types; however, research has found that reforms such as CCSS are more focused toward urban and suburban student populations and teachers have indicated that some of the standards may be irrelevant to rural students (Ayers,

2011; Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Large resource differentials find rural schools having to do more with less (Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009; Starr & White, 2008). Rural teachers face a greater deficit to overcome in the implementation process. Due to this deficit, the role of the principal in facilitating change becomes even more important.

The principal can provide support to the teachers during the process of change. Principals should ensure that morale is ample by supporting the teachers with what they need—materials, professional development, and a healthy organizational climate (Fullan, 1999, 2001, 2013; Hill & Brooks, 2004; West, 2005). For changes to be successful, the teachers must be willing to work toward the goal of implementation and that cannot be fully effective without the motivation and support of the principal. However, levels of principal support can differ significantly from school to school and teacher to teacher.

Some administrators provide unequal support or penalties that vary from teacher to teacher (Blase & Blase, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lilyquist, 1998; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Tye, 2000). Lilyquist (1998) stated that, especially in a top-down form of leadership where change is forced from high ranking officials down to the school level (and even within the school level by principals), some principals may withhold resources from some teachers and provide extra resources to others, creating an imbalance in training and support that will make it difficult for change to succeed. Bailey (2000) stated, "processes needed to ensure teacher involvement and ownership of change are rarely in place" (p. 119). Having focus and support are important to successful change. "Without such focus, principals cannot help teachers who themselves are pushed—perhaps threatened is a more apt word—to higher accountability

standards" (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012, p. 701). The support is necessary for success, and the lack of support will almost ensure failure (Wanless, Patton, Rimm-Kaufman, & Deutsch, 2013).

District-level support can also influence the success or failure of change. Firestone, et al. (2005) stated that "district leadership can influence teaching practices using one important pathway—professional development—to improve teaching" (p. 414). Fullan (1982) also stated that one of the steps district-level administrators should take to implement change is to "ensure that direct implementation support is provided in the form of available quality materials, in-service training, one-to-one technical help, and opportunity for peer interaction" (p.166).

As evidenced, literature has reported that support from both principals and district school systems personnel is essential to the success of any change initiative (Firestone, et al., 2005; Fullan, 1982, 1999, 2013; Hill & Brooks, 2004; Opfer, Henry, & Mashburn, 2008; West, 2005). Research has also found that rural schools are disadvantaged in the resources required to implement change (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Chance & Segura, 2009; Eppley, 2009; Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009). With the recent mandate for implementation of CCSS in all Tennessee schools, the support of principals and district personnel becomes particularly important in rural schools. This study examined principal and district level perceptions of the extent and quality of support provided to teachers in one rural district as they implement CCSS.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how principals and district personnel support teachers during a time of change in their schools. Specifically, the study focused on the extent of support during the change process of implementation of CCSS in a rural school system in East Tennessee.

Research Questions

Research questions are intended to guide a study. The two research questions that guided this study are:

(1) How do rural principals provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

(2) How do rural district administrators provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

To answer these research questions, the researcher interviewed school principals, assistant principals, and district level administrators in a rural school district. In these interviews, the researcher examined the extent of support provided by the principals and administrators to support the change to CCSS.

Significance

Education policy often requires a change within a school building. Policymakers often support implementation of change because they feel that American schools are not properly preparing students for college and careers, and they believe American students are not able to compete on a global scale (Fullan, 2001, 2005). Often, the policies that require a change in standards are focused around topics that are more urban and suburban centered (Arnold, 2005; Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Implementation is often difficult for rural schools because they face unique challenges that are different from the challenges faced by urban and suburban schools (Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009; Starr & White, 2008). By focusing on a rural school district, this study will provide policymakers insight to the

challenges faced by and the possible solutions for rural school districts when implementing new policy.

Tennessee has many rural school districts. Of the 1,726 public schools in Tennessee on the list of US School Locale Codes, 691 are classified as rural. This translates to approximately 40% of the public schools in Tennessee having a rural classification. With this many schools classified as rural, state policymakers must be aware of the unique challenges rural districts face. This study highlighted those challenges for one district, providing one level of insight regarding this sizeable subset of Tennessee schools.

Mountain View School District (MVSD) is a rural East Tennessee school district that was the focus of this study. Findings from this study will be useful to other rural school districts, namely head principals and district-level personnel who are responsible for providing necessary supports to teachers during times of change, by allowing them to see what processes and supports MVSD utilized, and they can determine if those types of supports might help in their schools or systems. Because rural school districts tend to have a greater disadvantage with funding and resources as compared to urban and suburban districts (Dayton, 1998), this frustration can become more imminent for teachers in rural school districts. This study will provide a basis to inform other rural school districts on how to better adapt to policy changes such as CCSS.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be addressed to further the reader's understanding of the terminology utilized in this study:

(1) *Director of Schools* or *Director* – This term is used by several school systems in the region as the title for the superintendent of schools.

(2) *District personnel* – This term will be used to refer to personnel at the district level who are responsible for the development and implementation of professional development activities for the school system.

(3) *Principal* – For the purposes of this study, the term *principal* shall refer to the head principal of the school.

(4) *Race to the Top* – Race to the Top is a government-funded grant program that was instituted by Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan.

(5) *Rural school* – This is defined using the NCES Urban-Centric Locale Codes list. There are three categories that qualify as rural—Fringe, Distant, and Remote.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are factors that narrow the scope and define the parameters of a study (Creswell, 2009), and these are choices made by the researcher. Certain delimitations were placed upon this study as a means of control for its scope.

The schools selected for the sample were delimited to rural schools in one school system in East Tennessee. The results of the study may not be generalizable across the entire population of rural schools. Since rural schools have different types of populations, this data will not be able to be applied to all rural school settings.

In addition, principals and district level administrators were interviewed. Since no other stakeholders were interviewed, the perceptions are confined to principals and administrators.

Finally, the focus of this study is change during the implementation of CCSS. Because of this, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other change initiatives.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are the projected weaknesses that can be found in a study (Creswell, 2009). Limitations are items that are outside the control of the researcher.

A limitation comes from the methodology in this study. Interviews can be subjective and will rely on the honesty and integrity of the respondents. Perceptions may not necessarily match reality. The researcher has also had to interpret the data collected and choose what information to use in the study. The researcher ensured that methods of verification were utilized to remove bias.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one included the basic information and terminology to be found throughout the study. The statement of the problem and research questions have been addressed, and the significance of the study explored. A description of the methods of data collection was also introduced. Key terms that will be used throughout this study have been defined, as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study for greater understanding of the confines of the study.

Chapter two provides review of the literature to present background information and provide support for the need for this additional research. A background of middle schools is covered first. This will be followed by information regarding instructional practices utilized in middle schools. Finally, before a summary of the chapter, the theoretical framework will be defined.

Chapter three will describe the rationale for the study and the methods that were utilized. This chapter will give an explanation of the design of the study, followed by a review of the research questions. The population will be defined, and an explanation of the sample will also be outlined. The data collection will be discussed, followed by the intended methods of data analysis.

Chapter four will give a review of the data collected. The information gained through the interviews will be evaluated and outlined for the reader. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the information.

Chapter five will address the conclusions and recommendations for the continuation or alteration of the study. This chapter will summarize the findings and discuss where gaps may still lie.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The recent history of education reform began with the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This law has been reauthorized several times, including President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, and the Race to the Top initiative under President Barack Obama. Under Race to the Top, states who wanted to participate were required to adopt new standards to be eligible for the funding from the program (Ravitch, 2014). Currently, many states are attempting to implement these new standards known as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) bas their curriculum standards.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) began to support educational standards that raise the level of academic achievement, provide consistency across the nation in academic expectations, and place students in the United States on a level to compete with students in other countries (CCSSI, 2012; Kendall, 2011). This change in American education of an alteration in standards requires a commensurate transformation of instructional practices.

This chapter will provide an overview of literature relevant to the study. Literature covering CCSS will be addressed. Also included will be research defining rural schools and problems faced by rural education. Literature regarding leadership during times of change will be reviewed. This review continues with a description of the conceptual framework for the current study, indicating the importance of the study and a description of the current gap in the literature which this study will fill.

Common Core State Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a development in education aimed at improving the standards by which students in the United States learn. These standards were developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) which is comprised of members from the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and businesses. The goal of CCSS is to create standards that put American students on a competitive level not only with each other, but also with international students (CCSSI, 2012; CCSSO, 2013; Kendall, 2011). The standards "outline the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn throughout their K-12 education in order to be prepared for college and careers when they graduate" (Center on Education Policy, 2014a, p. 1).

"The stated goal of standards is to specify key knowledge and skills in a format that makes it clear what teachers and assessments need to focus on" (Conley, 2011, p. 17). Conley continues by discussing that CCSS is designed to develop cognitive strategies with the purpose of identifying knowledge and skills that are presented in sequence and progress in complexity throughout a student's educational career.

Goals of CCSS

One of the major goals of CCSS is to provide the same standards from state to state so that students receive comparable education across the country (Association for Middle Level Education, n.d.; CCSSI, 2012; Kendall, 2011). Kendall (2011) stated that students can often miss large amounts of content or relearn the same content due to discrepancies in standards across the country. Some students may begin their education in one state and move to another. Standards that are covered in their grade level in the new state may not have been the same

standards they were studying before. The different states may address different standards at different grade levels.

The supporters of CCSS also expressed a concern that students in the United States are not performing at the same academic levels as students from other countries (AMLE, n.d.; CCSSI, 2012; Kendall, 2011). The design of the Common Core standards is to promote higher levels of competitiveness for American students by making them ready to enter the workforce or attend college with minimal course remediation (Moats, 2012).

The organizations involved in the development of the standards realized there were already standards in place for each state (CCSSI, 2015a). These standards often did not correlate with standards from other states. Also, with each state setting its own proficiency levels, there was not a set definition of what made a student ready for life after high school. What qualified as proficient in one state may not have been considered proficient in another, creating a gap in the levels of education of the students.

With CCSS, AMLE (n.d.) that it will make it easier to determine what skills a student is missing and work with that student toward mastering that skill. This would be accomplished through the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) practices to benchmark and monitor students' progress and zero in on what skills are missing, and then provide extra help, small group, or one-on-one instruction to progress the student's understanding.

The standards were created as part of a two-step process. College and career readiness standards were created first in order to determine the skills and information students should know by the time they graduate high school, and the kindergarten through twelfth grade standards were created second in order to address what students need to learn to build up to

being ready for a college or career, post-high school (CCSSI, 2015a). And these college and career ready standards would allow instructors at the college level an insight to what information students should have mastered, regardless of where they have come from around the country.

Needs for the Success of CCSS

For CCSS to be successful, experts say that teachers need to create rich, engaging lessons for students to foster their interests and desire to learn (CCSSO, 2013). Hargreaves (2005a) stated that teachers still rely heavily on teacher-centered instructional practices. For many students to find instruction engaging, the lessons need to be developed around not only the content, but also the needs of the students (Brunner, 2013). Creating activities that promote higher order thinking strategies while centering instruction on the students will provide for more successful implementation of CCSS (Brunner, 2013; Smylie & Perry, 2005).

In April 2014, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) presented a report titled *A Research Agenda for the Common Core State Standards: What Information Do Policymakers Need?* This report was designed to address immediate needs in the areas of information and data. CEP (2014b) consulted with representatives from several CCSS organizations, including the National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, Council of Chief State School Offices, National School Boards Association, and several other organizations to determine what information and data they needed regarding CCSS.

Among the needs expressed by these groups were examples of what works. "While practitioners are in the throes of CCSS implementation, policymakers are trying to support this process, and all are acting on very little information" (CEP, 2014b, p. 2). Listed areas of needed research focus include case studies from states or districts that are relatively far along in the

implementation process to determine what is working and what is not; whether effective partnerships among education agencies, institutions of higher education, and businesses are in place to support CCSS implementation; indentifying states and districts that have done more to prepare lower-achieving students for CCSS to gain information on how these states have supported this preparation; and states' efforts to prepare for testing implementation. These organizations also expressed a desire for long-term research to be completed about CCSS. This report implies that there are not many studies that have been performed that will express the successes, processes, and/or shortfalls of CCSS implementation.

Curricula and Materials

When the standards under CCSS were created, the writers wanted the standards to represent goals that would help students be prepared for college or a career upon high school graduation (CCSSI, 2015b). The standards are evidence based, consistent, based off of current state standards and using the strongest of those standards, utilize higher order thinking skills, and pull also pull from standards used by education systems in other countries that compete on a global scale with the United States (CCSSI, 2015b).

Standards were implemented for kindergarten through twelfth grades in math and reading/language arts. The focus of the standards is to start with core concepts in early school grades to build a foundation for work in later grades (CCSSI, 2015b). Students are given time to master the standards and skills that will allow them to tackle more complex concepts in later grades. "While the standards set grade-specific goals, they do not define how the standards should be taught or which materials should be used to support students" (CCSSI, 2015b, n.p.).

There is no set curriculum to be utilized across the country, as long as teachers are teaching the standards and adhering to the goals of the standards.

One report on CCSS implementation found that the majority (80%) of districts in states that have adopted CCSS have already begun teaching CCSS aligned curricula, and a similar percentage of districts' teachers are using materials developed by local teachers (CEP, 2014a). Approximately two-thirds of the districts studied reported that 90-100% of their teachers and principals had attended some level of CCSS training, but only one-third of the studied districts stated that all of their teachers were prepared to teach CCSS in the 2014-2015 school year (CEP, 2014a).

The curriculum implementation methods are not standardized among all of the districts. CEP (2014a) reported that some school districts are fully implementing CCSS in some grade levels and phasing it into others. For example, one district studied fully implemented the standards in K-2 while having partial implementation in grades 3-12 (CEP, 2014a). Another district studied chose to implement the standards at the secondary level and filter the transition down through the lower grade levels.

In Tennessee, there is no set, statewide curriculum for CCSS. The state, however, has provided yearly trainings for teachers to attend to learn about the standards and learn strategies to use for classroom implementation of the standards (TDOE, n.d.).

Training

A study conducted in California regarding teacher preparedness found that math and science teachers stated they would need more training to effectively implement the standards (WestEd, 2012), with another nationwide study by Education First (EF) and Editorial Projects in

Education (EPE) stating that teachers will need to have a deep understanding of CCSS, along with access to aligned materials and new teaching approaches, to effectively implement the standards (EF & EPE, 2013). The teachers recognized that the methods they used to teach before CCSS implementation would not be sufficient to teach the new standards. The math teachers in this study specifically stated that the methods by which they were taught, and the methods they currently used to teach, would not be adequate to teach the new math standards effectively, so they would need as much assistance as they could get, especially from their schools and the district level, to be effective at the new standards.

A concern of some secondary math educators from a California study centered on elementary-level preparedness for the standards. These teachers felt that students were already ill-prepared under the current standards at the time, and that without proper training and preparedness for the elementary levels, the gap in preparedness for middle school and high school standards would grow under CCSS (WestEd, 2012).

The state of Tennessee offers ongoing training from the state level that teachers are able to attend to learn about the standards (TDOE, n.d.). They began offering these training sessions for the 2012-2013 school year. They have continuously offered training sessions for teachers since that time. The training sessions focus around "standards, assessments, resources, and instructional practices" (TDOE, n.d.) to provide teachers with "clear strategies and tools to help all students meet high expectations" (TDOE, n.d.).

Response to Intervention

Though Response to Intervention (RTI) has been around long before CCSS (NEA Member Benefits, n.d.), in states like Tennessee, it has been incorporated into the

implementation of CCSS. In order to identify learning difficulties with students, schools can use an RTI approach. "Response to Intervention…is a methodology aimed at evaluating and addressing the educational needs of all students and identifying students needing intervention beyond what is provided during typical classroom instruction" (Shapiro & Clemens, 2009, p. 3).

A three-tiered program is used to implement RTI (Luckner & Pierce, 2013). Tier I includes high quality classroom instruction aligned with state standards and being administered by qualified personnel, ensuring adequate instruction for all students (Luckner & Pierce, 2013; RTI Action Network, n.d.; TDOE, 2015b). Although ever student participates in Tier I instruction, it is estimated by TDOE that approximately 80-85% of students will adequately learn in a Tier I environment.

Tier II instruction is in addition to classroom time. For students who are identified as needing additional help, they will have, typically, an additional 30 minutes of instruction in math or reading/language arts that is tailored to their needs (Luckner & Pierce, 2013; TDOE, 2015b). Approximately 10-15% of students would fall into this classification according to TDOE.

Tier III instruction is for students who have a significant gap in classroom skills. These students receive even more instruction during the school day that is delivered individually or in small groups and addresses the specific deficits of the student (Luckner & Pierce, 2013; TDOE, 2015b). TDOE estimates approximately three to five percent of the state's students would fall into this classification.

Student placement into RTI tiers is decided by a universal screener, which is often left up to the state's, school system's, or individual school's choice (Luckner & Pierce, 2013; TDOE, 2015b). The universal screener is a test administered one to three times per year for Tier I

students, biweekly for Tier II students, and weekly for Tier III students (Lucker & Pierce, 2013). The universal screener assessments are used to determine whether students need to change tiers and/or to tailor instruction to students based off of areas of deficit.

In 2012, the state's Common Core Leadership Council met to discuss best instructional practices for math and reading. The council decided there was a "need for a statewide RTI model to promote consistency and improved instruction" (TDOE, 2015b, p. 9). TDOE made RTI a state-wide mandate in effect beginning July 1, 2014 (TDOE, 2015b). It is utilized in conjunction with CCSS to ensure that educators are "providing instructional opportunity to any student struggling to succeed" (TDOE, 2015b, p.7).

Critics

While CCSS has many supporters, the standards also have many detractors. Those who are opposed to CCSS range from politicians to educators and education experts to parent groups and think tanks to business leaders. There are several factors these non-supporters address when speaking out against CCSS.

Many anti-CCSS individuals point out is that the standards were written with very little teacher input (Ravitch, 2014; WestED, 2012). The National Governor's Association (NGO) released in 2009 information about the work groups and feedback groups that would be responsible for developing the standards. The purpose of the Standards Development Work Group for each area (math and reading/language arts) was tasked "in determining and writing the college and career readiness standards in English-language arts and mathematics" (NGA, 2009, n.p.). The role of the Feedback Group was "to provide information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents" (NGA, 2009,

n.p.). The article continued to state that final decisions about the standards documents would be made by the Work Group.

The problem those who do not support CCSS have had with this process is that neither of the groups involved much public school teacher input or transparency in the writing process (Ravitch, 2014). The list of members for each of the groups for each standard set is comprised of members of ACT, Inc., the company responsible for writing and administering the ACT college entrance exam; Achieve, Inc., an organization created by governors and business leaders to "make college and career readiness a priority across the country" (Achieve, 2015, n.p.); The College Board, the company responsible for writing and administrating the SAT college entrance exam; America's Choice, an organization that was a provider in research-based strategies to schools to improve student achievement (which was acquired by Pearson Learning, a for-profit education materials and testing supplier, in 2010) (Pearson, 2010); Student Achievement Partners, an organization founded by two of the people brought in to help write the standards; VockleyLang, an organization founded by a project manager and graphic designer whose purpose, according to their website, is to provide "sophisticated ideas to ordinary people" (VockleyLang, 2009); various university professors; and one charter school teacher (NGA, 2009). According to anti-CCSS camps, the standards writing process happened with these representatives, behind closed doors, without the input of public school educators or public opinion (Coopersmith, 2014; Ravitch, 2014).

A major concern of many against CCSS lies in the funding of the project. Ravitch (2014) indicated that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation bankrolled over $200 million to jump start

the CCSS process. Other notable financers of CCSS development include IBM, JPMorgan, and Microsoft, among others (Delevingne, 2015).

Another concern many have regarding CCSS deals with governmental control. Constitutionally, control of schools belongs to the states. Since control of public education is not specifically mentioned in the constitution, it falls under the Tenth Amendment which states, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people" (U.S. Const. amend. X). While CCSS is not specifically federal government mandated, participation has been made a requirement to receive federal funding through Race to the Top (Coopersmith, 2014; Moats, 2012; Ravitch, 2014). Even though it is not a requirement that states participate in Race to the Top, those who are against CCSS do not agree that the lure of money in the form of federal grants should be allowed to dictate what states are doing in regards to public education (Coopersmith, 2014).

Dr. Louisa Moats, who is an expert in early childhood literacy education, stated in regard to the reading and language arts standards that they are essentially setting students up to fail (Bertin, 2014; Moats, 2012). Dr. Moats was on the writing team for the CCSS reading and language arts standards in 2009, but she refused to sign off on their use (Bertin, 2014). She stated that the standards ignore ability levels and student needs by requiring that all reading pieces be on grade level instead of on student level. She indicated that implementation of these standards, and requiring students who are already at risk to read beyond their ability levels will have the reverse effect of the standards' intentions:

> …raising standards and expectations, without sufficient attention to the known causes and remedies for reading and academic failure, and without substantial influx of new resources to educate and support teachers, is not likely to benefit students with mild, moderate, or severe learning difficulties. Rather, the stage is set for those students to suffer adverse consequences, such as forced grade repetitions, denial of promotion, or diplomas, and irrelevant requirements that do not, in fact, enable students to be more ready for college or career. (Moats, 2012, p. 16)

Rural Schools

According to the United States Department of Education (US DOE, n.d.), defining the term rural includes factors such as population density and remoteness. The US DOE (n.d.) stated that these factors influence "school organization, availability of resources, and economic and social conditions" (n.p.). The Rural Assistance Center (RAC, 2012) noted that all school districts, even smaller, rural schools, must maintain a certain standard of services for students. These services, such as staff, transportation, food services, and facilities, are sometimes difficult for rural districts to keep up because it often costs more to provide these services than for schools in a larger district. Bard, Gardener, and Weiland (2005) attributed these higher costs to "a series of economic downturns" (p.4). They stated that the migration of students from rural to urban areas caused rural school enrollments to decline, thus raising rural education costs. This causes a declining tax base, and since school systems receive state funding based on the tax base and student enrollment (Dayton, 1998), financial resources are often restricted for rural schools.

Rural schools are often the centers for their communities (Bauch, 2001; Schafft & Jackson, 2010). They provide locations for community gatherings where "athletics, drama

programs, music and other social activities play a vital part in the community life and identity" (Miller, 1995, p. 4). Without the schools, some rural communities would not function (Miller, 1995; Tieken, 2014).

People in rural communities are often viewed by society at a lower social standard than urban residents (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Often, residents of rural areas are referred to as "hicks, rednecks, plowboys, bumpkins, hillbillies," (Howley, Harmon, & Leopold, 1997, p. 6)—all terms to imply that rural residents are backward, unsophisticated, and uncouth (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Theobald and Wood (2010) suggest this perception of rural residents has been perpetuated throughout the years due to the advent of radio, television, and movies. They state that programs such as *Green Acres, Hee-Haw, The Andy Griffith Show, The Bob Newhart Show, Petticoat Junction, The Dukes of Hazzard,* and *The Beverly Hillbillies* all contain characters that propagate the country bumpkin mindset. The rural characters on these programs are portrayed as unintelligent and without ambition, and since these were nationally syndicated programs, it spread this perception of rural life throughout the country, further disseminating the mindset that rural people are slow.

Industrialization and Outmigration

As the country moved from the more rural, agrarian societies of the past toward the more urban, industrialized business centers of today, rural economies and schools have suffered (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Mechanization of farming equipment caused many rural farm workers to lose their jobs and search for employment elsewhere (Stern, 1994). Rural workers have moved toward more service industry oriented jobs, working at retail stores or in hotel services, for example (Budge, 2006; Herzog & Pittman, 1999; Howley, et al., 1997; Stern, 1994).

This situation has forced rural people into jobs with lower wages and has caused higher rates of unemployment, adding to the rural economic struggle (Groenke & Nespor, 2010). In some of these communities, the rate of families on welfare is also high (Howley & Howley, 2010).

Another result of the shift from rural to urban is outmigration. Many from the rural population opt to relocate to urban centers for jobs or because it is what people who want to make something of themselves do (Bauch, 2001; Budge, 2006; Howley et al., 1997; Howley & Howley, 2010; Miller, 1995; Sherman & Sage, 2011; Theobald & Wood, 2010). The highest-performing students in rural areas are encouraged to leave the community as success is measured by making it out of the rural area because more opportunity lies in urban centers (Bauch, 2001; Long, Bush, & Theobald, 2003; Sherman & Sage, 2011; Theobald & Wood, 2010).

The combination of outmigration and the move to more minimum-wage, service industry jobs that limit economic growth affects the overall economy—and, therefore, the educational funding—of rural communities (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Beck & Shoffstall, 2005; Budge, 2006; Dayton, 1998; Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Mollenkopf, 2009; Schafft et al., 2010). Industries that do move to rural locations are usually attracted by lower tax rates and tax breaks offered by local governments (Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Moore, 2001). These situations in which industries arrive strain the already overstretched funding sources for rural education (Groenke & Nespor, 2010). These low levels and minimal sources of local funding create problems for rural schools in providing necessary resources (Dayton, 1998).

Teacher Preparation

Most teacher preparation programs ready teachers for suburban or urban settings (Edmondson & Butler, 2010). Combine this preparation with the lower wages that come with

teaching in rural communities, and rural schools find it difficult to attract and retain highly qualified and prepared teachers (Barley and Beesley, 2007; Eppley, 2009; Mollenkopf, 2009, Schwartzbeck, Prince, Redfield, Morris, & Hammer, 2003). Younger teachers and administrators often view positions in rural schools as a stepping-off point between their education and a better, higher-paying urban or suburban position (Powell, Higgins, Aram, & Freed, 2009; RAC, 2012; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Eppley (2009) attributes this inability to retain teachers to the lower levels of per-pupil spending that are usually found in rural schools.

Edmondson and Butler (2010) also stated that many of the teachers who stay in rural locations and do well are those who grew up in the area because they understand the community, which the researchers indicate is an important trait for a teacher in a rural community. The frustrations of the teachers who understand these communities lie in the imposed curricula often not relevant to the lives of rural children because their lives and communities are not akin to those who develop a new curriculum (Arnold, 2005; Brooke, 2003; Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2007; Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

Rural School Resources

Reeves (2010) stated, "Educational leaders have three essential resources: time, money, and emotional energy" (p. 27). However, when it comes to rural schools, money can often be a problem. Rural educators and administrators constantly talk about having to do more with less (Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009; Starr & White, 2008). When there is a lack of funding, it can make it difficult to provide necessary resources such as professional development to teachers when it is necessary to implement new programs (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Chance & Segura, 2009; Hickey & Harris, 2005; Howley & Howley, 2005).

The emotional energy can also run short. In rural schools, teachers can often comprise an entire department for a grade level, a school, or they may even be required to teach multiple subject areas (Howley & Howley, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009). Between this and being forced to utilize resources and implement reforms that are both seen as irrelevant to rural schools because they were created with urban and suburban schools systems in mind (Arnold, 2005; Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010), teachers experience frustration (Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

Administrators in rural schools play a critical role in ensuring the success of change. Reeves (2010) stated that teachers are only able to maximize their influence over student results when they have the support of school and system leaders. He further stated that these leaders must provide time, professional learning opportunities, and respect. Barley and Beesley (2007) reported in their study on the success of rural schools that teachers in their study felt they were successful because they had the support of their principals, and the principals reported having respect for the teachers' need for research-based professional development.

Educational Change

Fullan (2001, 2005) indicated that the initial focus of educational reform can be traced back to the 1960s. Two major events that occurred during this time frame brought about major concerns regarding the United States educational system. The launch of Sputnik and the Civil Rights Movement created anxiety, giving the impression that American education was not at the same standard as Russian education nor was it providing excellent and equitable education opportunities for all citizens (Fullan, 2001, 2005; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan, & Hopkins, 2005). The United States has been reforming education ever since.

Educators can often feel that mandated change makes their work environments chaotic (Hargreaves et al., 2005). This chaos can create a mindset of fear in those undergoing change. Hargreaves (2005b) indicated that people's fear of change is because the reasoning and/or end result is often not clear to the participants in the beginning. However, fear can be alleviated by the support provided by the principal and the trust placed in the principal by the teachers which can be the deciding factors for a teacher's ability to successfully implement change within a school (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Fink & Stoll, 2005; Fullan, 1999, 2005; Heifetz, 1994; Smith & Andrews, 1989; West, 2005).

Leadership and Change

Without the proper support systems in place, initiating and implementing change can be a difficult process. The principal must provide proper support for implementing change within a school. Fullan (2001) stated "the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change" (p. 82). For change to be successful, the principal has to be supportive of teachers in many ways. Ensuring that teachers have the materials, professional development, and, often times, moral and emotional support to promote success provides encouragement to the teachers that the change can be successful (Fullan, 1999, 2001, 2013; SEDL, 2000; West, 2005).

According to Nicholson and Tracy (1982), when change is implemented from outside of the school building, the principal needs a time of adjustment. The researchers stated that the principal would often be bypassed in these situations, and they would be receiving information about the change at the same time as the teachers. They found that principals need appropriate time to orient themselves to the change before leading their teachers through the process. The principal needs to be "prepared to be the instructional leader for the change in his or her

building" (Nicholson & Tracy, 1982, p. 72). In addition to principal preparedness, Nicholson and Tracy (1982) stated that teachers' sense of participation in the process is influential in its success. They indicated that teacher participation relates to attitude when implementing curricular change.

For change to begin in a school, the leader must have a clear and stated vision. In a study by Rivera-McCutchen (2014), the researcher found that the principal studied had a strong vision for reform of the school. The principal was described by the faculty as a visionary. They stated that she had a clear course defined for the school, and that course was more than just an improvement on graduation rates—"her vision was to improve the quality of education for Bridges students" (Rivera-McCutchen, 2014, p. 1023).

Finnigan and Stewart (2009) found in their study that the principals of the schools that were successful in turning around academic achievement ensured that their vision was shared by the entire faculty. They supported the teachers and also made sure they had whatever materials they needed to enact the change. Vuillamy and Webb (1991) distributed questionnaires to teachers to determine what was most valuable and most hindering to the process of change. Along with being included in the development of the change, the support of the principal was identified as highly important to the teachers when implementing change in the school. The researchers noted that the successful school principals might take over teachers' classes so they could have time to collaborate with other teachers or come in and work with small groups in the classroom so the teachers could direct focus where needed. The teachers surveyed stated that principals who "demonstrated an ongoing interest and commitment" were those who made the change possible.

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL, 2000) stated that teachers should be allowed to discuss their successes and failures because it is the only way to learn. This allows the teachers the opportunity to determine what works and what does not for their school. In their study regarding changes in classroom teaching strategies, Vulliamy and Webb (1991) stated that data from open-ended surveys from teachers suggested that in order to facilitate change, they must reflect on their practices. The teachers needed to examine what they were doing in their classrooms to know where to improve.

Working collectively through group collaboration allows the faculty to work through any concerns that may exist throughout the change process (SEDL, 2000). Sharing the vision and responsibilities allows for the knowledge of all parties to be put to use to guide the change (Singh, 2011). Suiter (2009) profiled the Central Park East Secondary School in a study regarding changes in the school over a period of several years. The school was successful in the 1990s, and this was attributed by the faculty and staff to a shared vision had by faculty and staff members. They knew their goals and worked collectively to achieve them.

Effective principals allow time for the collaboration process between teachers. However, Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) found in their study of the principal's role in collaboration that teachers felt that "the principals' lack of vision undermined the teachers' confidence and motivation to work together on problems related to instruction and student learning" (p. 181). The teachers were not provided any goals or expectations for their collaboration time, and the teams either struggled or failed at their collaborative tasks. The researchers reported that the teachers were looking for support and meaningful feedback to ensure their efforts were worthwhile.

In addition to providing time for collaboration and development of a shared vision, providing proper professional development is necessary. The principal cannot just ensure that teachers receive professional development in support of implementing the change. Professional development opportunities are often a one-time investment, sending teachers to conferences or inviting speakers to one event. Joyner (2005) refers to it as " the 'drive by' variety of staff development or one shot presentations offered to staff with no coaching and follow through to help participants master the requisite skills needed for implementation" (p. 187). Joyner stated that follow-up is necessary for the transfer of knowledge to be successful. However, the ideas learned through professional development should always be examined to determine how they can be applied to what is already being done in the school (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Fullan, 1999; Joyner, 2005, Levin, 2005; West, 2005). The principal in Olsen and Chrispeels's (2009) study provided the leadership team with support and professional development from the local university. They attended four sessions with the team to support them in their roles. They also had follow-up sessions the following year to determine what further support and changes were needed.

Leaders cannot mandate change in a top-down fashion (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Fullan, 1999). Schools are organizations of people with thoughts and emotional processes. For change to be successful, the principal must promote and support relationships where teachers feel comfortable turning to each other and leaning on one-another when needed (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Smith & Andrews, 1989). If the principal mandates or always turns to a selected few to implement changes, others can feel alienated through the process (Hargreaves, 2005b; Levin, 2005). The role of the principal should be to manage change instead of force it. Fullan (1999)

stated that teachers should experience a balance between individuality and group processes during change, because too much of either would make the process of change collapse. The principal is responsible for ensuring this balance has an environment in which it can thrive.

Olsen and Chrispeels (2009) studied a middle school successfully undergoing a schedule change in an attempt to increase achievement. The authors noted the principal facilitating the work done by a leadership team that had been set up in the school. The end result was shared leadership of the changeover. This leadership team used their knowledge of their school combined with the professional knowledge of a local university to create a balance that would work in their school. The leadership team was comprised of teachers invited by the principal and volunteers to foster a sense of balance to those working in the school. It was not just the teachers the principal wanted on the team; anyone could be a part and express opinions and work toward the common goal.

This idea of inclusiveness was also found to be successful in a study by Beerman and Kowalski (1998). The authors studied several Indiana high schools implementing curricular change. They found the more successful schools had an inclusive model of implementation, where teams included administrators, teachers, students, parents, and representatives from the community. They found that the schools that made progress had principals who were knowledgeable of the changes, communicated effectively, and provided support for the change process.

Collaboration regarding change is to include teachers who are resistant to change to ensure their concerns are heard alongside the comments and ideas of those in support of the change (SEDL, 2000). The principal in Olsen and Chrispeels's (2009) study made sure that any

teacher had the opportunity to be a part of the process, and collaboration among team members was key. Vulliamy and Webb (2009) stated in their findings that "Staff complacency and lack of interest…were also given as explanations as to why changes intended at the outset of the research never materialised [sic]" (p. 229), indicating that every person involved in the process of change is important.

In the 1990s, a study was done at the Central Park East Secondary school during a time of change in the structure, curriculum, and pedagogical practices used by the school. The principal was adamant about involvement of the entire faculty (Suiter, 2009). If she held a meeting, teachers were expected to be in attendance because she believed that they could only accomplish their shared vision if everyone was involved. She guided the meetings, but the teachers provided the topics by reflecting on what was occurring in classrooms and the school.

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed in the work of Bridges and his examination of transition in change and the responsibilities of the leader of change. Bridges (1987) referred to transition as "the Shadow Side of Change" (p. 2). In addition to planning for the change occurring in an organization, Bridges stated that leaders need to keep in mind the transitions of people, as well, and that planning for the change and not the transitions will set an organization up to fail. Most organizations do not manage transitions well because they believe that making the changes are sufficient (Bridges, 1987).

Three Steps to Transition

There are three steps in Bridges's transition model. The first step "begins with an ending" (Bridges, 1987, p. 2). In this step, people need to let go of the past in order to prepare

themselves for the future. Everyone has an identity, and for successful change to occur through transition, that identity sometimes must let go of what was. It is difficult to break away from a hold that a system may have on a person, and doing what is known and comfortable can be difficult to leave behind. When leaders begin a transition, it is important not to degrade the past in the process. This can make those who are faithful to the ways of the past feel ineffective, thus losing the support of that demographic. The role of the administrator is to be open to the change and help teachers see the positive goals of the change.

Bridges (1987) second step is what he referred to as the neutral zone. This phase can be dangerous for an organization because the members take a break from what was in order to prepare for what is to come. This is the time where innovations have a very good chance to succeed. This phase can take time. The person can be removed from the previous system, but the methods previously used may remain with them. In this step, the role of the administrator would be to encourage teachers to look toward the outcome and what will be necessary to make it happen. The administrator will provide support structures necessary for teachers to make the change successful.

The final step is to begin anew. In this phase, the members of the organization will have a renewed sense of purpose and be ready to press forward with the change (Bridges, 1987). In order for the new beginning to happen, people must have already let go of the past to start with a clean slate for the future. In this step, administrators will encourage teachers to utilize the new skills learned through training, and they will continue to provide support to the teachers to ensure the change is successful.

By pressing forward with change before all involved parties are ready, an organization (such as a school) is setting itself up for failure. The members (teachers) must be ready for the transition to occur; otherwise, they will be stuck with the past with the change plan actually resulting in a similar situation as before. The principal must act as the facilitator of change and be willing to lead the teachers through the transition period by supporting them and ensuring that they understand not only why the change is important, but how it will be successfully implemented. To facilitate change through transition, the leader must utilize and outline "the Four P's: the purpose, a picture, the plan, and a part to play" (Bridges, 2009, p. 108).

The Purpose

When outlining the purpose, Bridges (2009) stated that the leader must summarize the problems that are being faced by the organization. The leader needs to be ready to explain the problems and the evidence that supports the existence of the problems. Not only should these problems be explained in detail, but the possibilities of the outcomes if the problems are not fixed should be explained. This gives the members of the organization a clear purpose for undergoing the change.

The Picture

Following the purpose, a picture must be presented (Bridges, 2009). For the members of the organization to understand the changes that will occur, a picture of the outcome must be placed in their heads. Giving the most detailed description of what the outcome will look like, and using visual aids when possible, will give the members a picture of the goal they must work toward. Without letting the members know what the end goal looks like, they do not have a vision of what the outcome should be, making the transition more difficult. As the leader,

Bridges (2009) warns not to get ahead of oneself. The leader has often already transitioned and is ready for the change and can sometimes forget that those he or she is leading are behind in the process. The leader must make sure that the members of the organization are brought through the process properly in order to envision and be ready for the change.

The Plan

Creating a plan is the third step in facilitating successful change and transition (Bridges, 2009). In order to be successful, the plan must include individual aspects instead of just group-oriented details. It should outline what will specifically be done with each individual in order to assist individuals in coping with the change and completing it successfully. Where the outcome is important, the plan should lay out the specifics of how to get to the outcome. In order to successfully transition, the plan needs to start with where the members are then outline how they are to develop themselves to reach the final outcome.

The Part to Play

The final part is creating a part to play for each individual (Bridges, 2009). Where plans are effective, if the members do not individually see how they fit into the plan, they will feel left out. This could cause the ultimate failure of the transition process. Members must know their part in order to see where they will fit in when the plan is complete, allowing them to know where they will be in the outcome as well as how they will contribute to reaching the outcome.

Without a leader who is willing to undergo the process of transition and properly lead a group through the change, it is highly likely that the entire process will fall apart. This results in the desired outcome never being fulfilled. In order to successfully initiate change, the leader needs to understand these aspects and be willing to undergo the process to ensure success. The

outcome relies heavily on the leader's ability to facilitate the transition process and see it through to its completion.

Chapter Summary

Common Core State Standards were created to support a high quality education for all students in the United States. The standards were designed to make sure students across state lines were learning comparable information at the same time and using higher order thinking processes to better prepare them for college or careers after high school. Even though the standards were created for this positive purpose, there are some critics of the standards because of funding sources and transparency and the learning curve involved for teachers to successfully implement the standards.

Rural schools tend to have a difficult time with implementing changes, especially changes that seem to be more designed for urban and suburban classrooms. Rural school systems tend to have a significant lack of state and federal funding and resources when compared to their more urban/inner-city counterparts. That coupled with morale issues that these teachers face with having to "do more with less" can make a transition such as CCSS implementation difficult on teachers without proper support systems in place.

Research on change indicates that without the proper support, the change will fail (Fullan, 1999). For the change to CCSS to be successful, principals must ensure that teachers are receiving the appropriate support systems to ensure the best possible outcome in the change. They need a support system of other teachers and a positive climate in which to work to foster the change. While the change is occurring, a proper balance of inside innovation and outside education need to be utilized to guarantee the success of the change. It is the job of the principal

of each school to ensure that these factors exist so that teachers do not feel overwhelmed when trying to introduce change into their system. Successful change will take all of these aspects into account.

Chapter three provides the rationale for the design and methods that were utilized. This chapter will give an explanation of the design of the study, followed by a review of the research questions. The population will be defined, and an explanation of the sample will also be outlined. The interview protocol used in the study will be discussed, followed by the methods of data analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter two provided a review of the relevant literature. Research was presented on Common Core State Standards (CCSS), rural schools, educational change with information on the role of the leader during change, and the conceptual framework.

To determine if teachers receive adequate principal and district-level supervisor support in the implementation of CCSS, this chapter outlines the methods that were employed in this study. The design of the study and the review of the research questions will be examined to explain how the study was conducted. The sample will be outlined, followed by information about the school system in which the study took place. The interview protocol will be discussed, and the data analysis methods will also be outlined. A short summary will conclude the chapter.

There are two research questions that were examined while conducting this study. The research questions are as follows:

(1) How do rural principals provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

(2) How do rural district administrators provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

Rationale and Assumptions of the Design

A qualitative approach was utilized in this study to examine how principals and district-level administrators support teachers during times of change—specifically, the implementation of CCSS. Merriam (2009) stated, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they

attribute to their experiences" (p. 5), rather than attempting to determine a cause/effect relationship. Merriam also noted that the intent of qualitative research is to "describe how people interpret what they experience" (p. 14). This study examined how principals and administrators support teachers through the implementation of CCSS, and a qualitative approach gave the most in-depth description of the participants' experiences.

A qualitative case study was conducted to determine how principals and administrators support teachers during a time of change. When choosing to perform a case study, Yin (2009) stated that researchers should choose this method to answer *how* and *why* questions. Merriam (2009) also noted that determining meaning and understanding is the focus of qualitative case study design. Since the researcher sought to find out how teachers were supported, case study research was suited to this study.

Merriam (2009) stated that case studies have some way of being "fenced in" (p. 40). The author defines this as some logical method for delimiting the scope of the case study. This study was confined to the Mountain View School District, and all research was conducted within the bounds of the school system.

According to Merriam (2009), because case studies are "[a]nchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (p. 51). Case studies can improve a field's knowledge base, and have "proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy" (Merriam, 2009, p.51). Since this study addressed the transition to CCSS for a rural school district, the study of this "educational innovation" was utilized to evaluate how the school district succeeded and struggled with implementation to be used in the future to "inform policy."

Some limitations of case study research also exist. One limitation includes time constraints (Merriam, 2009). The author stated that researchers my not have the time nor money to delve into the endeavor. Also noted was the length of the product. Merriam (2009) said the audience of the study (practitioners and policymakers) may not devote the time to examining the study because it may be too detailed or lengthy.

Merriam (2009) stated that a limitation of this type of research is the "sensitivity and integrity of the investigator" (p. 52). The author noted that the researcher often must rely on his or her instincts as well as abilities, and these can affect the observation and interview process. Bias can enter into the final product, and that is a factor of which the audience and researchers both should be aware.

A final concern for case study research addressed by Merriam (2009) includes validity, reliability, and generalizability. Merriam (2009) stated that validity and reliability can be controlled by conducting the research in an ethical manner. The author later stated,

> And just as there will be multiple accounts of eyewitnesses to a crime, so too, there will be multiple constructions of how people have experienced a particular phenomenon, how they have made meaning of their lives, or how they have come to understand a certain process. (Merriam, 2009, p. 214)

Maxwell (2005) noted that validity is relative when discussing qualitative studies. The author noted that it is a "goal rather than a product" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105). Merriam (2005) stated that qualitative research investigates people's understandings of the world, and since the data being interpreted is their understanding of what is being investigated, qualitative research gets closer to the reality of a situation.

The reliability of a qualitative study is difficult to measure because the results of a specific case may not be able to be replicated elsewhere (Merriam, 2005). The author noted that the purpose of qualitative research is not to isolate human behavior, but to explain how people see and experience the world around them. Because of this, replication is often impossible because no two humans in situations are going to have the exact same experience. Because of this, results are not always generalizable to other situations. Merriam (2009) stated that with qualitative research, it is often best to leave the generalizability to the readers for them to determine if the results would apply to their situations.

Merriam (2005) stated that a way to increase the validity of the results of a qualitative investigation is to use a process called triangulation. In this study, triangulation consisted of using multiple sources of data to support the results. This method utilizes three points of information that will cross-check each other to support the findings.

Several assumptions were in place throughout the study. The first assumption is with the continuation of CCSS implementation in Tennessee. As part of the federal grant funding program, Race to the Top, Tennessee agreed to the implementation of CCSS. It was also assumed that the sample will be representative of the case. Since there are eight schools in MVSD, and five of those principals plus three district administrators were interviewed, this encompasses a large number of administrators for this small school district. Also, it was assumed that the interviewees answered the questions truthfully and faithfully. The confidentiality of the interviewees was preserved throughout the research and writing process to ensure this assumption.

Design of the Study

An instrumental case study approach was taken during the study. According to Stake (2005), an instrumental case study "provide[s] insight into an issue" (p. 445). He continued to say, "The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (p. 445). According to Stake, the case may be typical or atypical, but it allows investigation into the external issue. The external issue being studied was the role of the principal and district level administrators in the support of teachers during the implementation of CCSS.

The case study aspect of this study encompassed the examination of one rural school system to investigate how the principals and administrators of that school system have supported teachers in their transition to CCSS. Yin (2009) cited that case studies are "used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (p. 4). One case of this implementation process was examined to illustrate what the system did to implement the change to CCSS.

For the purposes of triangulation, the researcher collected artifacts in the form of documentation that illustrated the support principals and administrators have provided to the teachers. Also, the researcher observed professional development opportunities. Yin (2009) expressed the importance of triangulation because it allows the researcher to "collect information from multiple sources but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon" (p. 116). The triangulation process provides multiple avenues of evidence to ensure the phenomenon described by the interviewees is supported by other evidence. Figure 1 provides a flowchart of the process.

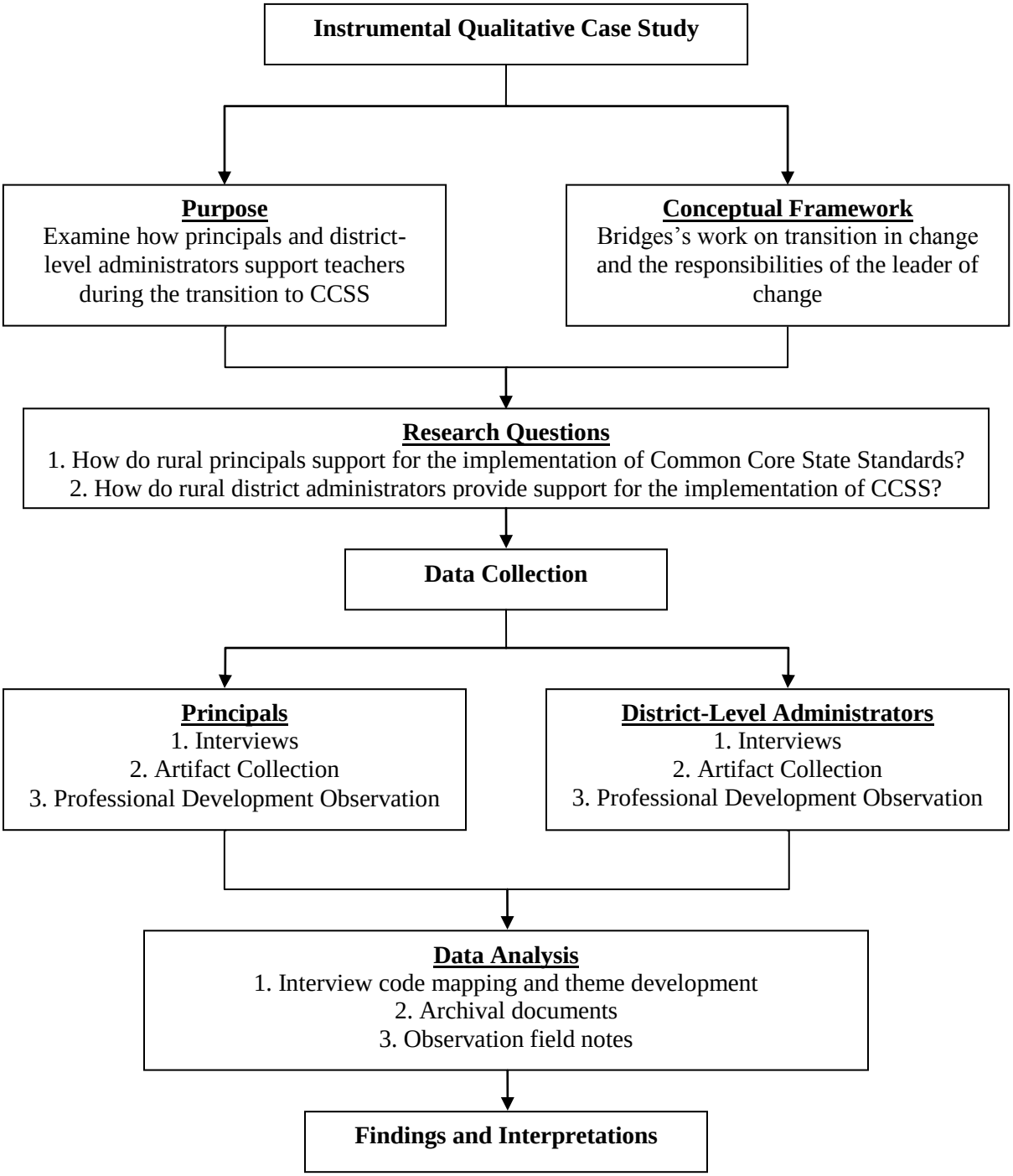


Figure 1. Research Design Flowchart

Sampling Strategy

For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling. This allowed the researcher to choose participants who have a knowledge of and experience with the phenomenon being studied. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) describe purposeful sampling where "the goal…is *not* to obtain a large and representative sample; the goal is to select persons places or things that can provide the richest and most detailed information to help us answer our research questions" (p. 134).

"Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research…Thus nonprobability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Merriam, (2009) also stated "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 77). This sampling method allows for the sample to be chosen based on the parameters of the study. Since the study examined rural principal and administrator support for teachers, this method allowed for the selection of principals and administrators who fall within this guideline.

As per case study design, one instance of the phenomenon being examined—in this case, CCSS implementation and principal/administrator support within a rural school district—should be the focus of the study. The case in this study was defined by the school system being examined. This system was chosen because the majority of the schools (in this case, 75%) are classified as rural, which was determined by examining the list of US School Locale Codes. This school system is regionally accessible to the researcher and qualifies within the criteria for a

site for this study. The criteria for choosing the site included implementation of CCSS and the classification as a rural school district.

Since rural school districts work with fewer resources than urban or suburban school districts, they often have a more difficult time implementing educational changes. The sample was principals and district supervisors responsible for planning teacher support systems in one East Tennessee rural school district.

Site and Participants

Mountain View School District (MVSD) is a county-wide rural school district in East Tennessee serving a county with a 2014 estimated population of 21,660 residents, approximately 94% of whom are white (United States Census Bureau, 2015). The county has a land area of approximately 520 square miles, with an average of 42 residents per square mile.

A visitor to the county's experience would vary widely depending on the time of year he or she visited. In the spring, summer, and early fall, there are lots of outdoor spaces to visit. Spring and summer would greet a visitor with lush greenery all around. A visit in the fall would have one standing in awe of the fall foliage colors, which are visible for miles around. Winter time affects the county in varying ways, with some portions getting heavy snowfall while others get less, often leaving the director of schools with the choice of having to close schools due to inclement weather when only one or two of the county's eight school are truly affected

The county is accessible by state highways and small county roads. It has no interstate highways traversing the county. However, residents of the county can be in a major Tennessee city within an hour, and those who are capable of leaving the county have nearby options for entertainment and recreation outside the county. Due to population sizes and sparse population

densities, the county does not have a lot of recreation and entertainment other than those involving the great outdoors or local school events

Mountain View School District includes eight schools of varying grade level compositions serving grades prekindergarten through twelfth grade. The schools include one prekindergarten through fifth grade school, one prekindergarten through eighth grade school, three prekindergarten through twelfth grade schools, one sixth through eighth grade school, and two ninth through twelfth grade schools, one of which is a county-wide vocational school (TDOE, 2015a).

Walking in to any of these schools leaves the visitor with a sense of family. The schools often have small faculties who are often close-knit—or literally family. Several of the schools visited have bright atmospheres that incorporate a sense of school pride and student individuality. One of the schools even allows their seniors to paint a ceiling tile that will be on display in the ceiling of the entry to the school.

One of the schools observed during the study had classes occurring in the cafeteria the day the researcher visited. Just like with many other schools across the nation, schools in this district are not immune to activities such as senior pranks. A senior had set off a stink bomb in the one wing of the building, but the faculty adapted and persevered by airing out the wing and accommodating classes in other locations until the odor had dissipated enough to return to class.

Mountain View services approximately 3,200 students with 200 teachers and 25 administrators, which includes district-level supervisors and principals. The per-pupil expenditure in MVSD is approximately $8,598 as of the 2014-2015 school year, which is the latest data available from the state report card (TDOE, 2015a). Table 1 provides a comparison of

Table 1

Average Per Pupil Expenditures in Select Counties, 2014-2015 School Year

District	Expenditures	Primary Classification
District 1	$13,386	City
District 2	$12,356	Town
District 3	$12,309	Town
District 4	$11,496	City
District 5	$11,222	Suburban
District 6	$9,888	Town
District 7	$9,285	Rural
Mountain View	$8,598	Rural
District 8	$8,426	Rural
District 9	$8,242	Rural
District 10	$7,905	Rural
District 11	$7,756	Rural
District 12	$7,756	Rural
District 13	$7,691	Rural
District 14	$7,270	Rural
State of TN	**$9,375**	

MVSD to five of the highest and five of the lowest per pupil expenditure systems in the state, along with four systems comparable to MVSD.

Of the approximately 3,200 students in the system, less than one percent are English language learners. The county has a district-wide economically disadvantaged percentage between 65 and 70, and approximately 15 % of the students are students with disabilities. The overall student population is predominantly white students, with African-American and Latino students making up approximately two percent of the population.

Permission to enter the school system was attained from the director of schools. The participants were chosen based on being in a position to directly support teachers during the change to CCSS. These participants included administrators from five of the six schools that

qualify as rural schools—three head principals and two assistant principals—and three district-level administrators who are responsible for coordinating efforts to support teachers during the transition to implementing CCSS. These participants will have first-hand experience with the CCSS change process and will be able to answer questions regarding the implementation process.

The participants in the study were the assistant principals from two schools and head principals of three of the eight schools in the district. These participants consented to participate in the study. The intended sample size for school level principals was six principals, but one declined to participate, and two principals delegated to their assistants, who agreed to participate in the study, because these principals were new to the district. Neither the vocational and technical school nor the one classically defined middle school in MVSD were selected for the study. These two schools are not classified as rural according to the US School Locale Code list published by the National Center for Education Statistics.

In addition to the three head principals and two assistant principals, three district-level administrators responsible for providing teacher support activities and materials were interviewed. The researcher requested the participation of the federal programs supervisor for the school system. The responsibilities of this administrator include professional development, equipment, instructional supplies, and coordinating resources related to First to the Top—Tennessee's cooperating Race to the Top initiative. The researcher also requested the participation of the elementary and secondary supervisors, as their responsibilities include curriculum, resource requests, and professional development coordination. Table 2 provides basic demographic information on each participant.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	School Grade Range	Gender	Years of Administration Experience	Years in Current Position
Valerie	PK – 8	Female	4	4
Montoya	PK – 12	Male	3	3
Vizzini	PK – 12	Male	3	3
Rugen	PK – 5	Male	4	2
PB	PK – 12	Female	3	3
Morgenstern	NA	Male	11	2
Queen	NA	Female	5	3
Westley	NA	Male	8	3

Data Collection

The director of MVSD was contacted via email to gain permission to enter the school district to perform research. After obtaining written permission and before collecting any data, the researcher sought the permission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) since human participants were involved. The researcher complied with all regulations regarding the use of and interactions with human participants while conducting this study.

After IRB approval, the researcher contacted the principals and administrators, individually via email or in person, to request participation in the study. All agreeing participants were asked to sign an informed consent which provided the participants information on the risks, benefits, and confidentiality measures that were taken to preserve their identities. With participant permission and signed informed consents, the researcher began the interview process.

Interviews were conducted as part of the data collection process. The interview protocol (Appendix A) includes questions which measure the steps principals and supervisors took to provide assistance to teachers to support the implementation of CCSS. This protocol was developed with the research questions, literature, and conceptual framework in mind. Table 3 provides information on how the interview questions address each research question.

Table 3

Research Questions in Relation to Interview Protocol

Research Question	Interview Questions
1. How do rural principals provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?	1, 2, 3, 4a, 4c, 5a, 5c, 6, 7
2. How do rural district administrators provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?	1, 2, 3, 4b, 5b, 6, 7

Merriam (2009) outlined six types of questions that are normally utilized in interviews. Experience and behavior, opinion and value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background and demographic questions are outlined to illicit good responses from interviewees in an attempt to gain the most possible data from participants. Table 4 provides an outline of how the interview questions in this study fall into these categories.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with head principals, assistant principals, and district-level supervisors. These interviews were semi-structured. This process allowed for guiding questions and principles to be queried while leaving room for expansion and follow-up questions where necessary (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). "This format allows the researcher to

Table 4

Interview Question Types

Type of Interview Question	**Interview Questions**
Experience and Behavior	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Opinion and Value	2b, 7
Feeling	2b, 7
Knowledge	2
Sensory	4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c
Background and Demographic	1

respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2008, p. 90). The guide for the interviews is included in Appendix A.

Participants who agreed to participate were interviewed in person or by phone. The researcher interviewed eight people who are connected to the phenomenon of providing support to teachers during times of change. These interviews were recorded in their entirety and transcribed for data analysis.

To triangulate these data, the researcher asked for evidence of professional development activities or other supports that have been provided to the teachers regarding CCSS. This evidence included agendas or registration information that outline the CCSS training and professional development provided to the teachers, whether it be within the school district or a training to which the teachers were sent, evidence of curricular support made available to the teachers, evidence of restructuring to provide time for collaboration, or other pertinent artifacts. These evidences were used to triangulate the interview responses from the principals, assistant principals, and administrators and provided a form of fact checking to the information gained in interviews.

To provide the third aspect of triangulation, the researcher attended professional development opportunities to observe the CCSS training made available to the teachers. The purpose of the observations was to collect data regarding specific instances to provide reference for the information gathered in the interviews. Field notes were utilized to collect the observation data. The use of these notes allowed the researcher a record of events that occurred. The researcher looked for evidence of CCSS support provided to the teachers. The researcher was able to observe two professional development opportunities in the form of PLCs that provided collaboration time between colleagues and administrators.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) noted that "Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data" (p. 175). The author stated that the researcher must make meaning out of the information, which requires "consolidation, reducing, and interpreting what people have said" (p. 175-176). Merriam continued that the analysis should focus around the research questions, and the researcher should analyze the data in an attempt to answer those questions.

The interview protocol consists of questions that target the principal and administrator provision of support for CCSS implementation. The interview data provided information regarding the opportunities teachers have been provided to learn about and obtain support focused around CCSS. The interview data were analyzed using QDA Miner, a software program designed to analyze qualitative data. The interview data were read to develop themes based on pertinent codes. The data were coded as it was collected, as Merriam (2009) stated that "collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research" (p. 169). The author's rationale is "The researcher usually does not know ahead of time…all the questions that

might be asked, or where to look next unless the data are analyzed as they are being collected" (p. 169). Analyzing the data as it was collected allowed for adjustments to be made in the data collection process to follow the themes occurring in the data.

Merriam (2009) suggested starting with an *open coding* process of starting with the first interview and making notes and observations about the data as it is read through. The data that are potentially relevant to answering the research questions should be noted. Merriam continued to state that making these notes in the data "is the way you begin to construct categories" (p. 179). After the transcript has been read through once, the second reading should focus on the notes to try to make groups for the codes that were noted on the first read. Merriam stated this grouping is referred to as *analytical coding*. Continuing this method throughout the rest of the interview data will eventually provide themes for the data. The end result, after reviewing the themes, should provide answers to the research questions. Table 5 provides information regarding this process for this study and the codes, categories, and themes resulting from the coding process.

The second data source analyzed was observation data. Examination of the field notes provided information about what happened with regards to CCSS implementation support. The analysis of this data was used to corroborate the reality of support provided to teachers compared to what principals and administrators said they did during the interview process. As with the interview data, the field notes were analyzed and coded to determine themes within the activity. These themes were then compared to those in the interview data.

Artifacts were also utilized to triangulate the data. The artifacts illustrated how often and what types of professional development opportunities were provided to teachers along with other

Table 5

Code Map: Interview Data Analysis Iterations

Final Iteration: Answers to Research Questions		
Answer #1		Answer #2
Third Iteration: A Priori Themes		
Creating understanding	Prepared for implementation	Ongoing assistance
Second Iteration: Categories		
Buy-in	Training	Collaboration
Communication	Resources	Ongoing Support
First Iteration: Codes		
Explanations	Principal Decisions	District Training
Cheerleading	State Training	PLCs
Parent Communication	State Website	Curriculum Coaches
Extra Help	Teacher Leaders	Time
	Lessons	Materials/Programs
	Assessments	Money

provided supports. These artifacts were analyzed to determine the support provided to teachers during the implementation process. The researcher analyzed the artifacts to look for evidence of professional development, collaboration opportunities, curricular support, etc., provided by the principals and administrators. Content analysis to systematically describe the artifacts' contents (Merriam, 2009) and coding similar to that used in the interview and observation stages were utilized. Because the opportunity to observe occurrences of support were minimal, these artifacts provided one more level of fact checking to ensure the principal and administrator responses match reality. The researcher utilized meeting agendas, interschool memos, professional development schedules, professional learning community notes, conference registrations, and evidence of resources provided to teachers such as rubrics, writing samples, and scoring guides.

Methods of Verification

Triangulation was used as the method for verifying the data. Yin (2009) stated, "When you have really triangulated the data, the events or facts of the case study have been supported by more than a single source of evidence" (p. 116). Yin continued to state that utilizing several sources of evidence allows for multiple measures. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data to add strength and ensure that perceptions match reality (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

The sources of data, besides interviews, were artifacts and observation. The artifacts gathered were evidence of professional development and resource support provided to teachers to prepare them for the transition to CCSS. Also, the researcher observed professional development opportunities to determine the level of support provided to teachers.

Member checks were also utilized to verify data. Member checks involve providing the research analysis to the subject. The subject examines the researcher's interpretation of the data, and the subject informs the researcher whether the interpretation matches the experience. Merriam (2009) stated that member checks were "tak[ing] your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation 'rings true'" (p. 217). Interviewees received interpretations of themes and experiences to determine if the researcher's interpretation of their data matched their experience.

Reflexivity was also be utilized as a method of verification. Merriam (2009) stated that reflexivity involves researchers "explain[ing] their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken" (p. 219). Since readers will interpret the data based on his or her own experiences (Merriam, 2009), it is important for the reader to understand how the researcher "arrived at the particular interpretation of the data" (p. 219). The researcher read

through the interview data to determine personal responses, emotional and intellectual, to the interviewee and map out those responses based on personal experience and interpretation. This information was examined to determine any biases or assumptions the researcher made in regard to the interview data. This allowed the researcher to determine where these biases and assumptions could affect interpretation of the research data.

Role of the Researcher

According to Merriam (2009), the role of the researcher in qualitative research is an instrument of data collection. During the interviews, the role of the researcher is to gather data on the levels of support provided by principals and administrators through the use of the interview protocol. Also, assuring and upholding the confidentiality of the participants is part of the researcher's role. During observations and artifact collection, the role of the researcher was a non-participating observer. The researcher did not interact while observing. The researcher gathered observation data based on what would normally happen during that time.

The reader should also be aware of the background of the researcher. The researcher has been a teacher for nine years and has been through the training and implementation of CCSS. As a small-town resident, the interests of rural communities and schools are of interest to the researcher, even though the school in which she works is not classified as a rural school. Even though the researcher has been guided to the research by background and history, the researcher intends to remove personal feelings regarding the topic to ensure the accuracy of the data and its interpretation.

Throughout the data analysis process, it is possible that personal bias could have interfered with analyzing the data. The literature and research questions were used as a guide in data analysis to ensure against personal bias entering the process.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, this researcher has explained the intended methods for the completion of this study. The research questions were reviewed followed by the rationale for the chosen design. The design of the study was then covered. The sampling strategy followed by a description of the site and participants was included. Next, the data collection procedures, data analysis, and methods were outlined, followed by the intended role of the researcher. These steps will be followed to determine whether support for the preparation of CCSS implementation is being provided by principals and district-level administrators to teachers in this East Tennessee rural school district.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how principals and district personnel support teachers during times of change in their schools. Specifically, the study focused on the extent of support during the change process of implementation of CCSS in one rural school system in East Tennessee. After a review of the research questions, this chapter will provide a brief profile of the school district and each of the eight participants, and will include information on the codes and themes that emerged while analyzing the data.

There are two research questions that were examined while conducting this study. The research questions are as follows:

(1) How do rural principals provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

(2) How do rural district administrators provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

The Case

The case examined in this study was one rural school district in East Tennessee during the transition to CCSS. Within Mountain View School District (MVSD), there are eight schools, with six of them classified as rural schools. Since the research questions focused on rural principal and district administrator supports of teachers during the transition to CCSS, this school district was selected because it fit the criteria.

Mountain View School District was chosen for two reasons. Six of its eight schools meet the requirements of being a rural school and were in close proximity to the researcher. The close

geographic proximity allowed the researcher the flexibility to meet with participants on their schedule. With the observations including PLC meetings, the agendas for those were not often set far in advance to allow long-term planning to arrange meetings.

Purposeful sampling was utilized within MVSD to obtain participants who had knowledge of and experience with the transition to CCSS. The focus was on MVSD and the phenomena experienced within the particular case regarding the transition to CCSS.

The sample included five school level administrators—three head principals and two assistant principals—and three district level administrators. The principals of three of the schools agreed to be interviewed, and because they were new principals to the schools and district, two of the principals asked the researcher to contact their assistant principals. The two assistant principals consented to participate in the study. The principal and assistant principal of one school declined participation. The district level administrators all hold positions where securing professional development, curricula, and materials are all part of their position descriptions.

Participant Profiles

Participants for this study consisted of three head principals, two assistant principals, and three district level administrators. The participants are responsible for the combined grade levels of prekindergarten through twelfth grade, spanning the entire range of CCSS education. All participants were interviewed either over the phone or in person.

Valerie

Valerie is a head principal of Castlegate School—a prekindergarten through eighth grade school. She has 29 years' experience in education ranging from elementary to middle grades and

as a librarian. After a brief reprieve from teaching and working elsewhere in the field of education, she returned to the schools as an administrator. She has four years' experience as an administrator, with a start toward the beginning of CCSS implementation.

Montoya

Montoya is also a veteran educator. He is the principal of Florin School, which is a prekindergarten through twelfth grade school. He has over 30 years' educational experience, most of which was spent in the classroom. For the last three years, he has been in the field of administration. He entered administration at a time when his previous school began sending teachers to training for CCSS. As such, he did not have the opportunity to participate in the initial trainings but has been with his current school since almost the beginning of CCSS implementation.

Rugen

Rugen, also a veteran educator, has been teaching since 1992. He is the principal of Guilder Elementary School. Guilder is a prekindergarten through fifth grade school in MVSD. Rugen has been in administration at his current school for four years. He spent two years as an assistant principal and is in his second year as head principal. He has been with his school in an administrator's capacity since early implementation of CCSS, giving him the experience within his building of the support that has been provided to the teachers.

PB

PB has been in her current administrative position for three years. She is an assistant principal at a prekindergarten through twelfth grade school—Miracle School. Her principal declined to participate because he was new to the school and system and did not have the

experience with CCSS transition within their school. She taught for 15 years prior to coming into her current position. She has been an administrator with her school since early in the CCSS transition process.

Vizzini

Vizzini is a mid-career educator. He has been in education for 12 years and been in his current assistant administrator position for three years. As with PB, Vizzini's principal is new this year to Cliffs School and MVSD, and also declined participation in the study. Cliffs School is a prekindergarten through twelfth grade school within MVSD. He has been with the teachers in his school for three years and has worked with them during the transition to CCSS.

Morgenstern

Morgenstern is a district level administrator with MVSD. He is mid-career as he began working in education 14 years ago. Eleven of these years have been spent in administration and five at the assistant principal level and four as a principal. This is his second year as a district level administrator. He has spent his educational career with MVSD and was in a principal position when the transition to CCSS started. He provided support at the principal level and has continued his supports as he moved to the district level position. His role is the elementary supervisor for the district, servicing prekindergarten through fifth grade teachers. His responsibilities include textbooks/materials, curriculum, and professional development coordination for the district's elementary grade levels.

Queen

Queen has been in education for 14 years, teaching mostly at the middle school level. She has spent five years in administration, with two of those years at a principal level. She is the

secondary level supervisor, working with sixth through twelfth grade teachers. She has been in the district in an administrative capacity since early in the process of CCSS transition, most spent at the district level during the transition. Her responsibilities include curriculum, testing, textbooks/materials, and professional development for the secondary grade levels.

Westley

Westley is a more than thirty year veteran of education, beginning his career in the 1970s. He spent the majority of his career teaching in elementary and middle schools. He has eight years of administrative experience, with three of those years at the district level. Some of that time was as the supervisor of federal programs. By definition, his position deals specifically with instructional supplies and equipment and coordinating professional development for the school district.

Analysis

The data were examined through the conceptual framework of Bridges's transition model. When analyzing the data, the role of the administrator during the transition was studied. Analysis occurred while keeping in mind Bridges's four P's of purpose, picture, plan, and part to play. The roles of the principals and district level administrators were examined in how they supported the transition to CCSS through helping teachers see the positive goals, providing support structures, and encouraging teachers to use their newly learned skills.

The interview data used included recorded interviews and field notes. Principals and district-level administrators also provided artifacts that were analyzed within the same frame as the interview data. Two observations were conducted, and the field notes from those observations were analyzed.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with all eight of the participants. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and was recorded with the permission of the participants so the researcher would have the most accurate data from the interviews. The interview data were coded upon the first reading, and those codes were grouped into categories upon the second reading. With the third reading, the researcher determined the three overarching themes of (a) creating understanding; (b) ensuring preparedness for implementation; and (c) ongoing assistance to support continued implementation. These three themes were not only supported by the interview data, but also the artifacts and observations.

Artifacts

Artifacts were collected, examined, and coded similarly to the interviews. The artifacts included documents that provided evidence that the principals and district level administrators were providing support to teachers during the transition process. These documents included items such as meeting agendas, conference registrations, training materials, rubrics, work samples, inservice schedules and programs, anonymous teacher feedback statements regarding trainings, pacing guides, and school improvement plans.

Observations

The observations occurred at the school level. The school district had already held their district-wide training days for the school year prior to Institutional Review Board approval of the study, so these days were not observed, although a detailed schedule of sessions was provided with the artifacts.

The observations lasted approximately between 45 minutes to one hour. The researcher was a non-participant observer of PLC meetings, making field notes of the support being provided to the teachers during these meeting times. Field notes were coded, categorized, and themed similarly to the interview data.

To achieve some variety, the observations were at two different schools with two different grade ranges. The observation at Cliffs School was with Vizzini and secondary teachers from this prekindergarten through twelfth grade school. The other observation was with teachers from Florin School, also a prekindergarten through twelfth grade school. The observed meeting included teachers from lower elementary grade levels.

The findings of this study are limited by only two observations from two schools. Therefore, any triangulation of interview data are isolated to Cliffs and Florin Schools, and cannot be assumed to have occurred throughout the district. However, interview data produced similar findings across the district' thus, conclusions can be drawn despite the limitations of only two observations

Findings: Principal Provided Supports

Creating Understanding

The first theme developed from the iterations was creating understanding. Under this theme, the categories of communication, cheerleading, and extra help further explain how creating understanding supported the change to CCSS.

Communication

All three principals and both assistant principals interviewed commented on communication with their teachers, in varying degrees, about CCSS. Some utilized information

from the state via emails and the website to share their information, while others shared theirs through faculty meetings and PLCs.

According to the artifacts, Rugen started introducing the new standards in 2009 during Guilder Elementary's August faculty meeting, and he continued discussion of the shift at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, as illustrated by a PowerPoint presentation that was shared with teachers. Rugen stated that he spent the first few days of August inservice meetings explaining to his teachers what CCSS is and "trying to establish the need for [Common Core]." He wanted his teachers to know not only what it was, but also wanted them to know why this change was important.

Valerie at Castlegate School provided an announcements sheet from early CCSS implementation. This artifact provided teachers information about upcoming state training opportunities and dates to plan for learning more about CCSS and its implementation during summer 2013. The artifact also included a statement that all educators are important to the implementation of CCSS, specifically addressing the role of the guidance counselor in helping with the transition. This information was delivered to the teachers by the administration via the announcement sheet.

Valerie and Rugen were especially vocal during their interviews of the importance of communication with their teachers during this change. Rugen mentioned that not only did his teachers need to know what CCSS was, they needed to know *why* implementation was important. They emphasized the need for student success to move beyond surface tasks and rote memorization. Valerie stated that she felt like Common Core is a good thing and "it makes sense." She wanted her teachers to understand that it would allow students to be able to apply

their knowledge, not just restate. Valerie stated that she tried to keep the explanations as optimistic as possible and be as supportive as possible.

Vizzini explained CCSS to his teachers during PLCs by telling them that "we are trying to…reshape our thinking to help reshape their thinking," He informed his teachers that they will differentiate between the relevant and irrelevant information to understand what is really needed to problem-solve with CCSS.

PB stated that the majority of her explanations involved disseminating relevant information to the teachers that she had gotten from the state's department of education. This information mainly came to her in the form of emails, which she then would forward to her teachers. She also shared the state CCSS website with teachers.

Montoya was unable to explain CCSS to his teachers prior to the beginning of teacher training. Montoya was a late hire in July 2013 from outside of the district—after the June trainings had occurred—so many of his teachers had already been to CCSS training—or were already scheduled for the July trainings—and he did not have the opportunity to explain the change to them prior to implementation.

All five school-level administrators communicated with their teachers regarding CCSS. Montoya, who was not able to communicate with them from the beginning, was able to communicate with them during the process, while doing so in a supportive manner.

Cheerleading

Four of the five interviewed principals responded with examples that illustrated the importance placed on remaining positive throughout the change. These comments were coded as cheerleading. Valerie stated that she tried to make the transition as positive as possible and pull

some of her teachers along in the process by supporting them in a positive manner. She specifically addressed teachers' struggles with the changes to standards under CCSS while still utilizing the old standardized testing system. She said, "you had to pull some of [the teachers] along a little bit," by supporting them to increase their comfort with the new standards.

Rugen discussed the importance of linking CCSS to something the teachers were familiar with—evaluations and the positive feedback aspect that is part of that system—to show his teachers how he planned to support them during the transition. Also, while not specifically addressed in the interview with Rugen, artifacts showed that he provided communication to parents to provide an understanding of CCSS well before teacher training began in 2013. This newsletter let parents know about CCSS and that teachers would soon be implementing these standards in their children's classes. The newsletter clarified the basic concept of CCSS, explaining that students would be learning under more rigorous and challenging standards, noting that students in similar grades across the nation would be learning similar material. The newsletter also included a list of CCSS resources and tips designed to inform parents so they could support their children, and therefore support the teachers.

Montoya mentioned several times that he considered himself the *cheerleader* for his teachers. Although he did not have the initial training because he was transitioning from classroom to principal across school districts at the time the training started in 2013, he said his goal was to support his teachers in any way he could. He also felt the best way he could let them know he would support them was to identify with them. Montoya reminded his teachers that he was just coming from the classroom and still knew what it was like to be a teacher and have to

change and adapt. He felt that would provide a level of comfort to his teachers that may not exist under long-time administrators. He iterated:

> That's what I told mine when I started three years ago. I said, 'look, I've been there.' I think that makes them feel very comfortable. I said, 'I'm just stepping over the line right here. I've been there, and I'm going to do the best I can to make sure that you are as comfortable as you can be, doing what you need to do in the classroom.'

He also stated that he often meets with his teachers one-on-one, because he knows they are comfortable with expressing their opinions and concerns with him. He does what he can to ensure he gets answers to their concerns and alleviate worries they may have.

Vizzini said he felt it was important for his teachers to know that he was "in the trenches" with them. Vizzini's school has many faculty members working with students on writing, and he works alongside of them. Going in, he wanted his teachers to know that he would have to do it himself first by learning the strategies, materials, and resources, and then he could then help his teachers. Throughout the year, Vizzini had continued conversations with his teachers to see how things were going. He said, "I want people to know they are doing well…Somebody is not there looking over your shoulder. They are there to help you."

These four principals and assistant principals wanted to make sure their teachers knew they would be supported during the process. Valerie, Rugen, Montoya, and Vizzini not only provided positive, uplifting words to their teachers for the change, they also made sure their teachers knew they would step up to help them.

Extra help

Three of the interviewees felt that making sure their teachers knew there would be extra help during this process was a key to getting buy-in from teachers. Valerie, Rugen, and Vizzini all expressed their willingness to their teachers to support them by working with them in any way they could.

Valerie wanted her teachers to know that training would be provided to them, but they would also have opportunities to observe other teachers and work together on lesson planning and assessments when the standards were implemented. Valerie assured teachers the time would be provided to them for this process. Rugen made sure his teachers knew that he would be willing to work one-on-one with any teacher who felt the need for assistance after initial training and during the implementation process.

Vizzini insisted on letting his teachers know that there would be materials provided that he would be willing to go through with them to develop better understanding of their use. He mainly focused on rubrics for writing lessons, wanting the teachers to know that he would be there to help them and work through scoring if they felt uncomfortable with that process—especially since he would have many teachers working in writing who were not traditional writing teachers.

When a PLC at Vizzini's school was observed, he worked first-hand with teachers. None of the teachers in the observed group were from writing-oriented subjects. They were mainly math, special education, and physical education teachers. Vizzini was observed providing extra help to these teachers to make sure they understood how to score the writings from their students and give them useful feedback for editing.

Valerie, Rugen, and Vizzini made certain their teachers knew they were willing to help them through the process. Through assuring collaboration time with other teachers and one-on-one help from themselves, these principals and assistant principal provided teachers extra help for the transition.

Prepared for Implementation

The second theme, prepared for implementation, includes responses that represent how principals prepared teachers. The codes grouped into these categories include state training and resources.

Training

Since the beginning of CCSS implementation in Tennessee, there have been ongoing trainings since the summer of 2013 provided by the state to which schools and school systems could send teachers and administrators to learn about the standards and skills to implement the standards. Every school whose principals or assistant principals were interviewed had teachers who attended the initial training and/or continued trainings.

Valerie stated that all of Castlegate's teachers attended the initial training in 2013 since their faculty was so small. She knew she would have teachers working in other capacities with Common Core (i.e., PE teacher, music teacher, etc.), and she wanted them to be trained as well. When asked about the initial training, Valerie stated, "I really was glad that our staff and everybody got to go hear for themselves." She liked that all of her teachers were going to get first-hand training instead of the information being filtered from the state to a presenter to a teacher leader then to the teachers. Several artifacts regarding registration of teachers for state CCSS training were supplied by Valerie, providing confirmations of teacher registration and a

finalized list of teachers to attend. Rugen was also able to send all of his faculty to the initial 2013 training.

Teacher leaders were sent to state trainings after initial implementation. These teachers were expected to return to their schools and the system ready to train other teachers in what they learned from the state. Rugen responded that the teacher leaders came back after training to work with their "grade level bands" on what they learned. He chose teachers to send to subsequent state trainings to bring this information back to share with other teachers. Teachers at Guilder Elementary may be working with many teachers across one or two grade levels where teachers at Florin, Miracle, and Cliffs schools might be working with only a few teachers across three to five grade spans, since they are all prekindergarten through twelfth grade schools.

Observation data also supported the use of teacher leaders in Florin School. The PLC observed in the lower elementary grades at Montoya's school was led by a teacher leader for that grade range. The topic was number sense, and the teachers met in the teacher leader's classroom so they would have access to technology to look at different resources as a group to work collaboratively in making a decision on resources they felt were useful.

Montoya asked who was interested in the follow-up trainings, and he, the assistant principal, the guidance counselor, and the graduation coach decided who from Florin School would attend the trainings. When asked what criteria he used to make this decision, Montoya stated that he mainly focused on experience, evaluation scores, and personalities. He stated,

> It's based on experience and the CODE [the former Tennessee system of tracking evaluation and teacher effect levels] evaluation that comes into play about stronger teachers, test scores, things like that. Because I want…if somebody is doing what the

state recommends, and they're good at it, then that's somebody you're going to want doing it.

Montoya also said that he takes personalities into consideration when deciding who to send to trainings. He stated that he wants to make sure he sends people who are comfortable presenting to their peers. He has great teachers who work very well with their students, but they are not always comfortable when talking with adults. He expressed that he did not want to "assign someone that may be uncomfortable, then you'll not get the results that you're looking for. I want them to feel comfortable, but I want to send someone that's going to do a good job."

The interviewees were also asked if they had received any state training in how to support their teachers during the transition. Two of the participants, Montoya and PB, stated they were able to attend administration-specific trainings. Montoya and PB both stated they did not receive any type of administration training—Montoya because he was still teaching in his former position, and PB because she was still a teacher when they registered for the trainings; thus, she was scheduled to attend training as a teacher. PB said the decision for her to become assistant principal was made after the training registrations could not be changed. Vizzini also only attended teacher-level trainings, participating in secondary English training.

Montoya stated toward the end of his interview that he wished he had been able to attend some of the early trainings, even if it was just the teacher training and not administrator focused. He continued, saying he would have to make administrative decisions, so he felt it would have still been important. He said,

I would have liked to have gone and sat in, even as an administrator, because I wasn't going to be the one implementing it in the classroom, but I would have been the one that

was going to be standing there, being their administrator, and making sure that it got implemented. And you get some ideas with…stuff that I could help them with…

Valerie and Rugen were the only two principal participants to indicate any administrative level training. Rugen stated that he was able to attend state-provided training specific to CCSS. He said this training occurred during his second year of administration—six days throughout the year. Valerie said she only attended informational sessions at the Tennessee Educational Leadership Conference (Tennessee's annual conference for school and district leaders) and received information from the East Tennessee Core Office. She did not attend state training specific to administrators.

Resources

Tennessee has provided a website that contains past training materials and information regarding CCSS in the state of Tennessee. The TNCore website has been available to teachers since CCSS training began. In addition to past training materials, the website provides information about CCSS, instruction, assessment, and Response to Intervention (RTI).

Valerie said that in her school, they have used the TNCore website a lot. She said in addition to the teachers learning about it at the state training sessions, they have utilized it within the building to find resources and lessons to use at Castlegate. She said:

We used a lot of their practice things and showed [the teachers] how to use [the lessons] in the PLCs and talked about which ones were good and which ones maybe didn't work so well and gave them some time to explore because time to explore means a whole lot.

In regard to the state website, Rugen appeared to have mixed feelings. He said there were resources available on the TNCore site, and they were generally very helpful. He said the

main problem he found was that teachers did not really know those resources were there, and he had to show that resource to and talk about it with his teachers several times to get them to realize it was there and what information was available.

Artifacts from Montoya at Florin School showed resources from the TNCore website were shared with teachers. One such resource, strategies for accountable talk, a method to support higher order thinking, questioning, and discussion in the classroom, was shared with teachers during PLC times along with information on implementation. Valerie and Vizzini also provided rubrics and assessment scoring guides that were shared with their teachers, which could also be obtained from the TNCore website.

In addition to the state materials, three of the participants addressed the importance of working with lessons to get the teachers ready for implementation. Valerie said that she has taught lessons for her teachers to give them a place to develop their own CCSS aligned lessons. She believed that teachers needed to see that support and how the analysis and application work. Rugen also utilized modeling in his building, but stated he used instructional coaches to help teachers with lesson plan development.

Vizzini worked hands-on with his teachers. He met with them and looked at lessons to see what they could work on to improve teaching and learning to align with the standards. He said, "We can both see the lesson from different perspectives and build together from there." His hands-on work with the teachers was also illustrated in an observation at his school where he worked side-by-side with teachers who were uncomfortable scoring writing pieces from students. He supported them to build their confidence in using the scoring rubric and provided useful feedback to these teachers.

Three of the principals weighed in on the new assessments as part of CCSS implementation. Valerie said that in district-wide PLC meetings, they identified the main standards in the curriculum so principals could work with teachers on preparing for the new standards and new testing style. When discussing how new assessments measured in depth application, she said, "We've never had to face a test that way." She worked with her curriculum coach and teachers on utilizing benchmark assessments to determine where students stood with the new standards and what they would have to do to bring them up to working within CCSS grade level standards. She said they knew they would need those assessments to determine goals for their students and make teachers think about the teaching methods they use in class.

Vizzini stated that at Cliffs School, they had to think anew about developing "a foundational understanding of what assessment is and how we can use it." He worked with teachers to create assessments to "benchmark [their students] throughout the process." With those benchmarks, he said:

> And then I am able to take them back to my colleagues at [a PLC] and say, 'Okay. Here are my findings. Here are the results. And this is why I believe this is going to work for…all of our students.'

He said he was able to use this thinking and these assessments to help his secondary teachers see how the standards apply to more content areas other than just math and English.

All of the principals and assistant principals worked to ensure their teachers were prepared for implementation of CCSS. They utilized available trainings and worked with teachers and other building personnel to find resources to make the transition easier.

Ongoing Assistance

The third theme is ongoing assistance. This theme's categories include collaboration and ongoing support. Responses under this theme included information related to district training, PLCs, curriculum coaches, materials/programs, money, and time.

Collaboration

Professional learning communities (PLCs) in MVSD meet at both the district and school levels. Teachers gather to discuss common issues they may have across grade levels, subject areas, or other areas of concern. Many of the PLCs and PLC series the district and schools have held have focused on CCSS.

Rugen said in his school, the teacher leaders who went to summer trainings returned to work with other teachers in their "grade-level bands" on what they learned. PLC time throughout the year came back to those topics the teacher leaders introduced at the beginning of the year.

Supported by artifacts, Rugen at Guilder Elementary provided for biweekly PLCs for several years where they discussed topics such as the CCSS transition, formative and summative assessments, collaborating within the grade level to develop Discovery Education ThinkLink probes or literacy centers that could be used during instruction, and working with the grade level below, setting instructional goals for the upcoming school year, all of which had to be centered around CCSS goals. These artifacts included PLC agendas from 2010 to 2013.

Valerie said in her school, the main focus for PLCs has been strategies and what they can learn from each other within the building. PLCs met weekly to give time for implementing the professional development on CCSS. Castlegate's grade span of kindergarten through eighth

grade made her scheduling interesting. She clustered her grade levels together by threes so they could work together with more relevant standards and data for each other. She said this time was used to deliver resources to teachers and work on areas of concern.

The interview with Valerie and the school's PLC agendas illustrated that Castlegate's PLC meetings worked slightly differently from other schools. Where the other school's PLCs were primarily led by the curriculum coaches, Castlegate's were run by a cooperation of the curriculum coach and the state academic specialist during the 2013-2014 school year. The curriculum coach and academic specialist worked together to provide resources and training to teachers during this time. Agendas indicated meetings occurred weekly where they set writing goals, discussed exemplar texts for writing, higher order questioning, and math tasks. The academic specialist also brought in a math specialist to help teachers work on math goals. The PLC time was also an avenue to distribute writing rubrics, CCSS vocabulary lists, and other resources to support implementation and assessment.

Vizzini stated that his school has previously used their PLC time to work on math assessments and learn what quality math assessments looked like and how to work on more depth with those skills. At the time of the study interview, he said they were using the time to primarily work on scoring writing. That time was being spent with teachers bringing in student writing to collaborate with others and work on scoring those samples. This time allowed him to work with small groups of teachers and develop their skills as an evaluator of student writing, especially if the teacher does not normally teach a writing-based class, as was witnessed in the observation at his school.

PB said that Miracle School also had school level PLCs that have focused on CCSS standards. In addition to the school level PLCs, several teachers attended district level PLCs to bring that information back to Miracle School.

Montoya noted that although he does not always attend his teachers' PLCs, he likes to visit them to hear their concerns so he can try to help them or get answers for them. He likes sitting down with them during that time, because he says that's a time when they are comfortable and will express opinions and concerns he can then work with them to address.

PLC agendas from several schools—mainly Florin, Castlegate, and Guilder—indicated that they adopted the same norms that were taught during state trainings and were expected to be used in the classroom during lessons. These norms included keeping students as the central focus, being engaged, sharing opinions without taking over or being rude, aiming for solutions, and removing fear of struggle if it is leading to a good product. These norms were presented to teacher leaders during training, who brought them back to incorporate them into trainings for the districts and schools, teaching by example. Using these norms in their meetings allowed teachers practice with these expectations so they could feel more comfortable taking them back to their classrooms.

The agendas also outlined strategies shared with teachers, such as accountable talk and POW+TIDELL, a strategy for organization and writing, that Montoya shared at Florin School while focusing on writing in classes other than English. Cliffs School's artifacts provided teachers samples of exemplar student writings at the middle school and high school level with explanations of how to score those and other student writings. All of these PLC agendas evidenced support provided by principals which allowed teachers to learn and collaborate.

Two observations were made at the school level evidenced principals' providing time to teachers to collaborate with each other. Cliffs School and Florin School were both observed during PLC times. Cliffs School showed Vizzini working hand-in-hand with his teachers to support them as they supported each other in learning to feel confident and effective while scoring student writing. Florin School's principal took a more hands-off approach, where Montoya provided time to the teachers to work with and support each other, but only would assist them by request.

One feature of MVSD is that all schools have curriculum coaches. Although the coaches are provided and paid for by the school district, the principals worked closely with them to determine what they can do to best assist teachers within the building.

Valerie worked hand-in-hand with her curriculum coach. She said they "are constantly on the lookout for strategies." They sought information that would be beneficial to their teachers and worked with an academic specialist from the state who helped them procure resources and materials.

Rugen also utilized his curriculum coach. His school used the Envision math program, but they were not seeing results they expected. Rugen and the curriculum coach met to discuss how they could improve their math scores. She introduced him to a website called EngageNY, offering them more in-depth resources than their current curriculum. He also stated the curriculum coach modeled lessons for teachers to help them further develop practices to help students with application of learning.

Montoya also worked closely with his curriculum coach, including the curriculum coach in decisions about who attended trainings. The curriculum coach worked to find resources and

tools for Florin's teachers. "I let her, because that's her deal, and let her go and find things and she brings back three or four choices and tells me," he said. He and the curriculum coach then discuss what they believe will work best and what the school can manage to implement.

Another way principals supported collaboration was with time. Time took on several meanings as the interviews progressed. Several participants expressed that time is always an important factor when introducing change. Some expressed their wish for more training time before implementation, their wish for more time to get teachers used to the idea before beginning the transition, and their efforts to provide time to teachers to learn and work together.

Valerie discussed time at the school level, referring to the time she was able to make available in the schedule for teachers to meet in PLCs and collaborate. She said that time was provided during their common planning times on a weekly basis at Castlegate, and they were able to use that time for professional development and ongoing work with developing strategies and lessons to support the standards. She wanted her teachers to know that the process would take some time, and they would have to work together.

At Guilder Elementary, Rugen provided time for his teachers to collaborate. Some time for collaboration was also provided at lunch where Rugen said he often sat with teachers to discuss issues and concerns. He made himself available for those times so he could talk with teachers about their concerns and work with them to find answers. He called it the "collaborative piece," and said it was important to provide that time to the teachers. As with Valerie, Rugen also expressed to his teachers that the transition would take time, noting that "It's an immersion process."

PB expressed that she felt the trainings were not planned with sufficient time to cover the information. She attended a teacher level training at the beginning of implementation and said, "I feel that these trainings often have a lot of information to digest and a very small amount of time to do it in."

Both of the observations as well as many of the artifacts support principals providing time to their teachers to collaborate. Both observations were of building-level PLCs from Florin and Cliffs schools and many PLC agendas were provided from Florin, Guilder, and Castlegate. These data illustrate principals prioritizing this time to their teachers.

Ongoing support

Valerie said she attended some district PLCs "where they got together to look at the Common Core standards and then dissect them and to scaffold things and to work up their pacing guides to make sure they covered it all." She said this was done at the district level and pushed out to the schools to help them support teachers with guidance on what to cover when, and she was able to take this information back to Castlegate to help her teachers make decisions regarding lesson structure and pacing.

PB added that her teachers have attended several trainings at the district level. She said the administration at Miracle School encouraged teachers' participation in as many district level trainings as possible to take advantage of those local opportunities to conserve money. Although these trainings were provided by the district instead of the state, all of the principals ensured they or their teachers took advantage of the opportunities.

Valerie stated that the state academic coach helped them find materials for their teachers to assist them with implementing CCSS. "We started doing more progress monitoring," she

said, “and we used the materials she got us for that.” Valerie worked with the state academic coach and the school’s curriculum coach to find available resources for their teachers by perusing websites and materials. They assisted teachers in locating resources and advice to gauge which resources were good and which ones might not work at Castlegate.

Rugen and Guilder’s curriculum coach worked together when making the change to EngageNY. He and the curriculum coach felt their previous program, Envision, “was still too much memoriz[ation].” He said they transitioned to EngageNY in search of a resource that would better fit with CCSS. They implemented the program in second grade the year prior to this study and liked their results. Rugen and the curriculum coach made the decision to expand that to second through fifth grades during the study year.

Montoya, who also worked closely with his curriculum coach to find programs and materials, said they have used IXL, an online math program, and DIBELS, a reading progress monitoring program, at Florin School. Montoya said that the questions they often have when looking for materials or a program to use are:

> Is it cost effective? Is it going to be results effective? Is it going to be something we can continue to use? And is it going to be something we can implement pretty quick, and are the teachers going to buy into it?

He said he often makes the final decisions on a program, but he gathers opinions from others on perceived effectiveness before making his decision.

The PLC observed at Montoya’s school indicated that teachers also had some freedom to look at resources to use within the classroom. These teachers, through time provided by Montoya to collaborate, discussed some free online resources to use in their classrooms. They

were also expected to explore EngageNY and bring a lesson from the website to their next meeting that might be useful for teaching CCSS. Even though Montoya did not provide the particular resource, he provided the time to the teachers to be able to discuss and collaborate on available materials.

PB said at Miracle School they have pursued avenues other than programs to support the curriculum. She has worked to increase access to technology within their building and has also worked with the librarian to increase the library's collection of books that align with CCSS.

Providing materials and resources require money. Much of a school's funding comes from the state and district levels and not the school, itself. However, principals often have to make decisions about how to best utilize the funding and determine what will be most useful for their teachers and students.

Perhaps the most candid statements regarding funding came from Montoya. He stated that certain things at the building level do not qualify for funding directly from the district, saying that many times, "It's at the building level to try to come up with [the money]." Montoya stated they will often have to fundraise to get the last of what they need to purchase a resource. He said they will try to purchase with the funds they have available, and they will often begin with Title I money first, which must be spent to improve student achievement. If they do not have enough funds, they will look at fundraising to earn the last of what they would need to purchase the resource, and that his curriculum coach is particularly good at coordinating fundraisers. He also stated they are always on the lookout for free resources or "free to try" resources.

Research Question 1

To answer how principals have supported teachers during the transition to CCSS, the evidence supports that many of the principals from MVSD have done whatever they can to help their teachers through the change. These principals explained CCSS to teachers and what to expect during the transition. They showed their willingness to work together to make it through the transition while continuing to provide support. Many of these principals used what was in their control to make the process as easy as they could for each teacher, whether it was staying positive and being that "cheerleader," working with curriculum coaches to locate materials and lessons, to working hand-in-hand with teachers to support them during the change process.

Findings: District-Level Supports

In addition to principal supports, district-level administrators also worked to prepare teachers for the transition to CCSS. The interview and artifact data from district-level personnel were examined with the same codes and themes as principal and assistant principal data. Observations were not conducted for district-level supports, because there were no district-level opportunities for observation following IRB approval for the study. However, an extensive schedule of breakout sessions at a professional development held before the start of the school year was provided. This schedule was detailed and illustrated the content of each session. The sections on district-level supports follow the same themes and categories as that of principal supports.

Creating Understanding

District-level administrators also worked to create understanding for teachers regarding the transition to CCSS. The same categories of communication, cheerleading, and extra help

found in the principal interviews explained how district-level administrators also supported teachers.

Communication

Morgenstern, Queen, and Westley all stated they wanted teachers to understand that CCSS was going to provide more in-depth learning for students instead of "surface knowledge" (Queen) and the "memorization process" (Morgenstern). Morgenstern said,

> The way I've tried to explain Common Core to the teachers is that it provides a lot more in-depth study into the standards and a lot more rigor. Where I think a lot of times, previously, with other standards there was a lot of memorization process type of things, without the students truly gaining an in-depth understanding of the objective. And when talking with the teachers, I've tried to relay that with Common Core that there's going to be a lot more in-depth in conceptual understanding of the standards.

Queen also indicated that in talks with teachers, she tried to explain that there would be less memorization of information and a move toward "deeper analysis and application." She explained to the teachers that CCSS supports more critical thinking skills. Westley expressed similar sentiments, also stating that everyone would have to work together to make it happen, iterating that it was not solely the responsibility of the teachers for a successful transition.

Artifacts were provided as evidence that principals and district level administrators tried to create a culture of understanding leading into implementation. These documents included memos and anonymous teacher feedback from county-wide PLCs.This feedback was in regard to a district level PLC meeting held for kindergarten through second grade teachers. In this feedback, many of the teachers expressed that they had a better understanding of CCSS after

attending the PLC. The teachers learned about the standards and received clarification regarding what CCSS was about. Several expressed they understood the standards better, but knew they had more to learn to be successful.

In addition to teacher communication, the administrators in the district spent time discussing parent communication. Queen stated, "We have got to get stakeholder buy-in, so that's not only the teachers, but parents and other personnel in the district that may not be teachers, so they can come in and help our teachers." Westley stated that communication with parents was key, because, "Anything in school works better when you have support from home." Morgenstern also supported this concept by stating that parents would need to help their children at home, and if they have a better understanding of what is happening, they would be able to better support their children, which would, in turn, help the teachers.

Ensuring parent communication provided a purpose for the change to the students' families. This purpose not only supported families, but also teachers since, as Westley stated, support from home helps when making changes. Parent communications were provided in the artifacts to support the communication and explanation to parents regarding CCSS. In addition, to communication, district personnel also served as cheerleaders for the teachers, much as the principals did. That category will be discussed in the following section.

Cheerleading

Two of the three interviewed administrators, Queen and Westley, indicated a cheerleading mentality to help support teachers. Queen stated that buy-in would be necessary to make the transition successful. She stated, "When teachers are learning something new, they

need that support where they know that we are behind them, and we know that it is a learning curve."

Westley had similar thoughts, expressing, "I tried to tell them it wouldn't be an overnight process, and we will have to work together to set goals and figure things out…" He continued by expressing that he never wanted the teachers to feel like they would be alone in the process, and that help would be available to them because the transition would be a learning curve for everyone.

Extra help

Queen and Westley felt that making sure their teachers knew there would be extra help during this process was a key to getting buy-in from teachers. Queen stated that as a district leader, she felt she should make sure principals have access to training so they can properly support teachers during the transition. Westley wanted the teachers to know that he would be able to work with them whenever he could.

Prepared for Implementation

District-level administrators also provided supports to be prepared for implementation. The data had the same codes as the principal data, with the exception of principal decisions and assessments. These codes fell under the categories of training and resources.

Training

The principals and district-level administrators all expressed the wish for more opportunity to attend trainings regarding teacher support during the transition process. Queen expressed she wanted more time and training before having to support her teachers through the process.

Morgenstern was the only district-level administrator to indicate any administrative level training. He stated he was able to attend training specific to CCSS that was provided by the state where he sat in a training session with principals and administrators, saw PowerPoint presentations and videos that explained CCSS, and heard other leaders from around the state talk about what they were doing in their systems and schools.

As for providing specific state training supports to the teachers, interview data indicated that district level administrators let principals know what money was available to send teachers to trainings. The principals then made decisions about which teachers to send to the state trainings and who their within-building teacher leaders would be.

Morgenstern described the teacher leaders as a group who attended the summer training, "they came back, this is on the first week of August. And they, the ones that attended the training, redelivered it to the rest of them at that grade level, or in that subject area that didn't go." Where some funding was limited for sending large numbers of teachers to trainings, the district utilized these teacher leaders to provide within-district professional development opportunities for other teachers to attend, as evidenced by a county inservice schedule provided in the artifacts.

Westley also supported the use of teacher leaders, stating the leaders attended summer training sessions and follow-up sessions during the school years to further develop their skills and understanding related to CCSS. This information was then brought back to the teachers in the individual schools and shared. He also stated that several of these teacher leaders were utilized at the training session prior to the start of the 2015-2016 school year. Many of these

teachers led sessions on information specific to teaching, assessments, or resources that could further support teachers in CCSS.

Resources

When asked about other available resources that helped prepare teachers for implementation, Morganstern and Westley mentioned the TNCore website. Morgenstern stated that they have made it known to teachers that TNCore is a resource available to them "where they can log in and get all the trainings from the summer." He also discussed finding resources that allowed teachers to see sample lesson plans from other districts and areas of the country. He stated the benefit of having those resources available to the teachers, especially when they can find lesson plans by standard to help the teachers begin implementation.

Westley also discussed the availability of the TNCore website and the importance of ensuring that teachers knew that was a resource available to them. He said there were materials available on the website from the summer training sessions, and he wanted the teachers to know there was a place they could go to get those materials, even if they had not been able to attend a training session. In addition, he explained that teaching strategies and lesson planning have been discussed with teachers. This allowed them to work toward implementing CCSS within their classrooms.

Ongoing Assistance

The final theme was ongoing assistance. The majority of artifact evidence provided by district level administrators supported this theme. Many of the artifacts support evidence of district level training, PLCs, curriculum coaches, materials and programs, and time.

Respondents' perceptions will be documented under the categories of collaboration and ongoing support.

Collaboration

Morgenstern, Queen, and Westley explained that at least monthly PLCs were held within the schools. Some of the schools held biweekly PLCs for several years, especially toward the beginning of implementation. Morgenstern noted that there is no standard formula for the construction of PLCs. He said that some schools, such as Guilder Elementary had five or six teachers in one grade level, where they had the same planning times and could meet by grade level. Other schools, such as Florin School, Cliffs School, and Miracle School might see a different configuration for their PLCs because there may only be one or two teachers in a grade level, where they shared planning and PLC time with other grade levels.

Memos from the school system that were disseminated to the schools were also provided. In these memos, a list of PLC goals were provided, requesting that principals and leaders from the district ensure time was provided for PLCs. Other goals provided by the district throughout the years of implementation included increasing educator effectiveness by implementation of CCSS, providing staff development to support this goal, and setting schedules of district-provided inservice and staff development opportunities to reach these goals.

All of the schools in MVSD have curriculum coaches. These coaches were responsible for helping teachers with materials and resources. Several have also worked closely with their schools' principals to develop lessons for teachers or help them locate information that deepened teachers' understandings of CCSS. Queen stated that the curriculum coaches "seek outside

resources and presents those to the teams to use," while Westley said he works with coaches to see what resources he can help them acquire.

Ongoing support

The district trainings are professional development opportunities that are sponsored by MVSD. Many of the district level trainings provided to the teachers have been annual professional development opportunities, often at the beginning of a school year. After the initial implementation of CCSS, these trainings have focused on updates and new programs that have been rolled out by the state.

Minutes from supervisors' meetings and leadership meetings at the district level were provided as artifacts by Morganstern. The minutes indicated that district personnel discussed developments with CCSS at the state level, including the introduction of RTI with discussion of universal screeners and progress monitoring, comparisons of CCSS to old state performance indicators (SPIs), state level assessments, and information regarding teacher leader training.

Morgenstern had the most input on the district training opportunities. He recalled a day approximately three years prior to this study where math teachers had to give a constructed response assessment (CRA). He said that the teachers were responsible for scoring a set of the assessments, so the district allowed teachers to meet at the central office with substitute teachers placed in the schools. The teachers all met and "took the papers that their kids had done, and walked through the process on the CRA." He said they scored the CRA, which gave them a better understanding of how much more in-depth explaining the answer is compared to a 100 question handout.

He and Westley also discussed a day at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year where the county had a training day with break-out sessions similar to those held at large educational conferences. They stated that many of the sessions were devoted to tools and methods teachers could use in their instruction, with Morgenstern stating, "A lot of those sessions were focused on things that are going to help with the Common Core." The sessions focused on math, writing, and higher order questioning.

In support of district level training, district administrators provided artifacts which included inservice schedules, meeting agendas, and a detailed listing of the breakout sessions from the 2015-2016 training day.

The list of breakout sessions for the 2015-2016 inservice day included opportunities for teachers to attend training sessions tailored to their needs, with many of the sessions centered on some aspect of CCSS implementation. Sessions included, but were not limited to the following topics:

- Writing assessments to measure new standards
- Effective questioning techniques
- Lesson structure and pacing
- Teaching number sense
- DIBELS progress monitoring
- Using Discovery Education probes with CCSS
- Reading deficits and interventions
- EngageNY training
- RTI

- TNReady (state assessments) test information and practice tools

The sessions covered all grade ranges, with many of the topics tailored to specific grade ranges. Some of the topics, such as lesson structure and pacing, were offered in different grade level spans to provide support for those specific grade ranges. Still others had multiple sessions to allow teachers the maximum opportunity to attend sessions relevant to their needs. All sessions were led by teacher leaders from the district.

Money can often be a problem for rural school districts (Dayton, 1998). The same is true for MVSD. With less than $9,000 spent per pupil, per year, they fall within the "do more with less" category. Queen and Westley stated that they felt like their jobs focused mostly around providing the best professional development opportunities they can with limited funding.

Morgenstern also discussed the use of a free resource, EngageNY. He stated that New York has done a lot of work with CCSS and developed the EngageNY website that has a lot of resources, lessons, and materials centered around CCSS. In addition to the EngageNY site, he said they have looked at other districts in the state to see what they have done. Pacing guides from other districts were examined to see how implementation was planned to get ideas for what would work for MVSD.

Morgenstern stated he wished they were able to provide more time, especially when implementation was new. He felt like they needed more time to revisit training, especially during the first years. They worked with the schools to make time every other week for PLCs in the buildings, but he said, "two times a month in the afternoon…that's not a lot of time when you're talking about everything that we had to introduce." Queen had similar sentiments, and added that she wanted more time for administrators to train and become familiar with the

initiative, since teachers "are looking to us for support." She felt they had not had enough training in the beginning to support them.

Some ways the district-level administrators have been available to provide time, however, include the above-mentioned working with schools to create PLC time and also the district-level trainings they provided. Earlier, it was mentioned by Morgenstern that the district was able to arrange substitute teachers to provide time for the math teachers to come together and score CRAs. Also, the planned day at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year provided time for teachers to work together, collaborate, and teach each other about materials and resources that are useful under CCSS.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked how district-level administrators supported teachers during the transition to CCSS. While the district administrators did not have as much one-on-one involvement with teachers during the transition process, they still worked with teachers to provide them with a purpose and explain CCSS, while also communicating with parents to help make the transition easier. They supported teachers by making it possible for teachers and teacher leaders to attend the state trainings so they could return to the school with accurate information. District-level administrators appeared most supportive with ongoing assistance, providing supportive district training such as the county-wide day prior to the 2015-2016 school year as well as working with curriculum coaches to be able to find resources to take back to teachers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided analysis and findings of the data collected during the study. The research questions were reviewed followed by the themes developed from interviews of the eight participants in the study. Research question 1 findings include principals' support through communication, sending teachers to be trained, positive encouragement, finding resources, collaboration time, and working one-on-one with teachers. Research question 2 findings include district-level administrators' support by communication, providing opportunities to attend training, and continued training within the district.

Chapter Five will conclude the study and provide discussion of the findings and implications for the field. Finally, recommendations for the field based on the study as well as recommendations for further study will conclude Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this multisite qualitative study was to examine how principals and district-level administrators in rural schools support teachers during change. Specifically, this study focused on the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The purpose was guided by the following questions:

(1) How do rural principals provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

(2) How do rural district administrators provide support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards?

Discussion

Findings from this study support existing research on transition to change in schools. Teachers in Barley and Beesley's (2007) rural school study reported their successes stemmed from principal support and respect for their needs. The administrators from the rural school district in this study, Mountain View School District (MVSD), supported their teachers by creating understanding for the transition to CCSS, preparing teachers for its implementation, and providing ongoing assistance after initial implementation, thus confirming the findings of Barley and Beesley. MVSD administrators understood their teachers would need assistance during the transition and worked to support those needs by sending teachers to training, providing collaboration time, and working with teachers and other school personnel to gather resources.

Although most of the administrators noted they had not received training on how to specifically support teachers during the implementation of CCSS, the administrators most

comfortable with preparing teachers were the veteran administrators. These administrators were able to receive initial information on CCSS to assist their teachers. In addition to having information new administrators did not have, the veteran administrators were in their positions longer and already had an understanding of their teachers' general needs. They worked with their faculties prior to CCSS implementation, and used this prior knowledge to support teachers during transition.

The three principals entering administration during the transition to CCSS had not received any prior training on CCSS, and they were not able to explain the need for it as well as the veteran administrators could. Nonetheless, these principals found ways to be supportive of their teachers. These three reminded teachers they had recently been teachers and still understood what it was like to be a teacher during times of change. These principals illustrated the interest and commitment that teachers in Vuillamy and Webb's (1991) study said was important to the change process. Since the new administrators missed CCSS training and mentoring was not provided for these principals, they incorporated positive attitudes and ensured teachers they would still do whatever they could to work with them, find information, find resources, and provide time for teacher collaboration.

Even though Nicholson and Tracy's (1982) study indicated that principals needed their own time of adjustment before being expected to support teachers during change, MVSD administrators did not have adjustment time. They often received information at the same time as teachers, or they received information and were expected to pass it directly on to teachers. The administrators did not have time to process the information before relaying it to teachers, making it more difficult to prepare their teachers for impending change. If administrators are

expected to lead change, they must fully understand the initiatives and thus effectively communicate and provide proper support to teachers to ensure a successful transition.

Collaboration time appeared many times in the interview, artifact, and observation data, an aspect Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) found was important to the change process. This is an aspect over which the administrators had control, and was a support they were easily able to provide to their teachers.

All of the principals in this study provided time during the day, weekly, biweekly, or monthly for PLC meetings where teachers could meet and collaborate. The principals provided teachers expectations for discussion regarding CCSS whether or not they attended the meetings with the teachers. Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) found this important, because in addition to the opportunity for collaboration, providing expectations also provided vision. These expectations supported teachers' understanding of the goals of CCSS and the expected end results of implementation. District-level administrators also encouraged principals to provide this time. Both levels of administrators worked to supply coverage, if necessary, for teachers to facilitate collaboration. The administrators provided this time for teachers to reflect on their practices, which Vulliamy and Webb (1991) found was important to the change process.

The administrators also provided ongoing support for implementation. Among working one-on-one with teachers, finding resources, PLCs, or providing a county-wide day of training, administrators in MVSD did not abandon their teachers after initial implementation. This is important because research reinforces that if teachers are provided with moral and emotional support, materials, and needed professional development, a successful change is more likely to occur (Fullan, 1999, 2001, 2013; SEDL, 2000; West, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

The data were examined through the lens of Bridges's conceptual frame. For transition to be successful, participants must have a purpose, picture, plan, and part to play (Bridges, 2009). These constructs were considered during data analysis.

The administrators provided a purpose when they explained CCSS to their teachers. Discussion of students' current learning, focusing around memorization of facts, illustrated the problem with old state standards. The administrators provided a purpose for CCSS, explaining the new standards would provide students opportunities for more focus and in-depth analysis. This provided not only the purpose, but also a picture of new learning.

Administrators planned for the change through training held by the state. This gave teachers an idea of what they would need to do to start work on the transition to CCSS. Teacher leaders were given a part to play by their principals and district-level administrators. Principals sent the teacher leaders to training, and they returned not only to share their knowledge with teachers at their schools, but to work with teachers across the district. These teacher leaders knew how they fit into the puzzle to make the transition successful.

A Model for Transitional Change

Bridges conceptual frame is presented as a consecutive, chronological series. When addressing MVSD through the lens of Bridges's conceptual frame, findings showed the process was less linear and more clustered. There is overlap between the purpose and picture as well as between the plan and part to play. The findings indicated that the principals and district-level administrators overlapped with their explanations of the state of education with the old state standards, how that was a problem, and where education should be after implementation of

CCSS. Moreover, the plan and part to play overlapped. Explaining to teachers what would be expected of them and making sure they knew how they would be a piece in the puzzle also included blurred lines. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the differences between Bridges's frame and its application to MVSD.

The overlap for MVSD could be attributed to several factors. Time could have been an issue. There may not have been enough time between the rollout from the state and the expected implementation date to allow for the four distinct steps of Bridges's frame. Money could also have been a factor. Since the schools and the district did not have the money to bring in individualized professional development focused on implementing CCSS in a rural school district, they relied on utilizing the state's training programs, which would again put MVSD on the state's timeline. Principals had to provide a purpose and a picture to their teachers before sending them to training. Following training, administrators had to provide teachers with the plan and their individual parts to play so everyone would understand the transition to this new way of teaching and learning.

Rural Schools

The literature focused on rural schooling posited that rural schools are often tasked with accomplishing "more with less" (Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Hickey & Harris, 2005; Mollenkopf, 2009; Starr & White, 2008). Even though MVSD received funding from the state, that funding, along with local tax funding, only provided the system with just under $8,600 per student. This level of funding caused difficulties for some administrators in providing resources or sending teachers to training. This situation forced administrators to rely on teacher leaders to be trained, returning to the school to disseminate information. Professional development specific

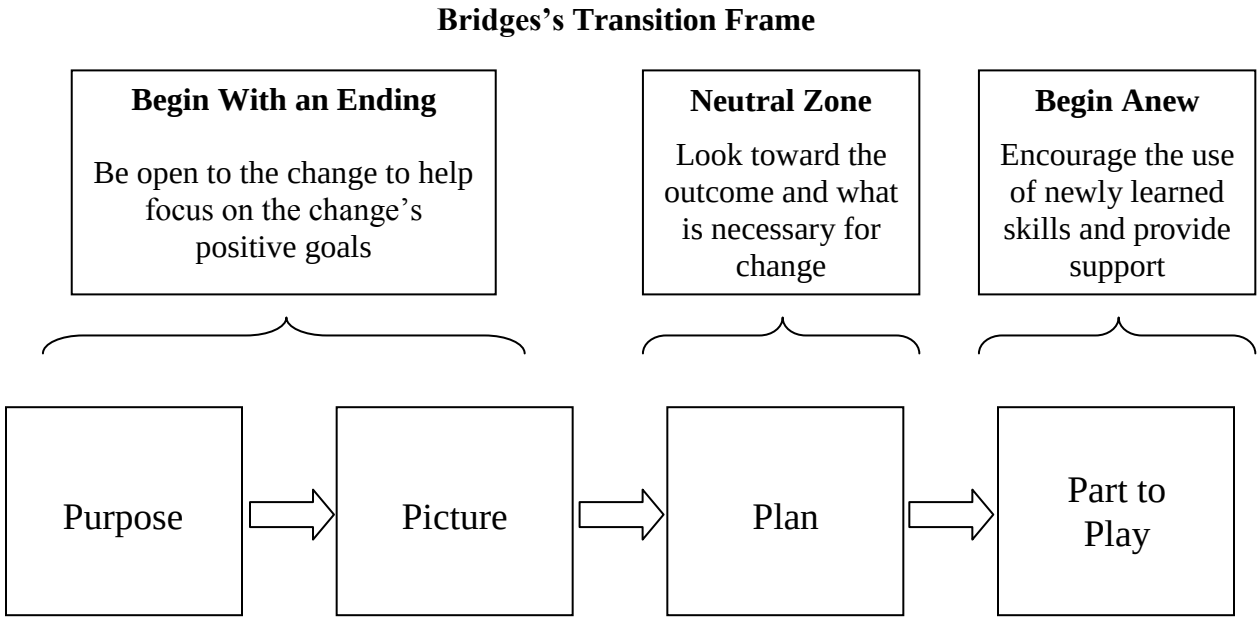


Figure 2. Bridges's Transition Frame (1987 & 2009)

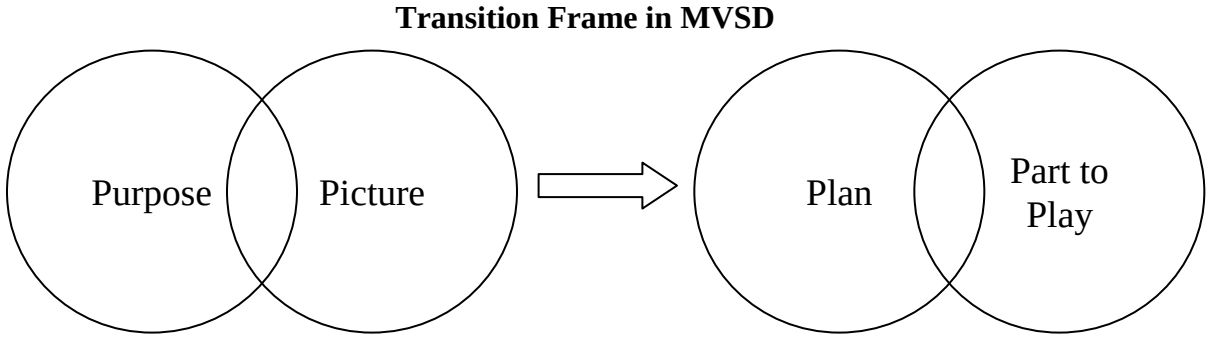


Figure 3. Transition Frame in MVSD

to rural schools was unaffordable, forcing the principals to rely on one size fits all professional development provided by the state. The state trainings were not specialized for the different types of schools across the state. This can create a more difficult transition for teachers in rural districts because they are not receiving resources and training that account for their specific needs as rural schools (Arnold, 2005; Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010).

Principals also had to provide ongoing support within their buildings. With the small size of rural schools, teachers become responsible for many roles. MVSD's schools have either a few teachers per grade level or teachers responsible for multiple grades. When implementing change, it became a team effort to implement the new standards. With more in-depth analysis of information, writing was a key factor for CCSS. Many teachers were not trained in writing, making them uncomfortable with the process of teaching students writing and scoring their compositions. Principals were responsible for ensuring teachers were supported in proper methods of teaching and scoring writing. Since funding did not support professional development for individual schools, the principals in MVSD provided for PLC time, often participating in or leading these collaborations to work with teachers to improve their skills for teaching writing. Participating in these PLCs required principals to take time away from other administrative duties.

Fink and Stoll (2005) and Smith and Andrews (1989) said for change to be successful, principals needed to ensure teachers felt comfortable working with and relying on each other, while Beerman and Kowalski's study (1998) found that schools that were inclusive of all stakeholders were more successful during change. To be inclusive and rely on each other, communication must occur. MVSD's administrators facilitated communication with and

between teachers to create understanding and facilitate professional dialogue regarding CCSS. Only two administrators discussed communication with parents. Including all stakeholders—i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community—in communication would increase the success of change by increasing the understanding for the need for change. Had administrators communicated more effectively with stakeholders outside of faculty, a better understanding for the need for CCSS would have been achieved. Only one school sent home information regarding CCSS, and based on artifact data, it was only one communication piece in a newsletter. This information was designed solely for parents and did not include information for students. Effective communication among all stakeholders would facilitate understanding and provide knowledge to value the need for standards change.

Implications

Policy Makers

The findings from this study have implications for policy makers and state education agencies. When determining new initiatives and implementation expectations, education policy makers can use data from this study to better understand a functional timeline and budget for successful implementation. Research from chapter two indicated that proper preparation time for administrators to learn the new initiative improves their ability to support teachers during change (Nicholson and Tracey, 1982), and rural schools' budgets require them to work with less funding (Dayton, 1998). Policy makers' understanding of these needs would allow them to prepare better timelines and budgetary considerations when implementing large-scale reform.

In addition to implementation expectations, training requirements should be considered. This study provided insight to the training made available to administrators and teachers across

the state and the struggles those trainings provided to rural school districts. Education policy makers and members of the state's education department can use this information to gain a better understanding of how necessary proper training is, not only for teachers, but also for administrators.

District-level Administrators

Many of the administrators interviewed did not receive training on CCSS prior to implementation. Those who did, stated it was mainly information about CCSS. None of the administrators expressed they had received training specific to supporting their teachers during the transition process. This study provides for better understanding of the needs of administrators for supporting teachers—especially rural administrators. Findings from this study also illustrate administrators' need to process new initiatives before leading their teachers through a transition. When state training does not exist or is limited and generic, the district should assume responsibility to fill in the gaps. A major gap found in this study was support for new administrators. There was no state training available for new administrators, and due to timeline issues, they were not even able to attend teacher training. When large-scale reform is implemented, and administrator changes occur simultaneously, a provision of training and mentorship would be useful for incoming administrators.

Principals

Considering communication, only one principal sent CCSS information home to parents. While communication within the building was abundant, communication outside of the building was less prevalent. When reforms occur, they not only affect teachers and administrators, but they also affect students and parents. CCSS created a shift in how students learn and the way

parents needed to work with their children at home. Providing information to parents and students on new strategies and resources to help with homework and learning would increase their understanding of the new standards. When all stakeholders understand the need for change and how the change affects them, there is an increase in the success of the change. Principals are a direct line of communication between the school system or state and families, requiring the need to ensure open and ample communication to families.

Recommendations

Policy Makers

The findings from this study illustrate how rural administrators were able to provide support to teachers during the transition to CCSS. Administrators wanted to provide as much support as possible to their teachers, but were limited by a lack of appropriate training, time, or funding.

Training should be made available for school contexts by community type across the state. Strategies that are effective in urban and suburban schools do not necessarily meet the needs of rural schools. This study found a lack of training to support the unique needs of rural schools when implementing a new, large-scale education initiative such as CCSS. Providing regional trainings that address needs specific to rural schools will allow administrators and teachers in these systems a better understanding of how an initiative could meet the unique needs of their students and provide them strategies to meet those needs.

A major concern expressed by many of the administrators in this study was time. Administrators need time to understand a new initiative and learn how it will fit their schools and affect themselves and their teachers. When implementing new, large-scale initiatives, an

appropriate timeline should be considered. Many of MVSD's administrators were learning information as they were expected to relay it to their teachers. Providing training specific to administrators prior to implementation would provide time for them to understand the initiative and learn strategies to support their teachers. Since rural schools have different challenges than urban or suburban schools, tailoring these trainings to meet the needs of rural schools and help administrators understand how to support their rural teachers would improve success of implementation.

When change is implemented, funds are often necessary for successful change, whether it is to provide materials, resources, or training. Expecting an overhaul of methods and practices without a budget to support these changes places schools, especially rural schools, in difficult situations. Rural schools already require more money than larger schools for daily operations (RAC, 2012). When implementing change on a rural budget, it stretches their already thin monetary resources. When large-scale initiatives are expected to be carried out in rural schools, budgetary assistance should be considered to support these systems.

Since education reforms affect students, there should also be consideration for resources for students and parents. The TNCore website offers a section for parents and the community, but it is mainly information about the standards. There is a lack of state resources that are specifically tailored to supporting students. Providing resources for student support during a transition should be considered when implementing change.

District-level Administrators

A major gap found with this research included the lack of mentoring for new administrators. When there is a principal change during the implementation of new policy,

support should be provided to those administrators to help them better support their teachers. Some of the principals were veterans, but some were first-time administrators. While the veterans used their prior experience and training to work with and support their teachers, new hires were struggling. Providing support and mentoring to newly hired administrators during a change process improves their comfort with the initiative and would allow them to more effectively support teachers within their schools.

There was evidence of only one district-wide training day that focused on supporting teachers with strategies and information regarding CCSS since the initial implementation of the standards. Since there were teacher leaders attending training yearly, the district administrators could have planned to provide more regular district-wide training for their teachers. As the teacher leaders were learning new information and strategies, they could have been working together to disseminate that information to all of the county teachers each year. It is district-level administrators' responsibilities to provide that time and organize that training.

Principals

While the principals of MVSD worked to provide supports to teachers, findings indicated they did not provide support to parents. When education initiatives are implemented, they will affect students. Since parents have to work with their children at home, understanding initiatives that affect their children will allow them to better support their children during change. Principals should consider increasing parent communication when undergoing initiatives that directly affect students.

Future Research

Rural districts in different regions can face different challenges upon implementation of change. This study focused on a rural school district in East Tennessee and addressed how principals and district-level administrators supported teachers within their district. Understanding that different regions and demographics can cause different challenges, exploring how other rural districts in other regions address change can strengthen the findings from this study.

Summary

Research has indicated that leadership plays a strong role in the success or failure of a change process (Darling-Hammond, 2005, Fink & Stoll, 2005; Fullan, 1999, 2005; Heifetz, 1994; Smith & Andrews, 1989; West, 2005). Due to resource differentials between rural and urban schools, the supports provided by a leader become even more important in determining the success of change (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Reeves, 2010). When implementing changes in schools, it should be remembered that, just as not all children are identical, not all schools and systems are identical. Large-scale reforms cannot be used like a blanket and cover every school district at once. Some special considerations should be taken for the unique circumstances that exist in different types of schools. Once size fits all reform does not actually fit all.

While this study does not provide insight into whether supports were perceived as successful, this exploratory study provides insight into support provided by school and district leaders in one rural system. Whether the supports are successful can only be determined by further study. Though much remains to be accomplished, the leaders in MVSD have utilized

their resources to best support teachers in the implementation of CCSS, looking to this change initiative to improve the teaching and learning in one rural district.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking time to meet with me today to discuss your support to your teachers to aid them in transition to and implementation of Common Core State Standards. Your responses will be kept confidential.

1. Please provide background information about yourself (i.e. – years in education, years as a principal/administrator, etc.)?

2. Did you receive training in how to support teachers in the implementation of CCSS?
    a. Please describe that training.
    b. If you did not receive training in supporting teachers, would you have liked this training?
        i. How would it have helped in the implementation of CCSS?

3. Describe how you have explained CCSS to your teachers to prepare them for implementation?

4. Tell me about the training opportunities you have provided to your teachers to support their implementation of CCSS.
    a. Principals: Describe the within-school opportunities you have provided to your teachers.
    b. Administrators: Describe the within-district opportunities you have provided to teachers.
    c. Both: Describe any outside training opportunities you have provided teachers the opportunity to attend.

5. Other than professional development opportunities, what other supports have you provided teachers to assist them in the transition to and implementation of CCSS (i.e. – curriculum, materials, etc.)
    a. Principals: Describe the within-school supports you have provided to your teachers.
    b. Administrators: Describe the within-district supports you have provided to teachers.
    c. Both: Describe any outside supports you have provided to your teachers.

6. Describe any state level support that has been provided to teachers.
    a. Describe your perceptions of these supports.
    b. If you have attended any of these supports, please describe your experience.

7. Describe any other methods you have used to support your teachers during the transition to and implementation of CCSS.

8. What would have helped you to better support teachers in the implementation of CCSS at your school (for administrators, in you district)?

Thank you for your time.

VITA

Victoria Henley was born in Oak Ridge, TN, to parents, Deborah and Charles Henley. She grew up in Harriman, TN, where she attended Elementary School at Bowers Elementary. She continued on through Central Intermediate, Harriman Middle, and Harriman High Schools, where she graduated as Valedictorian in 2000. From there, she attended Furman University in Greenville, SC, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in June, 2004.

Victoria returned to her hometown to eventually work at Walnut Hill Elementary School, where she realized how much she enjoyed working with students. She returned to school, attending Lee University in Cleveland, TN, where she obtained a Master of Arts in Teaching for Elementary grades kindergarten through eighth in July, 2007. While working on her masters, she had the privilege to finish her internship while working at Glyfada Christian Academy, a small, private school for refugees in Glyfada, Greece, which is a suburb of Athens.

After receiving her Masters, Victoria again returned to her hometown to teach eighth grade English at Harriman Middle School, and moved to eighth grade Science two years later. After her first year at Harriman Middle School, she began her Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a concentration in Leadership Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She graduated in May, 2016.