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Examining K-8 teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum change

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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING K-8 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MANDATED

CURRICULUM CHANGE

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The purpose of this mixed-method study was to examine elementary teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change. In the spring and fall of 2015, Illinois elementary school teachers in a north suburban school district participated in a focus group, an online survey, and follow-up interviews to gather data about teachers' perceptions of the mandated curriculum change process in implementing the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. The study also sought to find any differences between the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through fifth-grade classrooms and those who taught in sixth- through eighth-grade classrooms.

This study was based on a conceptual framework that included three different theorists, which provided a comprehensive lens to review the data: Knowles's Adult Learning Theory; Fullan's Three-Tier Change Process; and Au, Raphael, and Mooney's Model for Standards-Based Change. Using the combined work of these three theorists, three key overlapping components were validated within this research when implementing a school or district-mandated curriculum change.

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EXAMINING K-8 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MANDATED

CURRICULUM CHANGE

BY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"The only thing that is constant is change." (Heraclitus, cited in Robinson, 1968, p. 90)

Introduction

Ravitch (2010) made an interesting reference to school reformers resembling the characters of Solla Sollew by Dr. Seuss (Geisel, 1965). These characters were always searching for a mythical land where troubles were few and far between. Although educators know that there is never a perfect educational place, they continue to strive for curriculum improvements. Those curriculum improvements often come in the form of educational mandates that educational leaders then require school districts to implement.

In the history of school reform, several attempts have been made to improve the educational system. The 1960s and 1970s involved educational movements related to community-based education, open classrooms, and individuation of student learning (Pogrow, 1996). In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education sponsored a report called *A Nation at Risk,* which lambasted public education and described "a rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 5). This report prompted the *Back to Basics* initiative by the Reagan administration that was dedicated to a fundamental approach to reading, writing, and arithmetic (Morgan & Robinson, 1976), meaning the focus on the core ideas of education instead of other subjects. This initiative also included assigning more homework, increasing graduation requirements, and having stricter

attendance requirements (Cuban, 1993). The 1990s brought another wave of educational reform, with reform movements such as whole language, rigorous testing, team teaching, teacher involvement, accountability measures, charter schools, and school vouchers, among others (Cuban 1993; Pogrow, 1996). An additional reform movement that impacted practices in the 1990s was the integration of technology as a support across content areas (Linn, 1998; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997).

The 2000s saw additional changes to education. One was meeting the needs of English language learners by shifting the focus from skill-based practice to supporting the mainstream curriculum (Goen & Gillotte-Tropp, 2003; Huse, Wright, Clark, & Hacker, 2005; Shapiro, 2011). But the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) is arguably the primary U.S. reform movement of the 2000s and had several mandated components. One of those federal mandates included *Reading First*, which was signed into law in January 2002 and boasted methods to boost early literacy from 2002 to 2007 (*Illinois Reading First Final Report*, 2007; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Another product of NCLB included *Response to Intervention* (RtI), which required teachers to provide tiered lessons and activities to reduce learning gaps among students and provide support in the least restrictive environment (Illinois School Board of Education [ISBE], 2012).

Curriculum reforms released in June 2010 included the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which focus on English language arts (ELA) skills across all content areas and mathematics. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were

made public in April 2013, and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for social studies state standards was released in September 2013 (ISBE, 2010, 2013).

Although NCLB (2001) was a national testing mandate and required implementation across the country to ensure that all schools were meeting the expectations, the CCSS, NGSS, and C3 are all optional curriculum changes that each state can choose to adopt and are more focused on the content changes being taught within the classroom. NCLB was implemented at the national and state levels, and tests were sent to each school for district-wide testing. In the case of these curriculum changes, the implementation was the responsibility of the classroom teachers. As an example, in 2011, Illinois adopted the CCSS for ELA and mathematics for students in kindergarten through 12th grade, 13 years after the last set of Illinois standards were adopted for classroom instruction. The implementation plan presented by the state allowed for a four-year transition to the newly adopted standards, which meant that the new standards would be assessed at the state level for the first time during the 2014-15 school year. Transition planning was left up to each individual district as to how school staff would be educated about the new standards as well as how the implementation would be executed.

The NGSS (National Research Council, 2013) were posted for public comment on the ISBE website in the fall of 2013 and were adopted in February 2014 with an implementation plan to follow. Illinois' current social studies standards were developed using the 1985 Illinois State Goals for Social Science and include five themes with 11 mandated curriculum topics across the themes (ISBE, 2013). In December 2015, Illinois adopted the updated social studies standards based on the C3 framework.

As Illinois continues to update and mandate specific curriculum requirements to school districts, there continues to be skepticism toward the change process, as stated by Cuban (1993).

> The most common strategy that reformers have used in this century to get students to know and do the right things is to change the curriculum. That popular strategy has largely failed. If this history of failure were to be known more widely, it might embarrass the present generation of reformers who scale steep hills to plant the flag of curriculum reform. (p. 182)

As Cuban (1993) states, a large push for educational change continues, but there seems to be a lack of completion. In the case of the CCSS, 46 states initially announced their participation in implementing the updated standards for ELA and mathematics (ISBE, 2012). As reported in 2015, only 23 states were still implementing the standards as written, 20 states were implementing a modified version, and 3 states had withdrawn (*Common Core State Standards Adoption Map*, 2015). Curriculum change efforts are dictated by their impact on the teachers' beliefs or due to the amount of teacher involvement (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Cuban, 1993; Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996; Kegan, 1994; Pogrow, 1996). For example, 98% of the teachers agreed with the following statement when describing the *Reading First* program: "As teachers of this school, we are able to teach reading even to the most difficult students because we are all committed to the same educational goals" (Trainin & Wilson, 2010, p. 19). According to studies focused on teacher perceptions of the RtI process (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009; Detgen, Yamashita, Davis, & Wraight 2011; ISBE, 2012; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; National Center on RtI, 2010), teachers found this process to be positive because of the teachers' desire to provide additional and targeted support to their students (Martinez & Young, 2011; Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011).

Teachers often believe that their creativity, academic freedom, and experimentation efforts are suppressed in order to implement mandated curriculum requirements (Dean, 2013). Examples include aligning curriculum maps to state curriculum mandates or using standardized test questions on formative or summative exams. This lack of ownership over their curriculum and classroom implementation can cause negative feelings about the curriculum that they are required to implement. When standardized testing negatively impacted their schools' image within their community, teachers reported concerns about standardized testing, their curriculum, and their school rankings (Pedulla et al., 2003; Segall, 2003; Taylor, Shepard, Kinner, and Rosenthal, 2001).

Fullan (1993) argues the necessity for teachers to have a sense of moral purpose in order to embrace and adapt to change and to better meet the needs of their students. Studies have also shown that teachers are more likely to embrace new teaching approaches suggested by a colleague rather than by researchers (Anderson et al., 2012; Dancy & Henderson, 2008). In addition, the greater the usefulness and ease of using a new teaching approach or materials, the more likely the reform is to take place (Yuan & Lee, 2012). The research conducted by Anderson et al. (2012), Dancy and Henderson (2008), and Yuan and Lee (2012) is supported by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson's (2012) first of six assumptions about adult learners: "Adults need to understand the benefits of learning the new skill or knowledge before they begin the learning process" (p. 63). Teachers desire to have change suggested to them only when they see the benefit to themselves or to their job performance by making that purpose clear to the adult learners; the transition is embraced more easily than if otherwise not identified.

Having walked through a brief history of previous curriculum reform movements and having provided examples of research that help support curriculum change, the researcher realizes that research still needs to be conducted to show how curriculum change can be implemented through the change process for teachers.

Teacher Practices Impacted by Curriculum Change

"Systems don't change by themselves." (Fullan, 1993, p. 17)

Regardless of the curriculum mandates, teachers' habits and beliefs shape the way the curriculum is implemented (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Teachers internalize the changes, teach what they believe is right for their students, and adapt the curriculum requirements as necessary (Helsby, 1999; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Del Principe (2004) and Ewert (2011) found similar findings by identifying that reform is equal parts product and process. Philosophical conflicts between the teachers' philosophy and curriculum requirements surface when faced with curriculum changes.

In the past, traditional teaching methods in the classroom often portrayed the teacher as the keeper of knowledge and the students as receivers of knowledge who are to memorize and retain the information provided (Avenstrup, 2007). Freire (1970) refers to this as the "banking method" of teaching, and since the rise of critical pedagogy and multicultural education, teachers have been encouraged to take on less didactic pedagogies and methods. A more constructivist view of teaching practices has developed, and the prescribed set of facts no longer represents curriculum for students, as revealed in the work of Vygostsky (Vygotsky, Cole, John-Steiner, & Scribner, 1980; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986), Piaget (1967, 1973), Bruner (1960), and Dewey

(1929). This transformation to a constructivist approach is still not universally accepted by teachers (Matthews, 1997; Osborne, 1996), and as curriculum changes continue to take place, constructivism remains the goal for instructional practices (Avenstrup, 2007; Matthews, 1997; Osborne, 1996; Wadsworth, 2005). As Bruner (1960) explains in his book preface, the debate surrounding curriculum development and the value of determining what should be taught to which students is primarily for the teachers, as students learn what they are ready to learn.

For example, within the CCSS for mathematics are six major shifts in content: (1) focus, (2) coherence, (3) fluency, (4) deep understanding, (5) application, and (6) dual intensity (*Common Core Shifts*, 2011). In addition to the six shifts in content, there are eight mathematical practices that should be embedded into daily instruction that were modified from the original process standards developed by the National Council for Teaching Mathematics (NCTM). The eight mathematical practices move the focus from the teacher and place the expectations on student learning (*Standards for Mathematics*, 2010), in line with constructivist thinking.

In the CCSS for ELA, the six major shifts in literacy include (1) balancing informational text and literacy text, (2) building content knowledge in the disciplines, (3) establishing the staircase of complexity, (4) requiring text-based answers, (5) writing from sources, and (6) focusing on academic vocabulary (*Common Core Shifts,* 2011). As well as addressing the shifts in content, there is also a focus on the capacities of the literate individual, which were inspired by the college and career anchor standards (*Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy*, 2010). The eight mathematical practices and the capacities of the literate individual are

examples of the types of instructional shifts that teachers need to change as part of the CCSS initiative, which were generated based on constructivism.

Although teachers have been consistently expected to raise the bar for student achievements, until 2010, there have been few expectations for teachers to improve their instructional practices. Teachers in many professional development classes have said that if the information is not able to be used in the classroom the next day, the likelihood of implementation is weak (Davis Bianco, 2010; Martinez & Young, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). In general, teachers have been creatures of habit and become overwhelmed or frustrated with change.

Although teachers are generally categorized into one professional group, there are differences between elementary teachers and secondary teachers. Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade have been shown to be more comfortable with the change process (Fuller & Izu, 1986; Lee, Cawthon, & Dawson, 2013; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Elementary teachers are not often content specialists and need to be comfortable with many content areas that require various styles of teaching, but secondary teachers, particularly Grades 6 through 8, are most likely to be content specialists with an education endorsement instead of an education major. Lee et al. (2013) found that secondary teachers were less engaged in the change process by being hesitant to embed instructional changes and that, when change did occur, they spent more time questioning the strategy's usefulness. This idea is also discussed in Lipsky's (1980) book, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*. Lipsky studied the impact that the implementer of the policy has on the implementation itself. Teachers have the ultimate ability to implement a curriculum change within their classroom or to ignore the directive and teach what they, as adults, believe to be valuable to the learning experience of their students. This accentuates the idea that teachers can

support or undermine policy changes within a school or district by embracing or rejecting the transition plan.

Implications of Curriculum Change in Schools

Greater than an individual teacher, system reform is required when implementing curriculum changes (Fullan, 2009). When thinking about system reform, several factors are worth considering: communication, logic, recruiting the majority, and intuition (Ewert, 2011; Gladwell, 2000; Schlechty, 1993). This holistic process is vital to the success of the implementation. Although Gladwell (2000) might call it the "tipping point" (p. 18) and Schlechty (1993) describes it as "recruiting the five types of teachers" (p. 47), there seems to be a threshold within a school when the change process transitions from a few teachers to the majority of the school. Ewert (2011) found that two components were needed before the tipping point occurred for institutional change: extensive communication with all stakeholders and a specific taskforce designed to support the transition. However, before the school system can change, the right structures and supports should be in place (Ewert, 2011; Fullan, 2000).

Schools are known for engaging in continuous improvement, and they often change the expectations of the teachers as each reform is implemented (Fullan, 1993). This continuous shift in thinking requires teachers to receive the tools needed in order to participate in the change process successfully (Fullan, 1993; Irez & Han, 2011; Vetter, 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2012). Tools come in the form of time, resources, professional development, and administrative support. Research shows that teachers resist change due to the lack of supports, which include resource allocation, organizational structure, training, and leadership (Avenstrup, 2007; Fullan, 1993; Irez

& Han, 2011; Johnson, Bird, Fyffe, & Yench, 2012; Konings, Brand-Gruwel, & Van Merreienboer, 2007). In addition, community pressures and top-down reforms could also be contributing factors to the change process (Konings et al., 2007). These tools and supports should be provided for the teachers from the school or district-level administrators who are invested in the teachers' change process.

When school administration engages teachers collaboratively in the change process, the group achieves more success than does an individual teacher (Fullan, 2009; Reeves, 2008). Professional learning communities (PLCs) are an example of how a school protocol has been developed in an effort to support curriculum change (Buffman, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). Sometimes called teaching teams, PLCs allow teachers to work toward the common goal of curriculum change with likeminded peers who pursue a common vision and coherent strategy (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Johnson et al., 2012).

For example, science departments implemented successful curriculum changes by focusing on common interests within their field of study at the University of British Columbia and University of Colorado (Bush et al., 2010; Wieman, Perkins, & Gilbert, 2010). This community model strengthened the shared ownership and dedication to implementation. By utilizing models shared by Fullan (2007), Knowles et al. (2012), and Au, Raphael, and Mooney (2008) as a conceptual framework, a more successful implementation of a curriculum change may occur.

Context for Study

Not only are American organizations such as, American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP) invested in learning how students rank, but countries outside of the U.S. are also interested in learning how its students perform compared to their peers. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2012) was established in 2000 to study and evaluate education systems around the world. The program tests the intellectual abilities of 15-year-old students, and, currently, over 70 countries have participated in PISA data collection (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011a; PISA, 2012). According to the PISA data from the 2009 executive summary report, the U.S. is currently ranked below 17 other countries who participate in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in reading, below 34 OECD countries in mathematics, and below 21 OECD countries in science (NCES, 2011b). Scores were similar again in 2012, showing that the U.S. scores had made no significant growth in any of the three tested subjects (NCES, 2012).

After reviewing data from PISA, the growing concern that had started in 1983 only escalated among educational leaders and politicians, who saw the lack of observable growth and current U.S. rankings. A major focus area has become the literacy deficit in adolescents. Over the last 16 years, the number of U.S. students who performed below the average level on the reading assessment has increased, and the number of students ranking at or above the average reading level has decreased (NCES, 2011a). Several studies have focused on the connection between lack of literacy skills and high school dropout rate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003; Dougherty, 2010; Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa 2003).

Although these studies (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003; Dougherty, 2010; Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003) provide extensive examples of specific literacy intervention options for student achievement across Grades 4 to 12, they have not conducted the experiments themselves but analyzed data from previous studies to develop a synthesized review of the findings. Teacher training and program implementation were identified as major growth areas for school districts and states. Even focusing on the high school graduates provides disconcerting data. Due to the low number of students meeting the average literacy standard, 32% of high school graduates are not prepared for college-level freshman English (ACT, 2005), and as of 2011, 28% of the high school graduates met none of the college and career benchmark standards (ACT, 2011).

Although teachers are unaware of the skills students are likely to need as 21st-century citizens, it is necessary for them to attempt to prepare the future leaders in daily instruction. As students are prepared for a future that current teachers may be unaware of, it is necessary to give students all the necessary skills to become 21st century citizens. Currently, young adults are projected to have an average of seven career changes between the ages of 20 and 29, but their baby-boomer parents had an average of only 11 career changes between the ages of 18 and 44 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). By having learning standards internationally benchmarked, the data help educational leaders develop standards to ensure that students have a competitive edge in the emerging global marketplace (PISA, 2012). In order to make effective and impactful change on the curriculum provided in U.S. classrooms, a new set of standards were developed to attempt this task.

Development Process

Despite popular belief, the CCSS were not developed at the national level. Illinois State Superintendent Chris Koch was at the state superintendents' conference several years ago and mentioned that he was interested in updating the Illinois state standards that were adopted in 1997. He noted that if any other state was willing to join him, it would be a more collaborative effort. After an initial gathering of ideas, 32 state superintendents attended a conference in Chicago, Illinois, to begin development of new common state standards.

Through representation from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia were represented during the writing process (*Common Core Standards,* 2011). In addition to these main organizations, there has also been an advisory board made up of several other groups. Achieve, Inc., ACT, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the College Board, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers were all involved in the development process (*Common Core Standards*, 2011).

The representation of people involved with the development of the CCSS and the standards' subsequent rollout to the country was not embraced without criticism and controversy (Gewertz, 2013; Ravitch, 2014). Some of the criticism was due to the lack of practicing educators on the committees; specifically, only 3 held classroom math teaching positions, only 15 had classroom experience teaching ELA, and only 1 had a bachelor's degree in elementary education (Ravitch, 2014). Because of the committees' lack of experienced elementary, math, or ELA educators, teachers and school administrators found it difficult to see the value of the committees' standards that were to be implemented within classrooms. Educational researchers

began to write articles and statement papers identifying the strengths and weaknesses of these standards (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). Yet even with this underlying controversy, Illinois moved forward with requiring its school districts to train their teachers and begin the implementation of the updated standards, focusing on their positive attributes.

These new learning standards advertise themselves as a more focused approach to student learning (*Common Core Standards*, 2011). Guidance was collected from teachers, college professors, content experts, and innovators within education and business, along with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) working with ACT. The motto became "fewer, deeper, clearer" (ISBE, 2011b, p. 1). Drafts of the CCSS were made available for public comment in March 2010; the final version was released in June of that same year. Because the CCSS are so new to the educational field, there is little systemic research relating specifically to the CCSS. The current research can help fill that gap and use this conceptual framework as the lens through which the research takes place. In addition, this research presents whether the perceptions of teachers are reflective of the controversy that surrounds the standards at the political level (Williams, 2014).

<p style="text-align:center">Conceptual Framework</p>

The conceptual framework for this study combines concepts of Knowles et al.'s (2012) adult learning theory, Fullan's (2007) three-tier change process, and the standards-based change model developed by Au et al. (2008) to investigate teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change.

Adult Learning Theory

Although many various models of adult learning theory exist across many various fields of study around the world, this research focuses on Knowles's (1989) model of adult learning theory due to its worldly status. Savicevic (1991) reports that andragogy, which was advocated by Knowles (1989), had been adopted by at least 10 European countries, including Germany, England, Poland, France, Finland, the Netherlands, and Russia. In addition to multiple fields of education, developers of adult learning programs in criminal justice and medicine have used components of Knowles et al.'s (2012) assumptions to improve student success rates (Chan, 2010). The recommended changes made by authors of these programs were supported by Knowles et al. (2012), who state that "educators now have the responsibility to check out which assumptions are realistic in a given situation" (p. 68). For example, the idea that competition for grades represents the best motivator for students and therefore limits the number of students deserving an A was not the intention of motivation to learn (i.e., Assumption 6). Although adjustments have been made to meet the needs of specific populations, learners' participation in their own education has been the consistent thread that ties all of these models back to Knowles's (1989) original adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2012; Westfall-Rudd, 2011). Teachers are one of the groups that are considered to be a specific population.

Teachers are a unique type of adult learner because, as educators themselves, they tend to be more critical of presenters than other populations. A common complaint teachers make is that a learning activity is too far removed from classroom application and, therefore, lacks meaning (Wenzlaff & Wieseman, 2004). More successful professional development experiences would occur if teachers were invited to be participants in the setting of objectives and designing of

professional development plans. Teachers—who are at least equal to any professional development facilitator—need to be active throughout the entire process of designing professional development programs (Zmeyov, 1998). Therefore, the teachers' needs should be at the center of the professional development required for the change process.

<div align="center">Three-Staged Change Process</div>

Keeping the teacher at the heart of the change process is a prominent goal of Fullan and Steigelbauer's (1991) work that has focused specifically on a three-tiered system. This three-staged process concentrates on what an administrator needs to accomplish in order for successful change to take place (Fogarty & Pete, 2007). According to Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991), managing change at the school level requires three specific stages: (1) initiating the change, (2) implementing the change, and (3) institutionalizing the change. If any of the stages are missing, the results tend to be less than desired.

The less desirable outcomes—confusion, anxiety, gradual change, frustration, and false starts—can be summarized as teacher resistance to change. Although some have argued that resistance is most apparent in individuals who are required to change (Barker, 1992; Herzberg, 1990; Vaill, 1989), others have identified the process of change itself as a form of resistance greater than any individual factor (Knoster, Villa, & Thousand, 2000). Erickson (1993) defines resistors as those who oppose actions that threaten their identities. This definition is similar to Knowles et al.'s (2012) Assumption 3, which focuses on a learner's experience and how making personal connections to particular experiences prevents an individual from making changes. For

example, if an adult learner's experience is criticized or ignored, the learner internalizes that rejection personally, making him or her experience rejection as a person (Knowles et al., 2012).

Teachers take pride and ownership of their classrooms and the way they provide instruction to their students; this is a strong part of their self-concept as teachers (Fuller & Izu, 1986; Lee et al., 2013; Wolters & Daughery, 2007). When instructional practices and resources are expected to change by implementing mandated curriculum, teachers' self-concepts may be impacted to the point that their previous methods of instruction are retained, with potentially negative consequences for the overall change process (Lee et al., 2013).

To make the change easier, the three-tiered approach has proven to be effective (Fogarty & Pete, 2007). Tier 1, Initiating the Change, is the phase about deciding to begin the change process. It includes conversations about the need for the transition and developing the plan. Tier 2, Implementing the Change, is the phase that needs the most time and attention. During Tier 2, the plan is carried out, progress is checked, and problems with implementation are addressed. Tier 3, Institutionalizing the Change, means that the change is no longer considered new but has become a part of the school's usual practice.

School-district administrators who are familiar with the three-tiered change process and are willing to address each of the necessary components should be able to help guide their teachers and staffs through a systematic, successful change experience. This change model can be used for both short-term and long-term change; it can be used for any initiative that school-district leaders are interested in achieving (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Another lens that could be used to implement a change was developed by Au et al. (2008).

Standards-Based Change

For school building leaders or district administrators to implement successful change, each of the three stages for creating successful change are equally necessary. Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) provide suggestions to understand and support each of these stages; however, a specific "to do" list was developed by Au et al. (2008) to help district administrators or school leaders move through the standards-based change process.

The seven-step process developed initially by Au, Hirata, and Raphael (2005) and furthered by Au et al. (2008) provides instructional leaders at any level a step-by-step guide to allow change to take place within an organization. Step 1 requires that a need be identified by a small group or individual that would support improving student achievement. Step 2 focuses on a core group of leaders organizing the professional development needed to support the change and creates time for teachers to collaborate. Step 3 brings the whole school together by introducing the vision to the staff. Step 4 allows the teachers to assist in the development of benchmarks to monitor student progress. Step 5 establishes a system for schoolwide conversations so the discussions can continue throughout the school year. Step 6 leads the teachers to create curriculum guides that define expectations at each grade level for a staircase effect, and Step 7 includes the students in the process. By including the students and parents in the goal setting and assessments, the learning community is expanded beyond the school walls. This system of standards-based change addresses the needs of the leaders, teachers, students, and community to have a holistic view of the change process.

The goal of the standards-based change process, which aligns with Knowles et al. (2012) and Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991), is for teachers to have continuous conversations about what

they are doing to improve student achievement (Au et al., 2005). Together, these three models

provide a comprehensive lens through which to view systematic and successful educational

change, such as that required in Illinois by the implementation of the CCSS.

For this study, a combination of the three models is used to research teachers' perceptions

of the CCSS transition process within an Illinois school district. Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991),

Knowles et al. (2012), and Au et al. (2008) have been combined to create a conceptual

framework for a successful curriculum change process. The model developed aligns the six

assumptions about adult learners as defined by Knowles (Knowles, 1950, 1970, 1980, 1989,

1995; Knowles et al., 2012), the standards-based change model as presented by Au et al. (2008),

and Fullan and Steigelbauer's (1991) components of the three-tier change process (see Figure 1).

The administration, which needs to be aware of Knowles's adult learning theory (Knowles, 1950,

1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012), can plan and execute a successful curriculum

change by following a combination of the models presented by Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991)

and Au et al. (2008).

Stage	Title	Description
Stage 1	Initiate the change	Introduce the innovation to the participants
Stage 2	Implement the change	Apply the tools and techniques of the innovation
Stage 3	Institutionalize the change	Establish accountability for continued use

Figure 1. Three-Tier Change Process (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991)

By using the ideas presented by Knowles et al. (2012) as the thoughts of the

administrators responsible for implementing the change, these ideas can be reflective of the

components that need to be included in the change plan. The administration then needs to

determine how to institute change, as suggested by Fullan (1991), by referencing Au et al. (2008)

for the specific steps of that process. If the administration is able to consider the ideas presented

by Knowles et al. (2012) and can follow the steps presented by Au et al. (2008), then the desired

outcome of institutionalizing the change, as presented by Fullan (1991), becomes possible (see

Figure 2).

Problem Statement

Curriculum and instructional practices have undergone prodigious changes throughout

educational history in the U.S., which impact teachers and their perceptions of change. Some

reform movements have ended in student success, but others have made no lasting impact.

Studies have shown that, with proper support, teachers have positive perceptions of change and,

therefore, successful results were produced. Research continues to be disseminated that improve

instructional practices and identify updates to curriculum topics (Hamilton et al., 2009; Peabody,

2011; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008; Young & Kim, 2010). One example of curriculum change

that could have been supported more at the state or regional level is the CCSS, which were

adopted in Illinois in June 2010. Illinois provided limited resources for school districts to

transition to the updated curriculum requirements. Individual school districts were given the

autonomy of making those curriculum decisions at the local level.
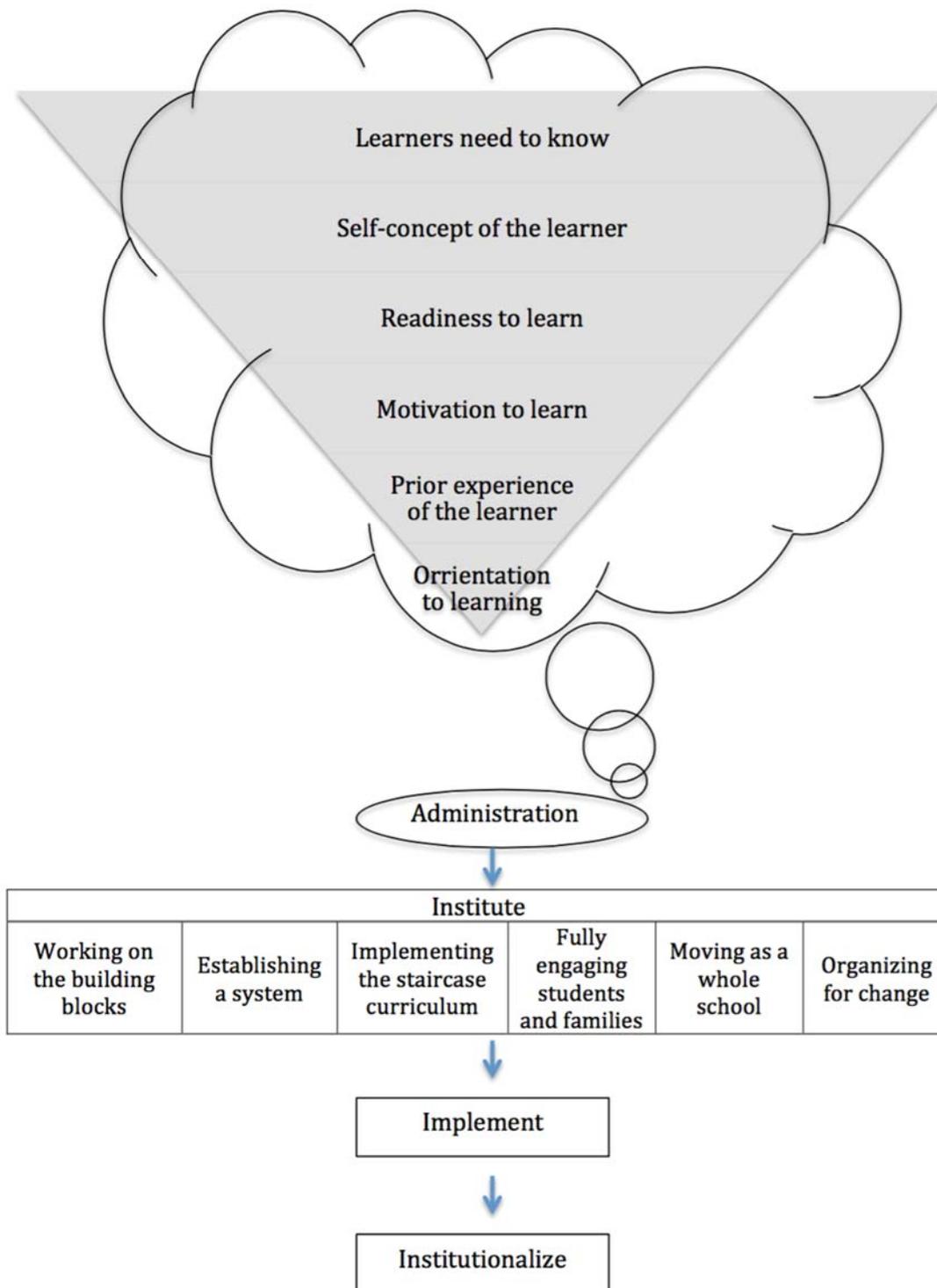
Figure 2. Model of conceptual framework for study

Generationally, although curriculum mandates have been introduced consistently to classroom teachers, supports have not always been provided to sustain these initiatives, and in some cases, there may not have been proper supports put in place to ensure that teacher perceptions of the change are positive. Without positive teacher perceptions of the change, little long-term change is likely to take place. In knowing the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes, supports and instructional plans can be put in place to assist the teachers in the transition and help to sustain long-term change. Studies about the impact of liking or disliking change on the success of the transition have been limited.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to seek the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes within an elementary district serving kindergarten through eighth-grade students. By examining the teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum change, their ideas and thoughts can be used to help develop a comprehensive plan that would allow for the building-wide implementation of a mandated curriculum change.

Research Questions

1. How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?
2. Are there differences in the perceptions between K-5 and 6-8 teachers?
3. How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?

Need for Study

A literature review related to teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change revealed that limited research has been conducted on this topic. Most studies do not examine the perceptions of teachers in changing curriculum; they focus either on improving student achievement based on change or the use of a specific textbook or resource during the change process (Landman, 2000; Segall, 2003; Trainin & Wilson, 2010; Wong-Ratcliff, Powell, Cage, & Chen, 2011). Looking at change from a broader lens has been done on an extremely limited basis. With such limited information and an increased amount of change coming to the educational field, studying this topic is important.

By learning the perceptions of teachers who are required to implement the mandated changes, administrators may be better equipped to create a plan of implementation that meets the needs of the teachers, supports student learning, and meets the updated expectations placed upon schools. This study can benefit administrators who are required to initiate mandated curriculum changes within their school district or building. This research can provide administrators with information that can be used to make decisions that support future comprehensive and sustainable change.

Methodology

This was be a mixed-method study in parallel form, combining a focus group, an online pilot survey, an online survey, and interviews (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2010). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) state that mixed-method research is useful when trying to solve a social or complex problem. By trying to identify teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change, it

was necessary to include a qualitative component that allowed for teacher opinions to be shared. The qualitative portion of the study focused on how the perceptions teachers have in regard to mandated curriculum changes (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The focus group of six teachers was made up of various grade levels, numbers of years of experience, and genders in order to gather information that could assist in the development of survey questions. The quantitative data analysis included a factor analysis for additional comparisons (Creswell, 2003; Mertens, 2010). After the survey was completed, follow-up interviews were conducted with nine teachers. Each grade level, K-8, was represented through a random selection of teachers within the school district sorted by grade level. Including both qualitative and quantitative components allowed for the results of the research to be used to inform future administrative decisions.

Using the components within the conceptual framework, a survey and interview questions were developed by which teachers could provide feedback for data collection and analysis. Analyzing the data provided from the participants, trends related to the conceptual framework were utilized to make connections to teacher perceptions. Researching teacher perceptions of change helped the development process for future change efforts.

The participants in this study were teachers who worked at a K-8 elementary school district located within a suburban school district in Illinois. This participant pool was utilized for both quantitative and qualitative portions of the data-collection process.

The homogeneous sampling method (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002) was used to identify research participants for the focus group. The focus group was held to explore personal perspectives regarding teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change, and those data were

used to finalize the survey questions. The focus group questions were semistructured and open-ended to provide an opportunity for participants to share their personal experiences and emotions regarding the topic. A pilot survey was also conducted to ensure Cronbach alpha levels were within the appropriate range of 0.7-0.8.

Based on the focus group and pilot survey, the online survey questions were perfected. Then an online survey was sent to the teacher participants through email (Converse, Wolfe, Huang, & Oswald, 2008; Mertens, 2010). The teachers received a link to the online survey for ease of participation. Survey participants indicated if they were willing to participate in an interview process and were selected through purposeful random sampling (Mertens, 2010; Seidman, 2006). The qualitative methods approach was used for the interview process, which allowed the participants to have their experiences perceived by others (Wiersma, 2000). Questions were semistructured and open-ended to ensure that the participants were able to express themselves comfortably and the interviewer could ask follow-up questions for clarification. The interviews took place after the survey window had closed to ensure a purposeful random sample pool of candidates. In order to understand the research in an organized manner, the study has been structured into five chapters.

Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout the study.

Change process: The movement from point A to point B within an educational system and the required steps that allow the transition to take place successfully.

Content standards: The skills and concepts students should know at the completion of each grade level (Zagranski, Whigham, & Dardenne, 2008).

Curriculum: From the Latin root *currer,* the course to be run, as referenced by Bobbitt (1918). Eisner (1985) describes curriculum as the content expressed within a particular curriculum model in three parts: explicit, implicit, or null. Explicit refers to curriculum that is stated clearly, with no room for confusion. Implicit meaning implied or unspoken, and null refers to having no value in the organization. Similar to Eisner (1985), Cuban (1993) also considers curriculum to be a combination of parts: official, taught, learned, and tested curriculum. Official refers to what is documented as the curriculum. The taught curriculum is what the teacher actually covers within the class. Learned curriculum is the information retained by the students, and tested curriculum is what is assessed at a school or state level. Tomlinson et al. (2009) provides a similar description, concluding that curriculum systematically addresses required content standards but also includes additional elements for successful student learning. For the purpose of this research, Eisner's (1985) explicit curriculum, Cuban's (1993) official curriculum, and the content standards as stated by Tomlinson et al. (2009) serve as the definition of curriculum.

Mandated curriculum: A required set of content standards deemed by the state in which the standards were adopted (Ediger, 2000).

Limitations

Limitations of this research include the participants being all from the same district. Although all the school districts in Illinois were required to implement the mandated curriculum

change, the focus on teacher perceptions from only one district might have revealed a unique

transition plan compared to other districts. Part of the uniqueness of the transition plan could be

due to the size and student population represented in this district. The district contained only

seven schools, and its students attended Grades K-8. In addition, with 41% of the district

teachers participating, the results may not represent the diverse views of all teachers across the

district.

The use of an online questionnaire is also a potential limitation. As the assistant

superintendent of the district was the person to share the survey link with the staff, some

participants may have believed they were obligated to respond in a certain way in the fear that

their administration would see their feedback.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided the introduction to the

study, including the conceptual framework, problem, purpose, research questions, need for the

study, methodology, overview of the study, and definitions. Chapter 2 includes a review of

literature of previously mandated curriculum changes, teacher perceptions of instructional shifts

and curriculum changes, a history of the common core development process, and a thorough

explication of the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used

in this study, including data analysis techniques and instruments used. Chapter 4 details the

findings, which include the quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter 5 presents the answers to

the research questions, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Curriculum Mandates

Curriculum mandates loom over the creative minds of teachers and administrators alike.

According to the ISBE (2011a) Instructional Mandates Task Force Report, Illinois schools are

currently required to adhere to 44 instructional mandates. Twenty-two of those have been

enacted since 1992. At the time of the report, the new Illinois state standards (CCSS) had been

adopted, and the cost considerations associated with this one mandate "has proven problematic in

the work of the task force" (ISBE, 2011a, p. 8), due to variables such as professional

development, additional materials for classroom instruction, and updated technology. Although

this is only one of the 44 current mandates, it is helpful to review past mandates that schools

have encountered in order to make better decisions moving forward.

One curriculum program that was imposed on schools was the *Back to Basics* movement

during the 1980s. This program focused on reading, writing, and arithmetic, which have been

commonly referred to as the "three Rs" of education. *Back to Basics* focused on a fundamentalist

approach to student learning (Morgan & Robinson, 1976). Although the three Rs-mandated

curriculum was not the first of its kind, it certainly focused on embedding the conservative

movement in American schools (Allen, 1992). This conservative movement could be linked to

the idea of running schools like businesses, which is common currently, with student

accountability, measurement, and the focus on the product of student learning (White &

Lowenthal, 2009).

      Another example of a mandated curriculum change is *Reading First*, endorsed by the No

Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) from 2002-2007, which boasted proven methods to boost

early reading instruction and was signed into law in January 2002 (*Illinois Reading First Final

Report*, 2007; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2008; U.S.

Department of Education, 2012). After $40 million was used to evaluate NCLB reading

programs, it was determined the $6 billion had been used to implement the federal *Reading* First

program alone (Manzo, 2008). Although the research behind *Reading First* provided

scientifically proven strategies to increase students' ability to read at the primary grades and the

students who were instructed to use those strategies experienced success, it is unclear whether

schools have maintained the program without national funding.

      RtI is a third example of a mandated curriculum change. As another product of NCLB

(2001), this mandated curriculum change required teachers and administrators to provide

significant documentation of research-based intervention strategies that have been implemented

with fidelity for a particular student. School districts are now required to provide tiered lessons

and activities to reduce learning gaps among students and provide support in the least restrictive

environment (ISBE, 2012). If students are unable to progress at a rate consistent with their peers

after receiving targeted research-based interventions, special education services may then be

considered.

      CCSS are the latest in a long line of mandated curriculum changes that influence U.S.

schools. After years in the making, Illinois is one of the 46 states that have adopted the CCSS in

mathematics and ELA (ISBE, 2012). These standards are written in grade-specific bands for consistent vertical alignment for kindergarten through Grade 12. The use of instructional practices recommended by the CCSS is maintained without government funding.

Every school in Illinois is required to transition to the CCSS. Although some schools have already started the transition, others have yet to begin the process. Formalized procedures are not available for schools to begin to implement a curriculum change process based on CCSS. The unique perspectives of three theorists provide a framework of guidance to ensure a comprehensive change process plan is developed.

Conceptual Framework

Knowles's Adult Learning Theory

History of Andragogy

Alexander Kapp, a German educationalist, originally identified methods used to teach adults as specific techniques in 1833 (Howard, 1993). Malcolm Knowles is credited with fathering andragogy in the U.S. (Knowles et al., 2012). Andragogy refers to helping adults learn, just as pedagogy refers to helping children learn. In 1926, E. C. Lindeman, who had been influenced by the philosophies of John Dewey, created a foundation for adult learning theory (Chan, 2010; Knowles et al., 2012). In his book, Lindeman (1989) made five assumptions about adult learners:

1. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.

2. Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered.

3. Experience is the richest source for adults' learning.

4. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.

5. Individual differences among people increase with age. (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 38)

Knowles (1950) published his book *Informal Adult Education* as one of several authors interested in distinguishing between andragogy and pedagogy in the mid-20th century (Cherrington, 1939; Fields, 1940; Jacks, 1929; Mackaye, 1931) and wrote in the field until his death in 1997. Knowles (1980) later defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (p. 43).

Knowles et al. (2012) identify four aspects of adulthood that distinguish adults from children: (1) one's biological status (i.e., when a person can physically reproduce); (2) one's legal status (i.e., when a person can vote, receive a driver's license, enter the military, and marry without parental consent); (3) one's social status (i.e., when a person takes on adult responsibilities such as full-time employment, home ownership, or beginning a family); and (4) one's psychological status (i.e., when a person takes responsibility for his or her own life and becomes self-directed). Knowles et al. (2012) consider the fourth aspect to be the most important to learning. Based on the definition of a psychological adult, Knowles' most recent andragogical model, developed in 1989, includes six assumptions about adult learners:

1. The need to know (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 63)

   - Adults need to understand the benefits of learning the new skill or knowledge before they begin the learning process.

2. Learners' self-concept (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 63)

   - Adults prefer to be self-directed and do not like others forcing education on them. Therefore, volunteer programs have greater success than required programs.

3. The role of learners' experience (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 64)

   - Adults have had more life experience, and that can be used as a resource in an adult learning environment.

   - As adults mature, they begin to define themselves as their experiences, which makes validating their ideas more personal.

4. Readiness to learn (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 65)

   - Real-life situations are necessary for adults to see the relevance of learning the information at a particular time.

5. Orientation to learning (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 66)

   - Adults need to perceive that the new information will help them complete a specific task or deal with a life situation.

6. Motivation (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 67)

   - Both external and internal motivators can be factors for adult learners. Better employment status, higher pay, and the desire for a better quality of life or job satisfaction are factors that assist adults with motivation.

Application of Andragogy

Knowles's (1970) assumptions about andragogy, as detailed in *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy*, included only four of the current six assumptions (i.e., Assumptions 2, 3, 4, and 5); these were adopted in several schools from elementary school through college (Knowles et al., 2012). Feedback from educators at these schools revealed that children also appreciated some of the features of the andragogical model, resulting in later editions of the book to be subtitled *From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Knowles, 1980). This new edition also included the same four assumptions. Two additional books written by Knowles in 1984 included five assumptions of andragogy, so it was not until 1989 that the six assumptions were implemented and were maintained in all later books (Knowles, 1989) (see Figure 3).

These assumptions, as presented in Figure 3, show the difference between the ways in which child learners would approach each of these elements and the ways in which adult learners would approach these elements. Although all the elements have value and a place in the learning environment, they do not always take place in the implementation process but should be reflected in the planning portion prior to implementation. Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) Three-Tier Change Process focuses specifically on the action taken in the change process after Knowles's (1989) reflection should have happened.

<div align="center">Fullan's Three-Tier Change Process</div>

Although Knowles's (1989) *Elements of Andragogy* focuses on what an adult needs in order to participate in the change process, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) developed a Three-Tier Change Process that generalizes the phases of change implementation for an organization rather

than an individual, as shown in Figure 1. Fullan has spent his career focusing on supporting

schools and administration changes, which allows for practical application when seeking a

change model. In addition to having years of experience in understanding school change, Fullan

continues to be an instrumental leader in school reform. This model is designed specifically to

support administrators in transitioning an organization at the student or national level when

teachers may be resistant to the change efforts (Ellsworth, 2000). Commonly referred to as the

"three Is" (Fogarty & Pete, 2007, p. 9), initiation, implementation, and institutionalization are the

keys to successful implementation, according to Fullan's 30 years of research on organizational

change.

Element	Pedagogical Approach	Andragogical Approach
Preparing learners	• Minimal	• Provide information • Prepare for participation • Help develop realistic expectations • Begin thinking about content
Climate	• Authority-oriented • Formal • Competitive	• Relaxed, trusting • Mutually respectful • Informal, warm • Collaborative, supportive • Open and authentic • Human
Planning	• Completed by teacher	• Mechanism for mutual planning by learners and facilitators
Diagnosis of needs	• Completed by teacher	• Mutual assessment
Setting of objectives	• Completed by teacher	• Mutual negotiation
Designing learning plans	• Logical sequence of subject matter • Units organized by content	• Implemented by readiness • Units organized by problem
Learning activities	• Transmittal techniques	• Experimental techniques (inquiry)
Evaluation	• Completed by teacher	• Mutual rediagnosis of needs • Mutual measurement of program

Figure 3. Process elements of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 115)

During the initiate phase, also called Stage 1, it is necessary to share the plan for change and address all of the teachers' concerns and questions (Fogarty & Pete, 2007) in order to develop some excitement for the process that is about to begin. Stage 2, implementation, focuses on the engagement of the change process and monitoring the progress through sustained professional development (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Guskey, 2000). Last stage, Stage 3, develops after the change has become an embedded part of daily practice and is no longer considered to be new or different (Fogarty & Pete, 2007).

Although the implementation of the Three-Tier Change Process seems simplistic enough to implement at a school or district level, the time within each of the phases requires organization and leadership to produce a successful outcome. Fogarty and Pete (2007) share the story of a school district that wanted to move from a junior high model to a middle school model. This change would require not only a scheduling adjustment, but also a transition in teaching philosophy and instructional methods. In order to initiate this conversation, a town hall meeting was scheduled to gain insight from the community and school stakeholders. This initial step was all the district needed in order to complete Stage 1 of the change process. The interest was developed, and the district could move forward in their implementation stage.

Fogarty and Pete (2007) describe a school in another district that was interested in transitioning from a traditional schedule to a block schedule; at the same time, the district was working on some construction projects. The teachers who were impacted by both changes utilized the three stages of the change process. The project evolved from updating classrooms to addressing a common workspace for teachers to collaborate and continue to develop new and innovative ways to meet student needs. Using the three stages, the outcome was not as linear as

intended, but in the end, the adjustment to the timing of classes was implemented, and teachers were able to gain a common work area. These successful implementations demonstrate the viability of the Three-Tier Change Process successfully.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991) Three-Tier Change Process provides a clear path for implementing change within a school system. He identifies three specific areas on which to focus energy in order to make sustainable change that allows teachers to experience ownership in the process but that is still led by the administrative team. These areas can be presented at the district level or the building level for implementation. Au et al. (2008) have also developed a change model, which focuses on a specific and linear path that works well for building-level changes.

Au et al.'s (2008) Standards-Based Change Model

Fullan (1982) has stated that "change is what teachers do and think. It's as simple and as complex as that" (p. 107). Au et al. (2005) developed a step-by-step process to implement change at a building level. Au et al. (2008) took the original model and developed it further for school building leaders or district administrators to implement successful change. Each of the five components for creating successful change are equally necessary. Knoster et al. (2000) provides suggestions to understand and support each of these components; however, a specific "to do" list was introduced by Au et al. (2008) to help district administrators or school leaders move through the standards-based change process, as shown in Figure 4.

The goal of the standards-based change process is for teachers to have continuous conversations about what they are doing to improve student achievement (Au et al., 2005). Not

only does that goal align with Knowles (1995), but it also aligns with Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), as shown in Figure 5. Together, these three models provide a comprehensive lens through which to view systematic and successful educational change, such as that required in Illinois by the implementation of the CCSS.

Levels of Change	Description
Recognizing a need	A small group or individuals determines a need to improve student achievement.
Organizing for change	A core group of leaders focuses on professional development and creates time for teachers to collaborate.
Working on the building blocks	The standards based change process is introduced to the whole school so everyone shares the vision.
Moving as a whole school	Teachers are assisted to develop grade-level benchmarks to monitor student progress.
Establishing a system	School-wide conversations are scheduled and facilitated throughout the school year to talk about progress.
Implementing the staircase curriculum	Teachers create curriculum guides that define progress at each grade level.
Fully engaging students and families	Students are included in goal setting, assessments, and conferences with parents to expand the learning community.

Figure 4. Model standards based on change process (Au, et al., 2008, p. 161)

Three-Tier Change Process	Assumptions of Adult Learners	Model of Standards-Based Change	Common Thread
Institute (1)	Learners need to know (1)	Working on the building blocks (3)	All relate to the need for leaders and teachers to be aware of the goals and understand the path for success.
Implement (2)	Self-concept of the learner (2) Readiness to learn (4)	Establishing a system (5)	All relate to teachers' individual knowledge skills and their ability to implement the change.
Institutionalize (3)	Motivation to learn (6)	Fully engaging students and families (7)	All relate to ways in which teachers experience success or accomplishment as part of the change process.
Implement (2)	Prior experience of the learner (3)	Moving as a whole school (4)	All relate to the ways in which teachers receive and give support as they work through a transition.
Institute (1)	Orientation to learning (5)	Organizing for change (2) Implementing the staircase curriculum (6)	All relate to having a developed plan for the change process.

Figure 5. Alignment of the Knowles (1989), Fullan, & Steigelbauer (1991) and Au et al. (2008) models

Using the above framework, school administrators could create a comprehensive change plan to successfully implement a curriculum change. In the past, curriculum alterations have included several mandated curriculum changes. As the curriculum has evolved, some of the transitions have been more successful than others as described following. By utilizing the above framework, mandated changes could be implemented with fidelity and teacher buy-in that may otherwise be lacking due to the mandated nature of the implementation. By reflecting on the teachers' needs in developing the implementation plan and including the teachers in the implementation process, mandated changes can be embraced by both the administration and teaching staff.

Mandated Curriculum Changes

When implementing mandated curriculum changes, it is important to reflect on the specific change that needs to be introduced and how the teachers are likely to be impacted by that change. Knowing what teachers need can help the administrative team create a transition plan that incorporates teacher needs as well as the required components for the implementation. Following are a few examples of previously mandated curriculum changes, how those programs were implemented, and, ultimately, the extent of their longevity within the educational community based on that implementation.

Reading First Program

In order to make predictions about the newly adopted CCSS, previous curriculum changes and past mandates can be used as a guide for historical reference. Through research

conducted as part of the NCLB (2001), *Reading First* was developed as a K-3 program to ensure

that students would be reading at or above grade level before entering fourth grade (Gamse,

Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). The five components of the *Reading First* program

include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Also

recommended and included were professional development and coaching for teachers to learn

how to work with struggling readers and student screening options to monitor student progress.

To be eligible to receive *Reading First* funds in Illinois, school districts were required to

have a significant number of subgroups that require additional resources to increase literacy

(*Illinois Reading First Final Report*, 2007). NCLB subgroups that qualify school districts to

receive funds include high poverty, ethnicity, English language learners, and students with

disabilities. During the 2006-07 school year, 20 Illinois school districts, representing 151

schools, participated in the *Reading First* program (*Illinois Reading First Final Report*, 2007).

Between 2002 and 2007, $1 billion a year have been used to provide reading instruction

in classrooms (Gamse et al., 2008). Because the *Reading First* program is required to be

evaluated by NCLB (*Illinois Reading First Final Report*, 2007), the states have contracted

research organizations to evaluate their implementation plans and identify the program's

effectiveness. Studying the *Reading First* program during this three-year period, Gamse et al.

found that reading comprehension gains were insignificant but that the program did improve

students' ability to decode words. Studies conducted in both Illinois and Louisiana looked at

many facets of the *Reading First* program and found there was not enough evidence to support

the continuation of the program and the focus on teacher perceptions was not related to the

program (*Illinois Reading First Final Report*, 2007; Wong-Ratcliff et al., 2011).

Data regarding teacher perceptions of the *Reading First* program were collected by

Trainin and Wilson (2010) in Nebraska. In the annual report for Nebraska, *Reading First*

classroom teachers were asked to complete a 19-statement survey in terms of agreement levels.

More teachers agreed than disagreed with their ability to teach reading strategies and confirmed

their student success. Even with the teacher perceptions remaining positive toward the *Reading*

First program, the report also identified continuous gaps within the student achievement data.

Although Trainin and Wilson (2010) were able to gather data from across Nebraska, the lack of a

methodology section limits the quality of data collected.

The studies conducted in Illinois, Louisiana, and Nebraska show a lack of consistency in

the success of this program. When there were few data to support the continuation of funding for

the *Reading First* program, it ended in 2007. The RtI program that followed has shown greater

sustainability.

<div align="center">Response to Intervention (RtI)</div>

As mandated by the NCLB (2001), schools must assess the individual needs of students.

One way in which this assessment can be addressed by schools is through RtI, which came to the

forefront of the educational system with a much better rate of success. RtI is the process of

providing multitiered, targeted, and quality instruction to students who need additional support

within the core instructional program (Berkeley et al., 2009; Detgen et al., 2011; ISBE, 2012;

Johnson et al., 2006; National Center on RtI, 2010). RtI approaches have been included within

the regulations stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). RtI is not

a program that is used with special education students but instead is an instructional plan to ensure that all students achieve academic success (Martinez & Young, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011).

According to both studies conducted by Martinez and Young (2011) and Stuart et al. (2011), teachers perceived this process positively but had mixed feelings about the time commitment to ensure that quality instruction took place. These studies focus specifically on teacher perceptions and lack specific details about their RtI processes. Without knowing the states in which these studies were conducted, specific state requirements were unidentified, but implications for practice are still provided. Specifically in Stuart et al. (2011), recommendations include the need for teachers to have guidance and coaching through professional development. Stuart et al. (2011) also recommend a schoolwide implementation with a multiyear plan to increase positive teacher perceptions over time. Suggestions within the Martinez and Young (2011) study are directed at school administrators and recommend that particular detail be spent on who is to provide professional development and who is to receive professional development in order to have a successful implementation. Martinez and Young (2011) also suggest that school administrators acknowledge the work of the classroom teacher and offer more support throughout the change process.

Illinois is the only midwestern state that requires RtI in general education classrooms, and state officials have placed the responsibility on the Illinois Curriculum Department instead of the Special Education Department (Detgen et al., 2011) to implement these requirements. Six of seven midwestern states studied found that even formulated initiatives guiding district implementation still allowed open interpretation identifying flexibility as a valuable component in tailoring protocol for individual district needs. In Illinois, all 56 regional offices have been

assigned the task of training teachers and administrators in the protocol options of RtI. In addition, 13 online training modules and scheduled in-person trainings were made available during 2011 (Detgen et al., 2011).

Illinois has limited the number of stakeholders allowed to participate in those trainings. The state recommendation has been to work with neighboring districts to provide their own professional development (Detgen et al., 2011). Although the study was able to provide specific information related to Illinois and neighboring states, the data were only as valuable as the participants interviewed for the information at the time of the study; in interviewing state-level officials, there could have been discrepancies between the intended guidelines and application at the district level.

Professional development has been a key component in the effective implementation of RtI (Davis Bianco, 2010; Martinez & Young, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). Studies show that the more time spent on teacher professional development, the greater student achievement gains. Although the specific RtI implementation plans varied, all three of the above studies provided a full year of training before data showed significant student growth.

The studies conducted by Davis Bianco (2010), Martinez and Young (2011), and Stuart et al. (2011) show that professional development was provided in order to support the sustainability of the RtI program. Although the RtI process remains in effect, new content standards are forcing new skills and instructional practices to be utilized by the teachers. These standards are the CCSS.

Most Current Mandate

Regardless of the controversies associated with the CCSS, such as focusing on the specific developers of the standards, the heavy hand of government involvement, or the publishing companies' focus on increased sales, implementing the CCSS effectively is one step in helping students in the U.S. achieve the competitive edge necessary to be successful in the 21st century. Other steps include providing support for classroom teachers in the form of instructional resources, professional development, accurate assessments to assess progress, and curriculum support related to the content shifts. The CCSS have been released in mathematics and ELA for students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (*Common Core Standards*, 2011). The science content standards, the NGSS, are complete and have begun being adopted by some states (*NGSS*, 2012), including Illinois.   And Illinois also organized a team to develop the social studies content standards based on the C3 Framework, which was released in September 2013 (*C3*, 2013) and adopted for district implementation in December 2015.

Although the CCSS focuses primarily on math and ELA skills, there are also specific reading and writing skills that are identified for science, social studies, and technology classes. The greatest shift of content within these standards is in the field of mathematics.

Math CCSS

The CCSS mathematics standards were adopted by Illinois in June 2010, with no additional pieces of content. Two thirds of the CCSS mathematics standards have remained similar to the 1997 Illinois state standards (Common Core Institute, n.d.). There are six major shifts in content: focus, coherence, fluency, deep understanding, application, and dual intensity

(*Common Core Shifts*, 2011). Focus was intended to provide less instructional skills at each grade level but offer more in-depth study of each of those skills. Coherence addresses ensuring a common path from Grades K-12. Fluency is described in two ways: fluency of speed with math facts and fluency of mastery of intended learning target. Deep understanding is encouraging students to have reflective practices in their learning. Application focuses on real-world problems instead of traditional algorithms. The last shift in math practices is the concept of dual intensity. Dual intensity refers to a balance of time in practicing skills such as algorithms and developing understanding through application problems.

In addition to the six shifts in math content, there are eight mathematical practices that should be embedded into daily instruction: making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, constructing viable arguments, modeling with mathematics, using appropriate tools strategically, attending to precision, looking for and making use of structure, and looking for and expressing regularity in repeated reasoning (*Common Core Shifts*, 2011). The eight mathematical practices were modified from the original process standards developed by the NCTM. The eight mathematical practices move the focus away from the teacher and place the expectations on student learning (*Standards for Mathematics*, 2010). ELA standards also support students in preparing for college and careers.

ELA CCSS

The CCSS standards for ELA were also adopted by Illinois in June 2010, with no additional pieces of content. The standards provide more specific learning targets for each grade level than the previous standards did. They have also been written to show the grade-level

progression in a table that identifies the skills within each content area. The six major shifts in literacy include balancing informational text and literacy text, building content knowledge in the disciplines, the staircase of complexity, text-based answers, writing from sources, and academic vocabulary (*Common Core Shifts*, 2011).

The first shift reminds teachers that it is important to provide students with a proportionate amount of both fiction and nonfiction text for reading instruction. Building context knowledge extends the first shift to include the concept of skills that are applicable within multiple content areas. The staircase of complexity focuses attention on increasing the reading level of text as students progress in their language development. Having students respond to questions with text-based answers forces students to read the content instead of determining answers from their background knowledge. Writing from sources refers to students using multiple texts to provide the lens of their responses to the question being asked of them. And the last shift, academic vocabulary, reminds teachers to focus on words that have multiple meanings and cross-curricular connections instead of content-specific vocabulary needed only for one subject. As well as addressing the shifts in content, there is also a focus on the capacities of the literate individual, which were inspired by the college and career anchor standards (*Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy*, 2010).

CCSS Across K-12

When the standards were initially released in June 2010, 48 states agreed to adopt CCSS. As of November 2014, 43 states, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity had adopted the CCSS (*Common Core Standards*, 2014). The CCSS have been written

for students in Grades K-12 in ELA and mathematics. Individually, state boards of education have assessed the CCSS and determined their own full implementation date as the time when the state expects classroom teachers in Grades K-12 to embed the standards into classroom instruction (*Common Core Standards*, 2014), ranging from 2010 to the 2014-2015 school year.

With the implementation of the CCSS being so recent, only a few studies have provided the ability to determine success or failure at this time. This is discussed as the lens of teacher perceptions. Although the CCSS directly impact the classroom teacher, there are larger implications at the school level.

<center>School-Based Change and Curriculum Mandates</center>

As referenced by the ISBE (2011a) Instructional Mandates Task Force Report, several factors should be considered when implementing a curriculum change at the school level; examples include professional development, purchasing instructional supplies, and gaining additional technology supports. The items referenced by ISBE are similar to the recommendations made by Knoster et al. (2000) in a model called *managing complex change* to address the complexity of helping teachers make needed curriculum changes through professional development programs. Categories that Knoster et al. determined to be necessary components for successful change include vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan. Each of Knoster et al.'s variables could be investigated when determining how to implement quality and consistent change within a curriculum.

A mixed-method study conducted by Courville (2011) focuses on two specific mandated reading programs and the teachers' perceptions of the core literary components included within

the programs. Although the researcher did include member-checking as part of the research

process, there was a limited number of participants in the qualitative portion of the study.

Twenty-eight teachers completed the survey, and two of those teachers volunteered to participate

in the follow-up interview. Courville's study suggests that 94% of participants agreed that

professional development was important in the implementation of either program. Stuart et al.

(2011) conducted a study with 26 teachers who were self-selected, which could have tainted the

findings due to the nature of teacher volunteers. Data found by Courville (2011), Stuart et al.

(2011), and Nadarajan (2011) all found professional development to be a key component in

implementing curriculum changes.

Shriner, Schlee and Liber (2010) and Stevenson (2008) both conducted qualitative studies

to determine the teachers' perspectives on implementing an integrated curriculum approach to

instruction. Both studies identified professional development as a key factor in implementing

curriculum changes. Guskey (2000) identifies three types of areas for professional development:

content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics. The focus of professional

development could come in the form of logistical support on implementation, provide teachers

with the necessary skills to implement the change, or provide background on reasons for the

particular change (Guskey, 2000). Without skills, teachers may experience a sense of anxiety

that they are being asked to complete a task that they are ill-equipped to implement (Knoster et

al., 2000).

Nolan and Meister (2000) were able to study five content-specific secondary teachers as

they converted their curriculum from individual courses to an integrated curriculum approach for

greater student learning. With detailed descriptions of each participant and study location, it was

clear that this was a unique learning environment. Extensive data were collected, which provided many assertions relating to teacher perceptions of curriculum changes throughout their transition process. One concern the teacher team vocalized was the lack of support from building administration. This suggests that they were given a task of integrating their curriculum yet were left on their own without accolades for their efforts.

In the Managing Complex Change Model, as presented by Knoster et al. (2000), each of the variables plays an important role in the overall completion of the change process. Without each of the variables in place, a less than desirable outcome may occur. For example, without having the resources necessary for implementation, the staff may experience frustration (Knoster et al., 2000). In Nolan and Meister's (2000) study, the teachers vocalized a lack of support from their administration, affirming how important the resource of administrative support is when implementing a change.

If it is not certain that all of these resources have been addressed in the school's comprehensive change plan, it is also not certain that positive teacher perceptions will be developed. These teacher perceptions are pivotal to the change process.

Teacher Perceptions

Instruction Based on Mandated Assessments

Teachers' perceptions of instruction based on state mandated testing has been gathered on both the national and local level. Segall (2003) focuses on five high school social studies teachers and the impact of Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). Although his

data collection was rich with quotes and provided a thorough view of the participants, this study could not be repeated because the interview questions were specific to the participants within the study. Segall's qualitative study determined that teachers perceived the assessment to evaluate the instruction and drive its creation. Landman (2000), who focuses on high school social studies teachers located in Massachusetts, found teachers who refused to make curriculum modifications based on the 10th-grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Although 11 teachers were members of this high school department, only four teachers were interviewed, which could have affected the reliability of the findings within the study.

Similar to Segall (2003), Taylor et al. (2001) studied teacher perceptions in Colorado. With a sample size of 161 3rd- through 10th-grade teachers, both written surveys and phone interviews were conducted to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The methodology section describes a detailed data-collection process for additional study replication. A two-stage stratified sample collection model allowed the researchers to gather teacher data from a large range of school types, and with an 80% response rate, their findings were consistent throughout the state. Teachers reported eliminating topics that were not on the state assessment to avoid potentially lower scores on state tests and thus a negative stigma within their community.

A national survey conducted by Pedulla et al. (2003) also concludes that teachers are concerned about their schools' perceived image within the community. Surveying 12,000 K-12 teachers across 47 states gave the researchers the opportunity to gather extensive data and develop comprehensive data tables. Only 4,195 surveys were returned, yielding a 35% response rate, which may have narrowed the quantitative findings of this study.

Pedulla et al. (2003) focuses on the instructional effect of state-mandated assessments and teachers' perceptions of that effect. Eight specific categories are addressed: school climate, pressure on teachers, perceived value of state test, alignment of practice, impact on content, assessment, unintended consequences, and accountability. The teachers had positive opinions of their state standards, and each believed that his or her school's curriculum was aligned with the state assessment. In terms of benefits of state testing programs, 75% of the teachers believed that the assessments were not worth the investment. Teachers shared that more instructional time was spent on tested content rather than on nontested content but only when the stakes were high for both students and teachers. When using the assessment results for student accountability, the majority of teachers remained neutral, although some believed that the accountability was inappropriate. And last, the teachers believed that the professional development provided to implement the state mandated assessment was appropriate and necessary.

Teacher perceptions have an impact on the sustainability of an implementation. If teachers have negative perceptions, implementation can be halted or delayed. When implementing new change such as the CCSS, the change process needs to be aware of teacher perceptions when making plans.

<center>Conclusion</center>

Mandated curriculum changes continue to transform the educational system. By referencing teacher perspectives of previous curriculum mandates such as *Reading First* and RtI, recommendations can be made for the newest curriculum mandate, CCSS. Understanding the perceptions of the teachers implementing curriculum changes allows administrators to provide

prescriptive professional development, which leads teachers through the change process for successful implementation. Nolan and Meister (2000) identify time for deep understanding, specifically when the teachers did not initiate the change, as one of their assertions, which was recognized by Davis Bianco (2010), Martinez and Young (2011), and Stuart et al. (2011), who acknowledged professional development to be a component of the successful implementation of change. This conclusion offers an opportunity for continued research in this area.

In order to ensure student achievement and teacher success, it is necessary to investigate teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes. Student attitudes mimic the teacher's perspective within a classroom (Smith, 2011; Trainin & Wilson, 2010). This suggests that positive student attitude is a direct reflection of the teacher's perception. In summary, teacher perceptions are a necessary focus of study to ensure appropriate professional development opportunities for teacher success and, ultimately, student achievement.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used in the design of the research in order to answer the research questions. This includes the data analysis techniques, the instruments used, and a description of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine the perceptions of K-8 teachers who were asked to implement a new curriculum mandate in the form of content standards commonly referred to as the CCSS and what differences there were among the grades studied. In addition, the ways in which the perceptions of the teachers affected their curriculum change process was examined. Findings from this study can inform educators, especially administrators, and help them to develop a comprehensive transition plan for the next curriculum mandate change.

This chapter includes a description of the research design, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis that was used in this study. The research questions that provided a direction of the study were:

1. How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?

2. Are there differences in the perceptions between K-5 and 6-8 teachers?

3. How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?

Research Design

This study was conducted with a mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research questions (Creswell, 2014). By utilizing both types of data collection, the participants had the opportunity to provide both open-ended and closed-ended responses. Through the triangulation of data sets (see Table 1), the combination addressed the weaknesses within each individual data set, providing a comprehensive view of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

Research Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group
1. How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?	X	X	X
2. Are there differences in the perceptions between K-4 and 5-8 teachers?	X	X	
3. How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?	X	X	X

The data was collected in three phases. The first phase of data was qualitative, using a focus group and collecting additional information, which was utilized to update the second phase of data-collection, using a survey that represented the quantitative phase. The third phase used individual interviews, which gathered additional data that continued to develop the body of the research to provide a holistic view of the researcher's questions. By gathering the data in a sequential manner, the data were better able to address the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

District Information

The school district where this study was conducted was located in a suburban school area within northern Illinois. According to the Illinois 2014 school report card (*Illinois Report Card*, 2015), there were five schools within the preK-8 district, with 41.5% of students qualifying for low-income services. Of the five schools, one serviced preK-5 students, three serviced students in Grades K-5, and one building serviced students in Grades 6-8. The highest school percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum state requirements on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test ISAT was 76.4%, and the lowest school percentage of students who met or exceeded these minimum ISAT requirements was 51.5%. The instructional spending within this district was $6,908 per student, with operational spending at $12, 268. The average class size was 23 students, compared to the state average of 21. Student mobility was below-average at 9%, compared to the state average of 12%. The ethnicities of the students were as follows: 20% White, 63.1% Black, 11.2% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, and 0.2% Native American, and 4.2% were two or more races. The state ethnicities of students are as follows: 49.9% White, 17.5% Black, 24.6% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian, 0.3% Native American, and 0.1% Pacific Islander, and 3.1% are two or more races.

Demographics of Potential Teacher Participants

The participants in this study were teachers who worked at a K-8 elementary school district during the 2015-16 school year. The teachers consisted of both genders and ranged in age from 22 to 68. At the time of the study, 175 teachers worked in this school district, including special areas, who also had the opportunity to participate within the study. According to the

2014 school report card (*Illinois Report Card*, 2015), 86% were women and 14% were men (see

Table 2). Additional data found within the 2014 school report card states that 83.3% of the

teaching staff was White, 13.1% was Black, 1.8% was Hispanic, and 0.6% was two or more

races. Teachers with bachelor degrees made up 33.6% of the teaching staff, and 65.8% held

master's degrees. The teacher retention rate was 86.4%, with an average of 15 years of service

within the district. There were approximately 10 teachers per grade at the K-5 level and nine

teachers per grade at the 6-8 level.

Table 2

Descriptors of Certified Staff at Participating District

Descriptors		Statistics
Gender	Male`	14.0%
	Female	86.0%
Ethnicity	White	83.3%
	Black	13.1%
	Hispanic	1.8%
	Two or more races	0.6.%
Education	Bachelor degree	33.6%
	Master's degree	65.8%
Retention rate		86.4%
Number of teachers per grade	K-5	10
	6-8	9

Demographics of Participants

The participants in this study were predominantly female, with the majority of teachers having 5

to 15 years of experience. More than half of the participants held master's degrees, with the

remaining teachers holding bachelor degrees. All the teachers served as teachers within an

elementary school district in a suburb of northern Illinois. Of the 175 teachers within the district,

7 teachers participated in the focus group (see Table 3), 61 participated in the online survey, and

7 additional teachers who had taken the survey but were not part of the focus group participated in the follow-up interviews (see Table 4). Teachers' perceptions were analyzed after each phase of the data-collection process to better understand the emotions and opinions about the mandated curriculum change process. The first research question sought to identify the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes within an elementary district serving kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

Table 3

Descriptors of Focus Group and Interview Participants

Participant Title	Pseudonym	Grade-Level	Content Area of Focus
Focus Group Person #1	Stacey	4th grade	All content
Focus Group Person #2	Stan	6th grade	ELA
Focus Group Person #3	George	6th and 7th grade	Math
Focus Group Person #4	Martha	2nd grade	All content
Focus Group Person #5	Joan	5th grade	All content
Focus Group Person #6	Sophia	3rd grade	All content
Focus Group Person #7	Amber	6th grade	Math

Table 4

Descriptors of Interview Participants

Participant Title	Pseudonym	No. of Years of Teaching Experience	Grade-Level Teacher	Content Area of Focus
Interview Person #1	Steve	11	7th grade	ELA
Interview Person #2	Donna	12	7th grade	Math
Interview Person #3	Brenda	9	7th grade	ELA
Interview Person #4	Sue	7	4th and 5th grade	All content
Interview Person #5	Paula	12	3rd grade	Reading
Interview Person #6	Michelle	7	Kindergarten and 2nd grade	All content
Interview Person #7	Meg	11	3rd grade	All content

Background on CCSS Transition

A significant number of changes to this school district began in the 2011-12 school year. Prior to the hiring of a new assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the district had not done any work addressing the 1997 Illinois state standards or curriculum work that required learning new instructional strategies or resources. This shift in leadership included a new curriculum vision with a more organic approach to teaching and learning, the idea of implementing units of study, cooperative learning, and pretests to ensure differentiation within the classroom. In November 2011, the assistant superintendent participated in a Common Core Black Belt program for district administrators. This cohort included school administrators from northern Illinois districts as well as western Indiana school districts. This year-long program provided the administrators with research to support the need for the curriculum change, weekly assignments, quarterly in-person full day meetings, and an opportunity to collaborate with other districts in similar situations. This program provided the foundational philosophy that was used to begin the CCSS transition within the district. The five-stage process that the district was about to begin included awareness, development, implementation, refinement, and sustainability.

The awareness stage began for math teachers in the winter of 2011 by introducing them to the CCSS math standards in grade bands K-5 and 6-8. With the support of building-level administrators, the transition continued by updating the math curriculum to address the new standards during the summer of 2012 by developing units of student and assessments. These units were then implemented in the fall of 2012. That same summer, a new position was created for the district in the role of instructional coaches. Two coaches per building were chosen and hired to help support their colleagues with all the instructional changes by providing job-

embedded professional development as well as support during teacher institute days, faculty meetings, and early release days, beginning in the 2012-13 school year. That same year, the school district began to hold monthly curriculum meetings to help teachers develop updated assessments that could be given commonly among all the teachers at that particular grade level, with an emphasis on cognitive demand, leveled questioning strategies to support high levels of rigor in the student products.

In addition to updating writing assessments, the 2012-13 school year was dedicated to a significant amount of professional development. Topics included reading instruction, data-driven decision-making, instructional shifts, and the understanding by design model. Another area of focus was technology. In January 2013, the district implemented iPads 1:1 for all students in Grades 4 and 7, which required teacher support in helping students develop their technology fluency skills.

The following school year, 2013-14 was a continuation of development of the many topics that were brought to the forefront in 2012-13. Although the instructional coaches still supported those topics, the introduction of the Decarte framework as developed by NWEA-MAP was shared with teachers and they were asked to ensure differentiation for their students based on the students MAP scores as well as to continue to implement of iPads 1:1 in Grades 3, 5, and 8. The professional development focus for the summer of 2014 was study development for ELA to be implemented in the fall.

The 2014-15 school year was the first year in which all the professional development was evaluated in the form of the upcoming Illinois state assessment aligned to the CCSS, called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test. The

instructional coaches continued to support teacher development in all of the above-mentioned areas of growth. With the full implementation of the math and ELA standards through units of studies, the math and ELA teachers pursued a new resource to assist them in the instruction of the new standards.

Data Collection

In order to have a holistic view of teacher perceptions, three data-collection strategies were used in this study--a focus group, a survey, and individual interviews--in order to form this mixed-method research. The focus-group data was also used to guide any additional survey questions or the removal of questions based on teacher feedback. With these qualitative research components, during the focus group and interviews, the volunteer participants focused on their lived experiences and opinions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Through the data-collection process, the participants' responses were organized to ensure that a comprehensive data set was gathered for purposeful contributions to this field of research.

Focus Group

The focus group was conducted to modify the survey and to ensure that the appropriate questions were addressed within the survey. These focus-group data was qualitative in nature and allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the participants (Maxwell, 2013). Based on the feedback from the focus group, survey questions were adjusted to ensure that similar themes were reflected in the teacher survey, allowing for more accurate teacher perceptions (Maxwell, 2013).

One focus group was organized by purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) suggests that purposeful sampling should be used when doing an in-depth study in

order to gather rich data. Creswell (2014) recommends purposefully selecting participants "that

would best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 189). The

group of seven participants was made up of second-grade through seventh-grade teachers.

Although the focus group was a small representation of the district teaching staff, this size was

supported within qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The focus

group served as a guide to finalize the survey questions. The focus group was asked questions

aligned to the survey topics to gauge the level of feedback that would be gained from survey

questions. Feedback was considered and survey questions were corrected prior to the release of

the survey to district teaching staff.

To ensure the privacy of the participants, directions within the focus group stated that

none of the opinions would be discussed outside of the group. When the researcher had

established the list of volunteers for the focus group, participants received a consent form (see

Appendix A) through email and an additional hard copy was offered at the focus group. Having

the trust of the participants was necessary to gain quality data for the qualitative portion of the

study (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 2009). In order to gain that trust,

each participant chose a pseudonym to use. This allowed participants to comment to each other,

but audio recordings reflected only their pseudonyms.

The focus group took place after school in one of the classrooms within the school

district office. This was convenient for all participants to reach and ensured participation. The

focus group lasted 40 minutes, and in order to protect privacy within the survey, no names were

gathered. To protect the identity of interview participants, names were changed on all documentation and within the research described in Chapter 4.

The criteria used to determine the focus group were the representation of most grade levels, gender proportions relative to district data, and number of years of teaching. Although the focus-group participants were intended to reflect the appropriate ratio of female to male staff members--a ratio of 6:1 female to male--the actual ratio was 5:2 female to male. Other criteria included a willingness to participate in the focus group, permission to be video- and audio-recorded, and permission to publish data utilized in this study.

<div align="center">Pilot Survey</div>

A pilot survey was utilized before the focus group was held and prior to the roll out of the district survey (see Appendix B). The pilot survey was used to determine validity and reliability of the survey tool by having Cronbach alpha statistics with an intended outcome of .70 or higher (Creswell, 2003; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Vogt, 2007). Thirty-nine teachers outside of the participating district completed the pilot survey. Results from the pilot showed the five original overlapping themes to be a valid and reliable tool to determine teacher perceptions related to the research questions with an overall Cronbach alpha score of 0.901 (see Table 5).

Questions from the *knowing self as learner* and *process support* sections were adjusted based on low Cronbach alpha scores and responses gathered from focus-group participants to form the final survey.

Table 5

Pilot Survey of Cronbach Alpha Scores

Original Themes	Alpha
Knowledge	0.697
Knowing self as learner	0.423
Teacher motivation	0.775
Planning	0.738
Process support	0.408
Overall–all groups combined	0.901

Survey

Surveys provide a numerical way to collect participant opinions for the purpose of generalizing from a small group to a larger population (Creswell, 2014). The homogeneous sampling survey was sent to all 175 teacher participants in the district through email (Converse et al., 2008; Mertens, 2010). Within the email, the teachers received a link to the online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey online, for ease of participation. Two reminders in addition to the original request were sent to each email address to ensure maximum participation. The first email was sent to all available participants; one week later the first reminder was sent to all district participants. The following week, a second reminder was sent to all potential participants. At the conclusion of the third week, the survey was closed. Interview volunteers self-identified by emailing the researcher directly after completing the survey. The researcher then responded to the volunteers to schedule the in-person interviews.

Two research questions were articulated and used to identify the types of items needed for this proposed research. Several survey instruments that focused on teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum changes were analyzed as potential models for investigating teachers' perceptions of the CCSS mandated curriculum change. After reviewing several examples and

assessing their validity and reliability, three surveys were determined to be the most viable for

the current study. Studies conducted by Powers (2010), Bristo (2010), and Charalambous and

Philippou (2010) provided the majority of the Likert-type items used as the basis for the CCSS

teachers' perceptions survey instrument (see Appendix C). In addition to the perception

questions, the survey also included a closing statement, asking the teachers to email the

researcher separately from the survey to express their interest in participating in a follow-up

interview for saturation (Seidman, 2006). This process did not limit the anonymity of the survey

for interview volunteers. Seven, one-time interviews were held, including teacher

representatives from kindergarten through seventh grade. Interview participants met the same

criteria as referenced for the focus group, and each interview took between 30 and 45 minutes.

Interviews

By participating in the interview with the researcher, individual teachers had the

opportunity to share their lively experiences of the implementation of CCSS and share their

personal perspectives about the change process. In addition, the teachers shared their ideas of

what had worked or not worked for them in the past regarding the change process within a

school. Survey participants emailed to the researcher their willingness to participate in an

interview process and were selected through purposeful random sampling (Mertens, 2010;

Seidman, 2006) to ensure that a variety of grades were represented. Although it was necessary to

reveal their names in the email, the researcher created a pseudonym name that was used within

the interview and data. Each interviewee was asked the same interview questions to ensure

validity and reliability of the data collected (see Appendix D). The researcher also audio-

recorded each interview in addition to taking field notes throughout the conversation, which were transcribed after the meeting.

Data Analysis

Focus Group and Interviews

All focus-group data analysis took place prior to the distribution of the survey. This ensured that survey modification was able to take place based on the results of the focus group feedback as well as the pilot survey. Coding of the qualitative data took place through several steps, following the model presented by Saldaña (2013). First, the researcher transcribed the audio-recordings and typed up field notes from the observations of body language of the participants during the focus-group meeting and interviews. Second, the researcher read the data, looking for any themes that surfaced and created a coding system to identify connections related to teacher perceptions of curriculum change or the change process. Color-coding was used to sort and organize themes in groups of positive, negative, or neutral. When the initial coding had been completed, a second round of coding was used to dig more deeply into the themes or reasons within each of the three general categories. Last, the researcher reviewed the coded themes and reflected on how they connected to the research questions in order to develop the themes further.

<u>Survey</u>

Completed survey results were downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Microsoft Excel

and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics similarly to the previous studies assessed.

Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and ranges of scores

for the independent variables, were used for the teacher demographics (Creswell, 2003; Mertens

2010; Vogt, 2007). These analysis methods provided summary information about each variable.

Based on the Likert-type items included in the survey, Cronbach alpha statistics were

used to determine internal consistency of the scale, with an intended outcome of .70 or higher

(Creswell, 2003; Vogt, 2007). Inferential statistics were calculated in the form of *p* values.

Exploratory factor analysis with oblimin oblique rotation was used to determine a more accurate

reflection of themes related to the conceptual framework, and *t* tests allowed two variables to be

compared to determine any connections between teachers in K-5 and 6-8 and their perceptions of

the CCSS. Statistical significance was calculated using a *p* value with an intended outcome of

.05 or lower (Mertens, 2010).

<u>Conclusion</u>

Chapter 3 outlined the purpose for this mixed-methods study and how this research

model was used within this study. Although the process was explained in this chapter, the

findings and conclusions are addressed in the following chapter at the conclusion of the data-

collection process section. The alignment of the conceptual framework connects to the three sets

of data, as described in Table 6. These connections are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 6

Alignment of Knowles's (1989), Fullan and Steigelbauer's (1991), and Au et al.'s (2008)
Models with Data-Collection Questions

Three-Tier Change Process	Assumptions of Adult Learners	Model of Standards-Based Change	Common Thread	Focus Group Questions	Survey Questions	Interview Questions
Institute (1)	Learners need to know (1)	Working on the building blocks (3)	**KNOWLEDGE** All relate to the need for leaders and teachers to be aware of the goals and understand the path for success.	7, 8	3b, 7a, 8a, 11b	4, 4a, 4b
Implement (2)	Self-concept of the learner (2) Readiness to learn (4)	Establishing a system (5)	**KNOWING SELF AS LEARNER** All relate to teachers' individual knowledge skills and their ability to implement the change.	2, 3a	1b, 3a, 4a, 6b, 8b, 10a	7
Institutionalize (3)	Motivation to learn (6)	Engaging students and families fully (7)	**TEACHER MOTIVATION** All relate to ways in which teachers experience success and accomplishment as part of the change process.	1, 5	1a, 2a, 5b, 9a	5, 5a, 5b
Implement (2)	Prior experience of the learner (3)	Moving as a whole school (4)	**PROCESS SUPPORT** All relate to the ways in which teachers receive and give support as they work through a transition.	3, 4, 6, 6a	4b, 6a, 7b, 11a	6, 8, 8a
Institute (1)	Orientation to learning (5)	Organizing for change (2) Implementing the staircase curriculum (6)	**PLANNING** All relate to having a developed but flexible plan for the change process.	3b	2b, 5a, 9b, 10b	7

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter reviews the data that were gathered through the research and presents the key themes that emerged from the teachers' perceptions. It begins with exploratory factor analysis results, which drove the remainder of the decisions regarding the factors that were determined as the three themes. The three themes presented are *personal involvement in the change process*, *leadership involvement in the change process*, and *teachers' level of confidence in the implementation of mandated curriculum*. In addition, the responses of those teachers who worked with students from Kindergarten to Grade 5 are compared to the responses of those teachers who worked with students from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?" To further explore teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum change, survey items aligning with Research Question 1 were examined. Online survey questions using a Likert Scale were analyzed for Research Question 1 through the use of factor analysis to determine themes within the teacher perceptions. The data was triangulated with personal interviews and focus group responses.

Factor Analysis of Survey Responses

Because there are three different visions for change theory included in the conceptual framework in earlier chapters, it would be most appropriate to consider how three different models could work together to create one unified model for curriculum change. By looking at the similarities and differences within the three theories, the researcher developed a consolidated vision, and a factor analysis (see Table 7) was conducted into content areas of focus: *knowledge*, *knowing self as learner*, *teacher motivation*, *process support*, and *planning*. The research questions were effected using the five themes described in Chapter 2 by results of the factor analysis. The 61 participants in the survey were utilized in the data set.

Items were explored using factor analysis with oblimin oblique rotation to determine whether the 22 items were best represented by a single or multiple underlying factors. Oblique rotation, as compared to orthogonal, allows factors to be correlated rather than independent. The items did not map onto the five original content areas as planned (see Table 7). Instead, a six-factor solution was revealed which accounted for 70.6% of the variance across the items. Items were assigned to factors based on their highest factor loading above .30. Internal consistency is acceptable for Factor 1 ($\alpha = .88$), Factor 2 ($\alpha = .77$), and Factor 6 ($\alpha = .76$). The alphas for Factors 4 ($\alpha = .58$) and 5 ($\alpha = .54$) are below the acceptable range (see Table 8 for descriptive information). The alpha for Factor 3 could not be determined because it contained only 1 item; therefore, Factor 3 was removed from further analysis.

Given the slightly improved internal consistency values, the statistically determined factors, especially 1, 2, and 6, were recommended for use in analyses; the use of the originally

Table 7 Originally Proposed Content Areas and Factor Analysis Solution

	Original content areas					Factor solution					
	Knowledge	Knowing self as learner	Teacher motivation	Process support	Planning	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q1A			X			-0.097	0.181	-0.060	**0.764**	0.016	-0.127
Q1B	X					0.186	**0.574**	0.476	-0.071	-0.269	0.073
Q2A		X				0.002	0.082	-0.123	0.450	0.165	**-0.564**
Q2B					X	0.247	**0.741**	-0.216	0.067	0.132	0.033
Q3A		X				-0.050	**0.598**	0.059	0.245	0.422	0.039
Q3B	X					-0.104	0.224	0.208	0.018	**0.653**	-0.180
Q4A	X					0.146	-0.017	0.007	**0.718**	-0.003	-0.031
Q4B				X		0.050	-0.039	-0.017	-0.007	**0.849**	0.099
Q5A					X	0.396	0.187	0.031	-0.288	0.177	**-0.421**
Q5B		X				**0.485**	0.374	-0.158	0.070	0.226	-0.285
Q6A				X		**0.646**	-0.277	0.238	0.327	0.184	0.175
Q6B		X				**0.689**	0.142	0.031	0.119	0.099	-0.035
Q7A	X					0.018	0.069	**0.833**	-0.044	0.148	-0.063
Q7B				X		-0.107	**0.589**	0.383	0.113	0.071	-0.114
Q8A					X	0.021	**0.686**	0.047	0.028	0.016	-0.051
Q8B		X				**0.584**	0.029	-0.292	-0.103	0.290	-0.299
Q9B					X	**0.617**	0.071	0.079	0.255	-0.164	-0.194
Q9A		X				**0.788**	0.105	-0.012	-0.278	0.010	-0.033
Q10A	X					0.468	-0.256	0.358	-0.036	0.175	**-0.512**
Q10B				X		**0.688**	0.156	-0.187	0.153	-0.095	-0.103
Q11A	X					-0.051	-0.047	0.042	0.113	-0.098	**-0.950**
Q11B				X		**0.725**	-0.062	0.351	0.019	0.077	0.088

Note. X's indicate the theoretically determined placement of items onto the original content areas. Bolded values indicate the factor on which items loaded highest.

proposed content areas as subscales was not recommended due to poor internal consistency and the determination that a six-factor solution better represents the 22 items. With the removal of Factors 3, 4, and 5, the remaining factors--1, 2, and 6--could be connected to the researcher's original content areas as planned (see Table 8). These three factors determined the themes within the findings. Within the three statistically valid themes, two factors emerged as major themes: Factor 1 and Factor 2 (see Table 9) related to Research Question 1.

<div align="center">Theme 1: Personal Involvement in the Change Process</div>

Factor 1 showed eight survey questions connecting with an alpha value of 0.88. These questions are listed in Table 10. In responding to the survey results, teachers indicated that, overall, they were confident in their abilities to create plans and address problems that arise throughout the curriculum transition process.

Four questions connected to the theme were 5b, 6b, 8b, and 9a, asking the levels of competence in various stages of the change process. Seventy-nine percent agreed or strongly agreed on Question 5b, 82% agreed or strongly agreed on Question 6b, 70% agreed or strongly agreed on Question 8b, and 78% agreed or strongly agreed on Question 9a (see Table 11).

Interestingly, it was recorded that although in Survey Question 6a, 95% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that all teachers are held accountable for implementing new practices, in Survey Question 9b, only 57% agreed or strongly agreed that they were involved in the planning of the transition process. This may mean that although the majority of the teachers believe that they are held accountable for implementing the curriculum, only a little more than half of the teachers have been directly involved in the transition.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Statistically Determined Factors

Factor	*n*	Min	Max	*m*	*sd*	*α*	Skew	Kurtosis
Total	58	1.00	3.27	2.02	0.56	0.91	0.37	-0.29
Factor 1	58	1.00	3.75	2.03	0.75	0.88	0.56	-0.44
Factor 2	58	1.00	4.60	2.27	0.73	0.77	0.80	0.69
Factor 3	58	1.00	5.00	2.57	1.04	-	0.38	-0.89
Factor 4	58	1.00	3.50	1.47	0.56	0.59	1.38	2.20
Factor 5	58	1.00	4.50	1.94	0.73	0.54	1.15	2.05
Factor 6	58	1.00	4.00	1.89	0.70	0.76	0.98	0.88

Note. Alpha for Factor 3 cannot be determined because it consists of only one item.

Table 9

Factors with Corresponding Survey Questions

Factor	Description	Corresponding Items							
Factor 1	Personal involvement	Q5b	Q6a	Q6b	Q8b	Q9a	Q9b	Q10b	Q11b
Factor 2	Leadership involvement	Q1b	Q2b	Q7b	Q8a	Q11a			

Table 10

Questions Included in Factor 1

Question		Corresponding Questions
Q5b		I feel "in the loop" regarding the CCSS implementation process.
Q6a		Teachers are held accountable for implementing new practices.
Q6b		I am confident in my ability to create plans to address problems that arise throughout the course of the CCSS transition.
Q8b		I feel competent helping my students learn the CCSS.
Q9a		My prior experiences in education helped me make the change(s) to CCSS.
Q9b		I was or am involved in the planning for the CCSS transition process.
Q10b		The positive collegial support I received helped me implement the CCSS.
Q11b		The positive collegial support I shared helped my building implement the CCSS.

Table 11

Survey Questions 5b, 6a, 6b, 8b, 9a, 9b, 10b, 11b: Descriptive Statistics

Survey Question	N	*n*	SA + A		SA		A		D		SD		U	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SQ5b	61	61	48	78.69	18	29.51	30	49.18	8	13.11	2	3.28	3	4.92
SQ6a	61	61	58	95.08	30	49.18	28	45.90	2	3.28	0	0.00	1	1.64
SQ6b	61	61	50	81.97	20	32.79	30	49.18	9	14.75	0	0.0	2	3.28
SQ8b	61	61	43	70.49	8	13.11	35	57.38	10	16.39	0	0.00	8	13.11
SQ9a	61	60	47	78.34	19	31.67	28	46.67	10	16.67	0	0.00	3	5.00
SQ9b	61	61	35	57.38	17	27.87	18	29.51	21	34.43	4	6.56	1	1.64
SQ10b	61	61	52	85.25	18	29.51	34	55.74	4	6.56	1	1.64	4	6.56
SQ11b	61	61	46	76.41	19	31.15	27	44.26	6	9.84	0	0.00	9	14.75

Note. N = total number of survey participants; n = number of teachers who actually answered the question.

The teachers in the focus group had all participated in the transition planning. They were asked to describe their confidence related to their teaching practices having been part of the curriculum planning process. Stacey, a fourth-grade teacher, said, "For me, there is a deeper understanding of the standards now that makes sense to me. That makes me a better teacher." Quinn followed up that statement by saying,

> Once I realized that the shifts and the sequencing were the major changes, I actually liked them better because the standards gave me a clearer idea of what I needed to do as a classroom teacher and how to prepare my students for the following grade and beyond.

Similar comments were also shared from the interview responses. When asked to describe her participation in the curriculum development process, Paula stated, "I really do love this process. I find it fun and interesting." Sue mentioned something parallel by saying, "I also think because we have been rewriting our curriculum, those that have worked on the process are becoming more comfortable with the transition." Paula echoed those thoughts by stating,

> People wanted to know why those in the administration office didn't write the curriculum. They don't understand. Had something just been handed to them, there would have been

frustration there in terms of nothing being tailored to their students' needs. Enjoy the process; build in the framework for your students with understanding of the standards.

When asked about the amount of teacher planning time, Meg commented that teachers are "putting more time into their professional practice and spending more time developing lessons and planning. It was hard at first but it is definitely getting better." Both focus group and interview participants who participated directly in the curriculum change process expressed positive experiences with the transition. Although only 57% of teachers responded as having participated in the process, in Survey Question 9b (see Table 11), 78% of teachers responded that their prior experiences supported their transition, which mirrors the comments shared by the focus group and interview participants.

After reflecting on the comments shared by both the focus group and the interview participants, it was clear that being involved in the direct development of the curriculum documents had given teachers a positive perception of the curriculum transition process. They reflected on the increased amount of time they had dedicated to improving the quality of the product they were developing and found that, over time, they were experiencing additional positive perceptions toward the process. This concept is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Two survey questions (10b and 11b; see Table 10) addressed the collegiality of teachers and its positive impact on the change process. Specifically, survey responses to Survey Question 10b showed that 85% agreed or strongly agreed that positive support they received from colleagues helped their building's implementation. These consistent results indicate that teachers believed that they were giving and receiving positive support to and from one another and that the positive support was instrumental in their building's implementation process.

Focus group comments echoed similar results. Stacey started the conversation by saying, "Our team was all really positive about it, so it kind of got me amped up a little bit too." Stan shared, "While writing curriculum with colleagues, everybody took on a certain amount of responsibility; that was a positive thing for us." Joan said, "The vibe I got was that you knew it was best for students and it was going to help them." Martha finished Joan's sentence with, "I think everyone's trying to be positive about it. We are rolling it out the best we can." Uniquely, interview participant Steve shared a different perspective, stating, "Between the departments, there are varying degrees of resistance to full acceptance and enthusiasm." Overall, feedback indicated that colleagues were receiving support from one another throughout the curriculum transition process. This feedback from the focus group aligns with the feedback received from the survey. The power of teachers to support one another and benefit from each other's positive energy was significant in the department's or grade level's ability to implement the change. Steve shared that his department's implementation appeared to be more challenging than those shared by the focus group. This could be due to the varying degrees of support shared by his colleagues during the interview.

In reflecting on their confidence in their abilities, their participation in the change process, and their reactions to the accountability of implementing the curriculum change, teachers had the opportunity to share their perceptions of the curriculum change within their district. Consistently, the teachers believed that they were giving and receiving positive support to and from each other, which was an essential part of the implementation process. The teachers also expressed the importance of their leadership and how valuable they had been to the change process.

Theme 2: Leadership Involvement in the Change Process

Factor 2 showed five survey questions that were related to the planning and preparation for a curriculum change process with an alpha value of 0.77 (see Table 8). These questions are listed in Table 12. Survey Questions 1b, 2b, 3a, 7b, and 8a all referred to some level of involvement from their building administrator, whether through collaboration, sharing the vision, or providing support for the teachers.

In responding to survey questions, teachers indicated mixed opinions about the administrative support through the transition process. For example, Survey Questions 1b and 8a had the greatest levels of nonpositive responses related to the perception of administrative changes, 41.67% disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were undecided on Survey Question 1b, and 29.50% disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were undecided on Survey Question 8a (see Table 13).

Table 12

Questions Included in Factor 2

		Corresponding questions
Q1b		Implementation of the CCSS has forced our administrative team to change its leadership style.
Q2b		My team and/or department regularly meets with faculty leaders to discuss the progress and needs of the CCSS change.
Q3a		My administrative team is willing and able to provide guidance to individual teachers regarding classroom, instructional practices, and other issues that may arise from the transition to the CCSS.
Q7b		Administration motivates teachers to try new ideas within the CCSS framework.
Q8a		The CCSS transition plan was shared, and a common vision was articulated to the staff.

Table 13

SQs 1b, 2b, 3a, 7b, 8a Descriptive Statistics

SQ	N	n	SA + A		SA		A		D		SD		U	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1b	61	60	35	58.34	7	11.67	28	46.67	17	28.33	1	1.67	7	11.67
2b	61	61	47	77.05	15	24.59	32	52.46	12	19.67	2	3.28	0	0.00
3a	61	61	47	77.05	19	31.15	28	45.90	9	14.75	1	1.64	4	6.56
7b	61	60	46	76.67	12	20.00	34	56.67	8	13.33	0	0.00	6	10.00
8a	61	60	43	70.49	8	13.11	35	57.38	10	16.39	0	0.00	8	13.11

Note. N = total number of survey participants; n = number of teachers who actually answered the question.

Fascinatingly, Survey Question 3a showed that 77.05% of the respondents (n = 47) strongly agreed and agreed that their administrative team was willing and able to provide guidance to individual teachers regarding classroom, instructional practices, and other issues that arose through the curriculum transition (see Table 13). Although almost half the teachers believed that their administrators did not change their leadership style and several teachers believed that the transition plan was not articulated, a majority of the teachers did believe that their administrative team did demonstrate their support of the teachers during the transition.

Teachers' perceptions of the lack of guidance in the transition planning were described during the focus group discussion. George started by asking, "There was a plan?" Joan then shared, "It was frustrating; I'm working under you people, and you don't know." Martha commented, "The administration gave us time to make changes, but it was overwhelming for the way it was shared in our district." Sophia said,

> I am part of the curriculum mapping team, and in the beginning, we were just searching on the Internet for the hardest things we could find. And now we realize we need to be a little more structured with the types of questions we are asking and the organization of the lessons and are aware of what comes throughout the process.

Sophia's statement is significant, due to her ability to articulate clearly an example of the lack of guidance that was desired from the teachers. Although the teachers had the best intentions to embrace fully the curriculum change and wanted to do a good job, they were lost without the guidance and direction they were looking for from their administrative team. This echoes similar findings from research presented in Chapter 2 (Martinez & Young, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011), which also describes teachers' desire to be affirmed by their administrative teams and shown support throughout the transition process.

When asked about the administrative support, Stacey agreed with Sophia by saying, "There were really complex and multiple parts, and there wasn't an understanding as to what the biggest task they were actually asking us to do." Stacey commented,

> We try something new, then later we get more information about it. So maybe just being a bit more prepared in the presentation of it all would have been helpful. But at the same time, most of us would rather know what is coming before we get bombarded with it.

With the lack of a perceived transition plan, the teachers began to express frustrations; this was consistent throughout the focus group and interviews.

During an interview, Paula made reference to the frustrations similar to those in the focus group: "There wasn't a lot of training available, and people were becoming frustrated with the process." Michelle shared similar thoughts: "Our district pushed us to try it. Dive into it. There was no reprimand for doing it wrong. Just try." In his interview, Steve stated, "They gave us summer planning time. We put everything into a massive set of documents and had our entire curriculum laid out by week. That made it a lot easier." The consistent frustrations expressed by the teachers forced them to make some executive decisions that they wanted from their administration. Specifically, Steve and his colleagues took it upon themselves to organize their

curriculum work in a common location, allowing them to have a sense of structure, which they were seeking desperately. Steve later said, "I know there were teachers who were meeting up outside of school for hours on end to try and put it all together." These meetings outside of the school day were necessary only because the teachers needed a sense of structure that was not being provided. They took it upon themselves to create that structure.

Although not all the teachers perceived the extra work time positively, Meg had a different perspective. She commented on the amount of individual planning the new curriculum required: "Most important is being able to individualize the instruction per child, being able to determine where they are and how to get them as close as possible to the standards. This takes quite a bit of planning." Meg later stated, "I'm definitely spending more time developing lessons and planning." This teacher expressed concerns similar to those of her colleagues but in a way that was more positive and focused on the students being the beneficiaries of her extra work time. She was able to see the value of her activity and, therefore, was comfortable putting forth the additional effort.

It was evident through the survey responses and discussion of the focus group and interview participants that the teachers believed that leadership was an important part of the curriculum change process. When leaders were able to articulate the short-term and long-term goals, the teachers were more comfortable being led through the process. In addition, with the administration's support of the teachers implementing the change, those teachers' experience was that of being valued and appreciated for their efforts.

By analyzing the findings related to Research Question 1, an understanding of teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change was examined. The data supported two major

themes: the teachers' personal involvement during a curriculum change transition and the leaderships' involvement in the curriculum change transition.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "Are there differences in the perceptions between K-5 and 6-8 teachers?" Using the same themes as Research Question 1, analysis sought to determine if there were differences between elementary teacher (K-5) perceptions compared to those of teachers of Grades 6-8, where teachers would be more content-specific in their instruction.

Participants were grouped by the grades they reported teaching into those who taught kindergarten through 5th grade and those who taught 6th-8th grade. Group differences in total perception of mandated curriculum changes were first examined visually using boxplots that display central tendency (median), distributional qualities (range and variance) and extreme values (see Figure 6).

A review of the boxplot suggests differences in median levels of perception between groups, with 6th-8th -grade teachers reporting higher levels. Thus, 6th-8th-grade teachers appeared to agree less with the survey items compared to K-5th grade teachers. Independent-samples t tests confirmed a significant difference between groups such that 6th-8th-grade teachers reported more disagreement with items ($t[56] = -3.27$, mean difference = .54, $SE = .16$, $d = 1.03$; see Table 14). The assumption of equal variances between groups was evaluated and met with the Levene's test. There were more K-5 participants as compared to the number of 6-8 participants, which made the n values unequal between the two groups.
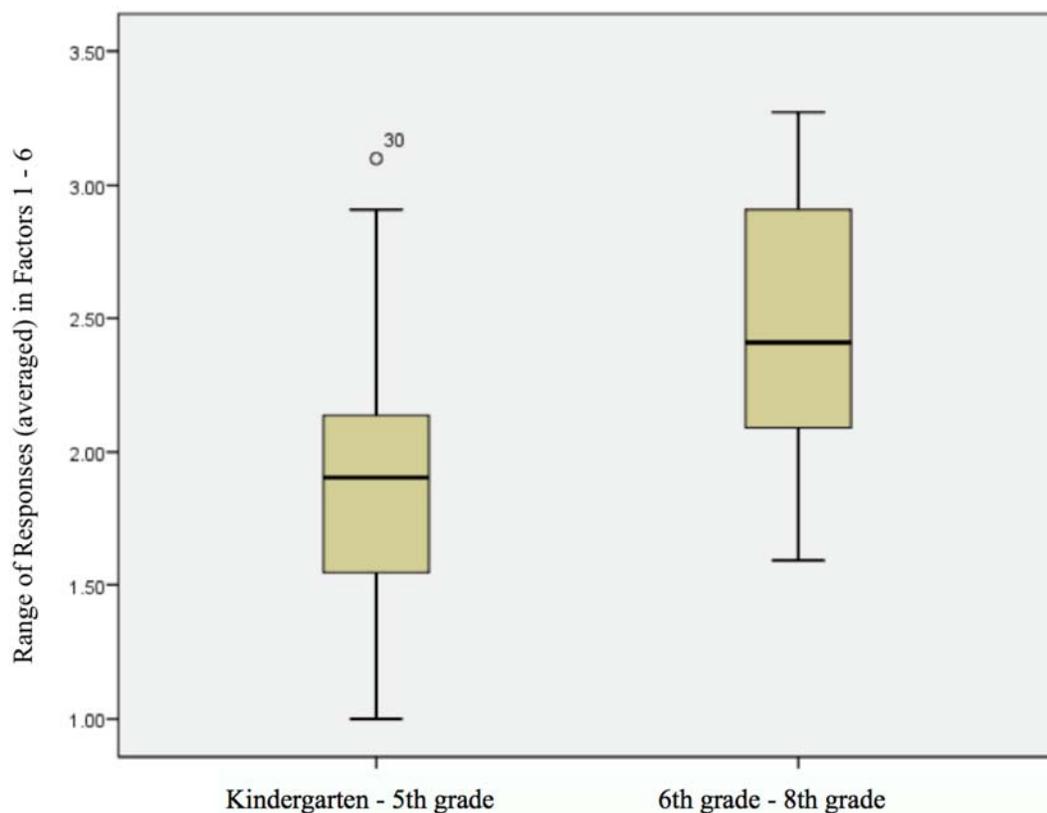
Figure 6. Range of responses related to mandated curriculum change by kindergarten-5th-grade teachers and 6th-8th grade teachers in Factors 1-6 (An open circle denotes a minor outlier (1.5 times the interquartile range) and the number refers to the line number of the participant in SPSS [strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4, undecided = 5]).

Table 14

Differences in Perception of Curriculum Change Between K-5th- and 6th-8th-Grade Teachers

Factors	K-5th Grade			6th-8th Grade		t	df	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD		M	SD			LL	UL	
Total	1.90	0.50		2.44	0.58	-3.27**	56	-0.86	-0.21	1.03
Factor 1	1.91	0.66		2.43	0.90	-2.32a	56	-0.98	-0.07	0.73
Factor 2	2.17	0.67		2.60	0.86	-1.90	56	-0.88	0.02	0.60
Factor 6	1.69	0.50		2.58	0.86	-3.56**	14.33	-1.43	-0.36	1.49

Note. High mean values indicate more disagreement with items.
aStatistically significant (p < .05) before the Bonferroni adjustment of p < .008
* p < .05. ** p < .01.

Exploratory Examinations of Group Differences on Themes

Group differences on each of the statistically determined factors were also examined (see

Table 14). Boxplots were again examined to explore central tendency and distributional qualities

and identify extreme values for each of the factors (see Figures 7, 8, and 9). A review of the

boxplot suggests differences in median levels of responses between groups for Factors 1, 2, and

6. For each statistical test of between-group differences, the assumption of equal variances

between groups was evaluated with the Levene's test. In cases in which the assumption was not

met, a more conservative adjustment to the degrees of freedom was used to determine the

significance. All six original factors were examined; therefore, it was necessary to apply a

Bonferroni adjustment to correct for the increased risk of a Type-I error (rejecting a null that

should not be rejected) due to multiple comparisons. This adjustment takes the nominal alpha

value used for significance (here, alpha = .05) and divides by the number of tests being

performed. The between-subjects tests can consequently be interpreted as significant when the

test yields a p value less than .05/6 = .008. Significant differences were revealed between

teacher groups on Factor 6 (t[14.33] = -3.54, mean difference = .98, SE = .28, d = 1.50) such that

6th-8th-grade teachers reported less agreement the survey items on Factor 6 compared to K-5th-

grade teachers. Differences on Factors 1, 2, and 6 are significant at $p < .05$ before applying the

Bonferroni adjustment, again in the direction that 6th-8th-grade teachers reported less agreement

with items. The small sample size of teachers in Grades 6-8 should be considered when

reviewing the data sets.

By analyzing the findings related to Research Question 3, the data confirmed that there

are differences between the perceptions of K-5 teachers and 6-8 teachers. Using the two major
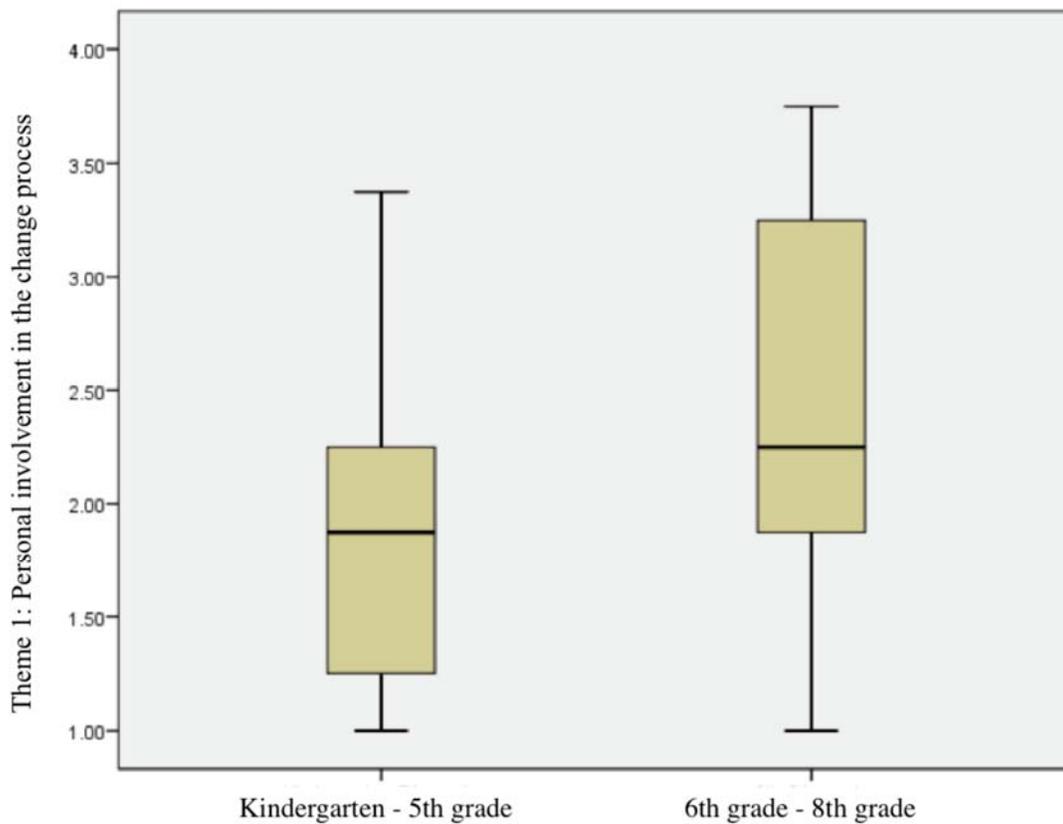
Figure 7. Perceptions of Items in Theme 1, *Personal Involvement in the Change Process*, by K-5th-Grade Teachers and 6th-8th-Grade Teachers (strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4, undecided =5)
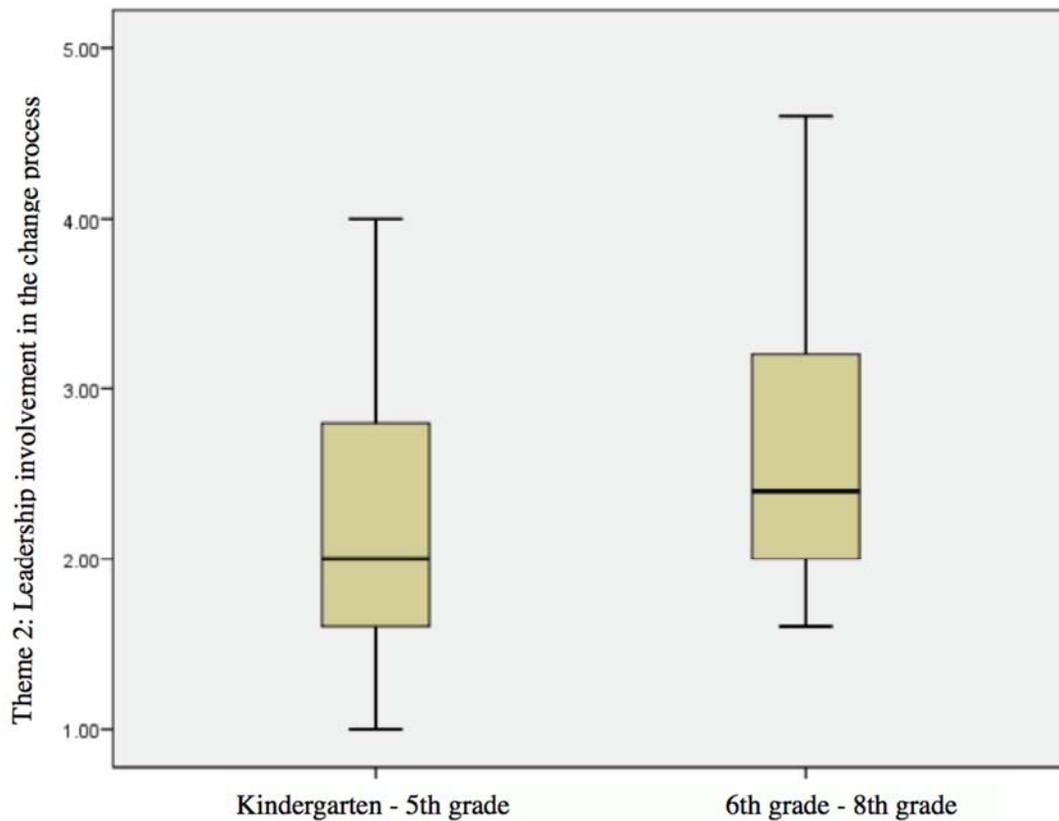
Figure 8. Perceptions of Items in Theme 2, *Leadership Involvement in the Change Process*, by K-5th-Grade Teachers and 6th-8th-Grade Teachers (strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4, undecided = 5).
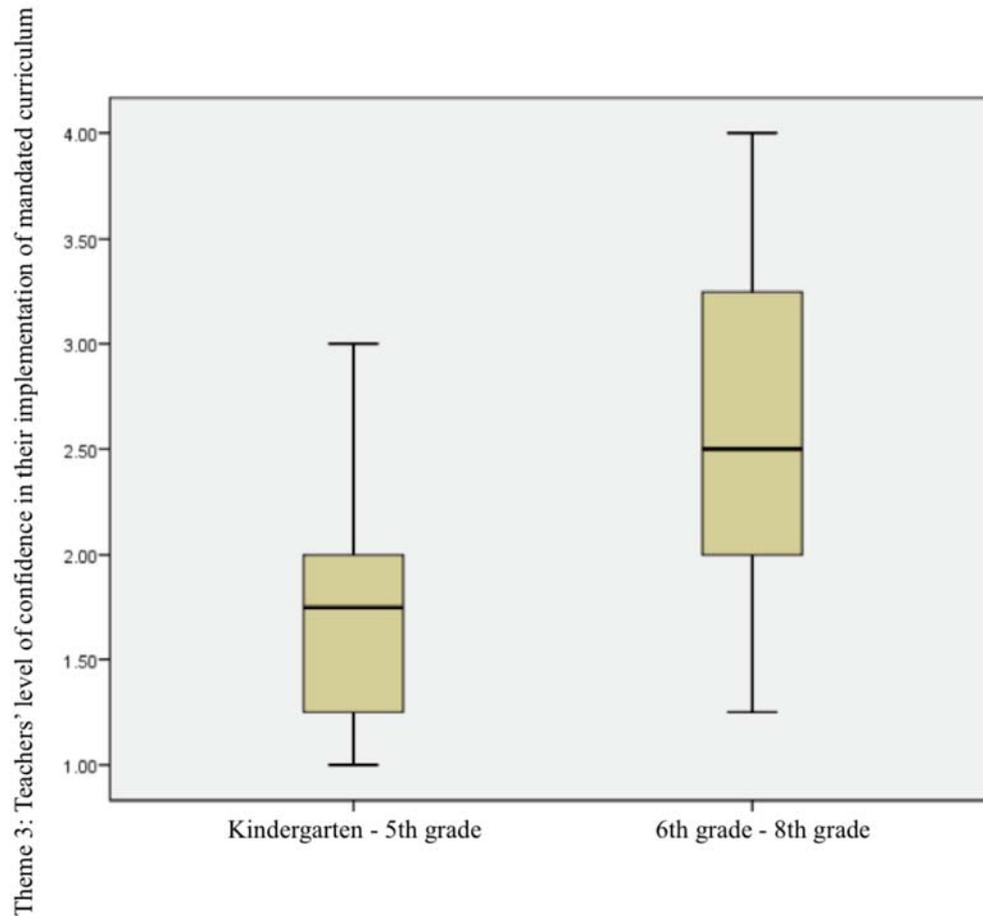
Figure 9. Perceptions of Items in Theme 3, Teachers *Level of Confidence in Their Implementation of Mandated Curriculum*, by K-5th-Grade Teachers and 6th-8th-Grade Teachers (This theme is referenced in Research Question 3: strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4, undecided = 5.)

themes determined through Research Question 1, and overall in all three cases, teachers of grades K-5 agreed to the survey statements more often than did teachers of Grades 6-8.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?" Within the six factors determined by the factor analysis discussed earlier in the chapter (see Table 8), one statistically determined factor emerged as a major theme for Research Question 3: Factor 6 (see Table 9). Factor 6, *teacher confidence*, was addressed in Survey Questions 2a, 5a, 10a, and 11a, which is significant for school administrators who would be working with teachers at the varying grade levels to ensure that all teachers could experience a positive change process.

Theme 3: Teachers' Level of Confidence in the Implementation of Mandated Curriculum

Factor 6 showed four survey questions connecting with an alpha value of 0.76. These questions were all related to teacher confidence in the implementation of mandated curriculum. In responding to the survey questions (see Table 15), teachers indicated that overall, teachers have an understanding of the transition plan and are aware of the need for it to accomplish the tasks, therefore giving them confidence to complete the tasks requested of them.

For example, in reviewing survey responses to Survey Questions 2a, 5a, 10a, and 11a, which ask about the teachers' understanding of the transition process and how that relates to implementation, 89% agreed or strongly agreed on Survey Question 2a, 80% agreed or strongly agreed on Survey Question 10a, and 90% agreed or strongly agreed on Survey Question 11a (see

Table 16). The comparison of the number of participants who had positive responses to the

number of participants who had less-than-positive responses shows that the majority of the

participants were confident in their abilities to implement the required changes.

Table 15

Questions Included in Factor 6

		Corresponding questions
Q2a	I am up-to-date on the progress being made toward full implementation of the CCSS in this school.	
Q5a	I am comfortable making suggestions or providing constructive criticism regarding the CCSS implementation process.	
Q10a	I believe that I understand the plan of our CCSS transition and why we need to accomplish the tasks.	
Q11a	Teachers who understand the path for CCSS implementation will contribute to its success.	

Table 16

Survey Questions 2a, 5a, 10a, 11a Descriptive Statistics

			SA + A		SA		A		D		SD		U	
SQ	N	n	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2a	61	60	54	88.52	31	50.82	23	37.70	4	6.56	0	0.00	3	4.92
5a	61	61	43	70.49	15	24.59	28	45.90	13	21.31	3	4.92	2	3.28
10a	61	61	48	79.93	16	26.67	32	53.33	9	15.00	0	0.00	3	5.00
11a	61	58	52	89.66	29	50.00	23	39.66	1	1.72	0	0.00	5	8.62

Note. N = total number of survey participants; n = number of teachers who actually answered the question.

In the focus group, teacher participants provided a reflection of their perceptions of the

curriculum transition. George commented, "I remember when administration first brought up the

transition was happening. The changes sounded fantastic and certainly necessary." Martha

echoed, "I definitely agree with George that I liked the idea of diving deeper." Stan added, "I

think there is a lot of good in getting this kind of consistency." George later stated, "I keep

looking forward to having a class of kids that have had a Common Core education."   Joan

shared, "You knew it was best for students and it was going to help them." Stan said something similar: "I agree; I didn't see any resistance to it. Everyone was on board. It's what we're going to do, so let's do the best we can." Amber added, "We were provided with copies of the deconstructed standards, which really helped to break down the standards into workable chunks for teachers." The focus-group participants' positive initial reactions to the change process indicated their openness and willingness to participate in the transition.

Positive feedback on this topic was also received during the interviews. Paula stated, "When my current district began mapping, I was very interested in it because of my previous experience. I had a very good first experience with it." Sue reflected, "There were always some gaps with our curriculum. Now we are with the standards and that has been the most important change. I think that is why our district is successful with growth." Brenda said, "I have seen an increase in my scores, so I would say, yes, my instructional practices have been impacted because of the change." It was evident through the focus group, survey, and interviews that the teachers were willing and eager to take on this curriculum change. They were able to see the need for the implementation and expressed positive feelings related to the challenge of updating their curriculum standards. These comments reflect the positive impact that understanding the purpose and seeing the need for the change has on the implementation of the change process.

The data for Survey Question 11a showed that 90% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that understanding the path for curriculum implementation contributes to its success. However, data for Survey Question 5a showed that 30% of teachers disagreed, strongly disagree, or were undecided on being up-to-date on the progress being made in their school.

Focus-group responses shared some similarly contradicting comments. Joan stated, "You feel like you've completed something and then realize you've got to go back and change something." Stacey added, "We were given the standards, but then we didn't know where to go from there. It was a big frustration." George shared his concerns: "What are the kids going to come in knowing? It has been something difficult to grasp." Stacey echoed the concerns: "I felt like we really didn't know what we were doing in the beginning." These frustrations expressed by the focus-group teachers could have been avoided if the administrative team had articulated a clear path for the implementation process. A bigger picture of the overall plan would have given these teachers a better sense of where they were in the change process and how many additional steps would be needed for full implementation. The interview participants also expressed concerns similar to those of the focus-group members.

Interview participants supported the concern from the 30% who were less positive about knowing the transition plan within their school, revealing that the teachers had a desire to know what the district was planning in terms of the curriculum transition. Steve shared, "People from this building were doing this unit, then one person from this school didn't like the stuff they did, so they restarted. There were problems." Sue commented, "It was hard to change your mindset how you were going to teach. The reality is always having to go back and refining the curriculum. This is hard for people to accept." In her interview, Paula said,

> Teachers want to know their craft and know it well. I work with very ambitious people. We hire a lot of perfection professionals that push themselves. They find it frustrating when they don't have a clearly articulated plan in place that will get them where they need to be.

The administrative team's knowledge of the personalities of the teachers within the district or specific building allows that team to have the opportunity to create a transition plan that supports

the teachers' desires to be aware of the plan and participate in the detailed development of the transition process. Without the teachers' positive perceptions of the implementation, the challenge is keeping the teachers motivated to change without understanding the path or purpose for the transition.

Analyzing the findings related to Research Question 3 allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change. Although teachers were able to reflect on their personal transition to the mandated curriculum, there was still some confusion related to the transition as a district.

Summary

The findings from the study of the focus-group participants, interview participants, and survey were all pieces of data necessary to show various perceptions of teachers during the curriculum transition process. By triangulating the data, a comprehensive view can be used to identify specific themes generated by the teacher responses. Individually, teachers play a role in their perceptions of a curriculum transition, leadership plays a role in the transition plan and for teachers, but there is still some confusion regarding the transition plan as a whole. There are also different perceptions between teachers of K-5 and teachers of Grades 6-8. Chapter 5 discusses the implications these findings and makes suggestions for administrators embarking on a curriculum transition within their K-8 district.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

Chapter 5 is a reflection of the research data and allows the researcher an opportunity to express thoughts and opinions on the themes that emerged from the teachers' perceptions. The chapter begins with a reflection on Research Question 1's theme, *personal involvement of the change process*, transitioning into Research Question 2's theme, *the leadership involvement in the change process*, and last, reflecting on Research Question 3's theme, *the teachers' level of confidence in the implementation of mandated curriculum*. The second half of the chapter provides recommendations for application in the form of planning, communication, and professional development. The conclusion of the chapter provides recommendations for future studies based on the findings of this research.

Review of Purpose

Given the consistent and ongoing changes to education systems, it is important to examine teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum change in order to learn those perceptions, which can allow administrators to support teacher development and curriculum implementation throughout the change process. The purpose of this study was to investigate the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes within an elementary district serving students in kindergarten through Grade 8. Additionally, this study sought to determine if there were

differences between perceptions of kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers and the perceptions of teachers working with sixth- through eighth-grade students. Further, the study examined how the kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers' perceptions of the change process affected the implementation of mandated curriculum. This chapter provides a discussion of the results of the study for each research question and recommendations for future research and practice.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Major Themes

Based on the triangulation of teacher perception data provided by a focus group, a pilot survey, an online survey, and individual interviews, teacher perceptions were studied and two major themes emerged: *personal involvement in the change process* and *leadership involvement in the change process*.

Personal Involvement in the Change Process

The first theme was the level of personal involvement in the change process. Teachers who were directly involved with the transition of mandated curriculum changes, whether by participating in the planning, writing the curriculum, researching resources, or piloting materials, had more positive perceptions of the change process than those who did not have direct involvement in the process.

One benefit of having teachers involved in the change process is the experience of empowerment by teachers when their voices are heard by those in decision-making positions.

Another benefit of having teachers involved in the transition process is to support their desire to

be validated and heard as professionals experiencing the transition firsthand. This study

confirmed the work of Buchmann (1983), who found that personal orientation was a major

theme when teachers were describing their work within the required curriculum. Having the

teachers involved in the change process is a great benefit to the administrative team for several

reasons. First, teachers who have been actively involved in the change process take ownership

of the decisions made as a part of that team. Outside the implementation planning meetings,

these teachers can become advocates for the process and positively reinforce their colleagues

who might be less excited for the change throughout the school. For example, teacher leaders

can facilitate team meetings or content-area meetings focused on changing instructional

practices, study assessment data for instructional gaps, or offer a listening ear when supporting

the challenges of the change process. These teachers can embrace leadership opportunities

within the change process, which can alleviate pressure from the administrative team to be

physically present at every scheduled meeting regarding the change process with the teaching

staff.

        Connections to personal involvement in the change process are also referenced within the

conceptual framework described in Chapter 1. In Figure 1, the administration must consider the

teachers' assumptions (Knowles, 1950, 1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012) about

themselves and their work prior to organizing a school curriculum change. The personal ideas

that teachers hold play a role in the implementation of mandated curriculum change. It is

extremely important that, as the administrative team plans for the curriculum change, it is aware

of the teachers' assumptions. Although each school or district has a different teacher population,

not every component of the assumptions must be addressed explicitly with the teachers, and the

administrative team should be aware of potential areas of conflict as they develop their plan.

Administration should also be aware of teachers who should be involved in the planning

discussions for the teacher leadership component that has proven to be helpful within the change

process.

Leadership Involvement in the Change Process

By reviewing the results provided through the triangulation of data, teachers explained

their perceptions of leadership involvement in the change process. Although teachers knew that

their administrators were holding them accountable for the implementation of curriculum

changes, the data showing teachers' perceptions of the administration's support revealed mixed

opinions. This study affirmed the work of Nolan and Meister (2000), who that found that

teachers were frustrated with the lack of support offered by their administrators when

implementing a curriculum change. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) discuss this objective within

their Three-Tier Change Process. Stage 2 emphasizes the need for focused engagement of the

change and continuous monitoring of progress through professional development. Guskey

(2000) agrees that continued professional development is needed to achieve what Fullan and

Stiegelbauer (1991) refer to as Stage 3, Instituting the Change. Au et al. (2008) have also

determined that establishing a system for schoolwide conversations throughout the school year is

necessary for teachers to experience continued progress.

Personal involvement in the curriculum transition did not correlate specifically to the

teachers' perceptions of leadership involvement of the process. Teachers reported being

overwhelmed by the need to redo completed tasks and by desired definitive outcomes. Teachers

expressed the desire for the leadership team to articulate the long-term plan for the curriculum

transition as well as the short-term goals aligned to the vision. They articulated their need for the

leadership team to allow for experimentation within the transition window but believed that the

experimentation should continue the teachers moving in a forward trajectory instead of having

the teachers seeming to repeat steps within the process. The alignment of the three theories used

in the conceptual framework all referenced the need for an organized plan to design a change

process with their staffs. Individually, they were referred to as "institute" (Fullan &

Stiegelbauer, 1991), "orientation to learning" (Knowles, 1950, 1970, 1980. 1989, 1995; Knowles

et al., 2012), and "organizing for change" (Au et al., 2008), as visualized in Figure 5. The

importance of the teacher within the change process cannot be dismissed when planning for the

change. As described in *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (Lipsky, 1980), "Workers can withhold

cooperation" (p. 17) in many forms. The workers, in this case, are the teachers and their ability

to avoid the work, have negative attitudes toward the change, focus on their union rights, or

perform the required tasks minimally (Lipsky, 1980). This aligns to the findings by reinforcing

the importance of acknowledging the personal involvement that teachers want to have in the

change process. When teachers are included in the development plan, they are more likely to

embrace the change instead of avoiding the work or having negative attitudes toward the process.

Differences Between Grade-Level Perceptions

The second part of the first research question sought to determine if there were

differences in the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes between K-5 teachers and

those working in Grades 6-8. The two themes discussed previously in this section--*personal involvement in the change process* and *leadership involvement in the change process* --both showed differences within the elementary group (K-5) of teachers versus the middle school (6-8) group of teachers. It was identified that teachers of students in Grades 6-8 had a greater variance of perceptions in both their personal involvement and leadership involvement of the change process over their elementary teacher colleagues.

<div align="center">

Teachers' Level of Confidence in the Implementation
of Mandated Curriculum

</div>

The second research question was asked to learn how the K-8 teachers' experience of implementation of mandated curriculum change affected the teachers' perceptions of the change process. This question found data to be focused around one common theme. Teachers' expressed their confidence in implementing the mandated curriculum. In all three areas of data collection, teachers articulated their suggestions for their personal improvement of the transition process as well as suggestions for their leadership in planning the next transition. Overall, the data were consistent across all participants within the survey. Specifically, the answers among the elementary teachers (K-5) were more similar to each other, whereas the answers among the middle-school teachers (6-8) were more dissimilar to each other. Interestingly, Cusick's (1982) study focusing on secondary teachers determined that these teachers' self-images were intertwined with their jobs. Therefore, if someone were to question their job or curriculum, teachers would perceive that as having their own identity questioned. This study aligns with Knowles Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1950, 1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012) and teachers' desire to be in control of their learning and need to know why a skill should be

acquired. This perception of the middle school teachers can have an impact on their ability to implement a curriculum change. As Knowles (1950, 1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012) mentions, teachers need to perceive that the new information will help them complete a task or assist in a life situation, which may not be true for content-specific teachers. In the case of curriculum changes, middle school teachers need to be motivated by their administration through performance observations and feedback that encourage the teachers to embrace the change that they, personally, may not believe is necessary, given their level of expertise within the content area.

<p style="text-align:center">Recommendations</p>

Based on the information provided by this research study, it is recommended that leadership consider three major areas of focus when embarking on a mandated curriculum change process: planning, communication, and professional development. In addition, recommendations can be made for policymakers who create mandated curriculum change requirements.

This study found three dominant teacher perceptions during the transition process that could be addressed by focusing on the major areas for leadership focus: teachers' personal involvement in the change process, leadership involvement in the change process, and the teachers' confidence in implementing their mandated curriculum change. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers need to know and understand the big picture with inclusive details as the transition process is shared with teaching staff. This assertion is consistent with the conceptual framework referenced in Chapter 1. Knowles' Adult Learning Theory (Knowles,

1950, 1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012) is the background knowledge that administrators should reference as they embark on a curriculum transition process. In order to ensure that a detailed plan can be developed and articulated, the Standards-Based Change Model (Au et al., 2008) should be used as reference for the implementation phase as described by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991). Although it is difficult for school leaders to wait for the state or federal government to share their entire plan before the district implements new legislation, it is incumbent on leadership to communicate what is known at its earliest point in time. Communication is key throughout the process and requires great foresight on behalf of the leadership team. The consistent and transparent communication on behalf of the administrative team can ease the fears or concerns that are likely to arise among the teaching staff. As they receive clear and frequent communication, teachers are more likely to believe that they are part of the transition process from the beginning and, hopefully, to see their involvement in the change process as valued.

<div align="center">Communication</div>

Teachers' perception of leadership involvement within the change process was largely dependent on the communication modeled by the leadership team. It is important that leadership at both district and building levels have a common understanding of the transition plan and the ability to lead the staff through the transition in a way that is as organized as possible. Although it is a delicate balance to ensure the teachers have all the information in a timely manner but not such an abundance of information that the task becomes overwhelming or unmanageable, this is the challenge of an administrative team to determine and coordinate. Knowles (1950, 1970,

1980, 1989, 1995) and Knowles et al. (2012) might argue that because the mandate did not come from the teachers themselves, no amount of communication would satisfy their needs. Knowles states that adult learners should establish the setting of objectives and design of the learning plan.

In the case of a mandated curriculum change, leadership would be leading the implementation, and therefore, strong and articulate communication would enhance the teachers' perceptions of their personal involvement in the change process as well as the leaderships' involvement, as identified within the recommendations made by Au et al. (2008). Within the model of Standards-Based Change (Au et al., 2008), a core group of leaders focuses on the development plan and then shares the vision schoolwide so everyone hears the message. This challenge for administration may be addressed by providing the leadership team with professional development in addition to professional development for the teaching staff.

Although these professional development opportunities may seem different for different groups, both are focused on the change process. It is important for a leadership team to have multiple strategies and suggestions to offer when working with a larger teacher team. Teachers need as much detailed information as possible in order to provide a comprehensive overview to their colleagues. It would also benefit the leadership team members to develop a strong sense of who they are as leaders and what type of leadership style they are comfortable with and to develop skills that allow them to support teachers who may prefer a different method of leadership. All these skills are needed for a leadership team to provide a larger teaching staff with the needed professional development in order to facilitate a successful curriculum transition with their peers.

Professional Development

This study confirmed the works of Courville (2011), Nadarjan (2011), as well as Stuart et al. (2011), all described in Chapter 2, which also determine the importance of professional development when organizing a curriculum change within a school. In order to ensure that teachers experience a strong sense of purpose and involvement throughout the transition process, it is important to provide a variety of professional development opportunities.

By being offered a variety of professional development choices, teachers can have the experience of volunteer participation, which can support teacher buy-in and implementation (Knowles, 1950, 1970, 1980, 1989, 1995; Knowles et al., 2012). Although professional development is often offered in the summer to avoid loss of instructional minutes with the students, some teachers may not be able to attend summer opportunities. Not being able to attend lessens teachers' ability to be personally involved in the transition process. In some cases, professional development is simply time given to the teachers in order to create and develop their new resources and materials; however, teachers still perceive value in having an outside consultant provide guidance and support during the development process, as was recommended by Knoster et al. (2000) in their model called *managing complex change*.

If the leadership team can utilize its knowledge of its teacher peers, it can develop a comprehensive professional development plan that addresses teachers' needs as well as providing a purpose for the learning activities. When it is an option, having teacher leaders facilitate the professional development is more likely to lead their peers to see the value in learning the same skill, or, in some cases, the teachers may be less intimidated in implementing the change, knowing that their colleagues have already made the transition themselves. Even if the teacher

leaders are the primary presenters of the new information, it is still important that the administration is present and learning along with the teachers. Administrators' physical presence at the training shows teachers that the administration is supportive of their efforts and that everyone is working toward the common goal of the transition together.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Policymakers</div>

In light of the research of this study, it is important for policymakers to see the impact that mandated curriculum change has on the teachers as well as the students. In the case of the CCSS, few practicing educators were involved in the development of the standards that impeded the teachers' ability to have a sense of personal involvement in the creation of the curriculum change. In addition, by not including practicing school leadership in the development of these standards, it became challenging for administrative teams to have a strong sense of ownership or sense of direction when creating their district's implementation plan. In contrast, the updated Illinois social studies standards (C3, 2013; ISBE, 2013) were created primarily by classroom teachers and practicing school leaders. This mandated curriculum change has been more embraced because of the involvement of so many current educators. The researcher recommends the continuation of following the model of the updated Illinois social studies standards when continuing to create curriculum change plans.

Policymakers should also consider two major areas of Knowles et al.'s (2012) Adult Learning Theory. Adults, including teachers, must know and understand the purpose of learning new skills or knowledge before beginning the learning process, and they also need to perceive the new information as valuable to completing their required task (Knowles et al., 2012).

Therefore, in this application, more time during professional development should be dedicated to the "why" of the change than to completing the task of the change itself. Teachers are professionals and should be treated as such throughout the change process.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research is an opportunity for educators to provide information to the professional community and to improve the craft of teaching and learning continuously. Although there is an endless number of topics that can be considered for future research, the researcher has focused the suggestions to those related to the current study, specifically focusing on topics related to school leaders and teacher leaders.

Suggestions for School Leaders

The results of the current research study affirm that there is a continued need for leadership to further its knowledge of teachers' perceptions related to mandated curriculum change. A strong theme throughout the study was the leadership's involvement in the change process because teachers count on their leadership team to provide communication and guidance throughout the transition process. Further research could determine the specific type(s) of guidance teachers would prefer during the transition process.

Another focus for additional research is determining which forms of professional development teachers perceive as most effective when experiencing a mandated curriculum change. The current study identified that teachers were seeking additional professional

development and guidance throughout the transition process but did not provide specific examples of how that professional development might be presented.

Finally, this study identified consistently that there were differences between the perceptions of teachers working in Grades K-5 and of teachers working in Grades 6-8. Within all three themes, middle school teachers showed greater discrepancies of perceptions. As predominantly content-specific teachers, why do middle school teachers have such variance in their perceptions of mandated curriculum change? Further research is recommended to determine specific techniques to implement change among middle school teachers to support a successful mandated curriculum change process.

<u>Suggestions for Teacher Leaders</u>

Understanding that teachers are adult learners who value learning experiences that they perceive as a personal need for development could be challenging when being required to implement and mandated change within their content or grade-level area of focus. It would be interesting to learn if teachers perceive the transition differently when the information is shared through a peer instead of being disseminated by an administrative leader or outside consultant. Is there value in training teacher leaders to be the internal providers of embedded professional development rather than hiring an outside consultant? Although an administrative team might have specific perceptions of its own on this model of professional development, a teacher leader has a unique opportunity to ask pointed questions of his/her colleagues, which an administrator may not have, and to be able to answer adequately by having conversations with teachers. This study recommends the use of teacher leaders, but that recommendation comes through the lens of

the researcher serving as a practicing district administrator and being aware of the limitations of a small sample size on the generalization of findings.

Conclusion

The study identified the importance of teachers' perceptions in planning and implementing a successful mandated curriculum change process. This research study also distinguished three teacher perceptions that have the potential to impact the transition process. The findings indicate that personal involvement plays a role in teacher perceptions of curriculum change. In addition, teachers have perceptions related to the leaderships' involvement in the change process. Last, teachers in this research seemed to be quite confident and were able to articulate that confidence surrounding the mandated curriculum change process. With effective communication and support throughout the transition, teachers have a more positive perception of the transition process, which would be a common theme emerging from all three areas that were identified by the teacher participants within this study.

Moving forward, the researcher plans to use this information to improve her own leadership practices when implementing mandated curriculum change. The research was enlightening and informative in providing a road map for district or building leaders to move their districts forward in implementing any curriculum change. Although teacher-led change is less fraught with the politics of public scrutiny or union concerns, there is still a need for a vision and a clear path for a sustainable change process. Teachers in this study were candid and forthcoming with their perceptions and thoughts, and those comments should be honored and applied in real life, not just research. In a mandated curriculum change process, the feedback is

even more crucial to the implementation process. By using a combination of change theories,

the needs of the teachers can be met, and successful change can occur.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL AND INFORMED CONSENT

Teacher Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Change

Teacher Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Change is a research study that seeks to understand the opinions of teachers within a K-8 district as they complete a mandated curriculum change, particularly the Common Cores State Standards implementation. Through an initial focus group, district-wide survey, and follow-up interviews with volunteer participants from the teaching staff, I hope to gain a better understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the transition and how that perception came to be.

This research is being conducted by Sarah M. Cacciatore, director of curriculum and doctoral candidate in the Curriculum and Instruction Department of Northern Illinois University, who is working under the direction of her doctoral advisor, Dr. E-yung Shin, professor, Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Each participant will be asked to respond online to a series of questions. This will take less than 25 minutes per person, who may choose not to answer any question. Participants will not be offered any reward to participate, and there is no penalty for nonparticipation. Completion of this survey is an indication of your informed consent to participate.

All data will be completely anonymous at the point of response. The information you provide will therefore remain totally confidential. The only person who will have access to the anonymous information will be the researcher associated with the project. I anticipate that there will be no individual costs or risks to you in completing this survey. The potential benefits for improving curriculum leadership and implementation plans are considerable.

I will ensure that all data gathered will be stored safely and securely in line with the University Codes of Conduct for responsible practice of research. This requires that all data (including electronic data) must be recorded in a durable and appropriately referenced form. Data management will comply with relevant privacy protocols. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be held for seven years.

I am also looking for individuals to participate in a focus group to explore questions for the survey and individuals to participate in individual interviews to further discuss questions related to the survey. If you are interested in participating in either an individual interview or a focus group or both, please contact me via email at [email address]. I will communicate with you only if you have contacted me and will email you a letter with further information regarding these interview opportunities as well as a separate consent form for participation.

If you agree to participate in either the focus group or individual interviews, you will be asked to select a pseudonym to ensure that your confidentiality is protected. Nothing you say will ever be associated with your name in any scholarly presentations or publications related to this project. You may decline to answer any question you prefer not to answer and may stop the interview at

any time. To thank you for your time, while I complete the interviews, I will provide you with a gift card for a local bookstore or coffee shop for your participation.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Sarah Cacciatore, at [email address] or by phone at [phone number].

I thank you for your consideration of this request.
Sincerely,

Sarah M. Cacciatore

APPENDIX B

PILOT SURVEY

Pilot Study

Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research project titled *Examining K-8 Teachers' Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum Change* being conducted by Sarah Cacciatore, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. The purpose of the study is to seek the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes within an elementary district servicing kindergarten through eighth-grade students. By examining the teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum change, their ideas and thoughts can be used to help develop a comprehensive plan that would allow for building-wide implementation of a mandated curriculum change. The research questions guide this study are:

1. How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?
2. Are there differences in the perceptions between K-5 and 6-8 teachers?
3. How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?

I understand that, if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to answer questions in the survey as honestly as possible. I also understand that I am free to decline answering any question throughout the survey.

The survey will take no more than 10 minutes.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice and that, if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Sarah Cacciatore, the researcher, at [phone number]. I may also contact Dr. E-yung Shin, professor at Northern Illinois University, at 815-753-8492. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at 815-753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefit of this study is to inform educators, especially administrators, to develop a comprehensive transition plan for the next curriculum mandate change.

I realize that Northern Illinois University policy does not provide compensation or insurance to cover injury or illness incurred as a result of participation in university-sponsored research projects. I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation.

I have been assured that my responses are strictly confidential. Data will be stored in a password-protected data bank and, once downloaded, they will remained in a locked file cabinet

to which only the researcher has access.

My completion of this survey implies my consent to participate in this research study.

Perceptions of the Change Process

Please select the level of agreement that is closest to your position with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
1a. The faculty of this school has implemented the requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).					
1b. Implementation of the CCSS has forced our administrative team to change their leadership style.					
2a. I am up-to-date on the progress being made towards full implementation of the CCSS in this school.					
2b. My team and/or department regularly meets with faculty leaders to discuss the progress and needs of the CCSS change.					
3a. My administrative team is willing and able to provide guidance to individual teachers regarding classroom, instructional practices, and other issues that may arise from the transition to the CCSS.					
3b. My administrative team shares research/best practices for CCSS with the faculty in appropriate formats.					
4a. Our school is moving forward rather than staying stationary or regressing regarding the CCSS transition.					
4b. I know that administration will regularly visit classrooms to monitor the progress of the CCSS implementation.					
5a. I feel comfortable making suggestions or providing constructive criticism regarding the CCSS implementation process.					
5b. I feel "in the loop" regarding the CCSS implementation process.					
6a. Teachers are held accountable for implementing new practices.					
6b. I am confident in my ability to create plans to address problems that arise throughout the course of the CCSS transition.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
7a. The administration's decisions regarding the CCSS implementation are continuously shared with all stakeholders.					
7b. Administration motivates teachers to try new ideas within the CCSS framework.					
8a. The CCSS transition plan was shared and a common vision was articulated to the staff and community.					
8b. I feel competent helping my students learn the CCSS.					
9a. I believe the school is successfully progressing toward full implementation of the CCSS.					
9b. I was or am involved in the planning for the CCCSS transition process.					
10a. I feel like my prior experiences in education have helped me implement the CCSS.					
10b. I feel like I understand the plan of our CCSS transition and why we need to accomplish the tasks.					
11a. Prior to implementation, I had a positive perception of the CCSS.					
11b. During the implementation process, my perceptions of the CCSS have improved					
12. How many years have you been a teacher?	Multiple choice: 0-4, 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21+				
13. What subjects do you teach? Please check all that apply.	Check boxes: English Language Arts, Fine arts, Foreign Language, Health/PE, Math, Science, Social Studies, Special Education/English Language Learners, Other				
14. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? Please check all that apply.	Check boxes: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8				
15. What is your highest degree earned?	Multiple choice: BA, MA, Doctoral				
16. What is your gender?	Multiple choice: M, F				

APPENDIX C

FOCUS-GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus-Group Questions
(To be read to participants by the researcher prior to the interview.)

Thank you for your voluntary participation in this research project. You will be asked to respond to semistructured questions. This group interview will take approximately 45 minutes, and you may choose not to respond to any question during the process. This focus group-interview will be audio-recorded for purposes of transcription. You can decline from answering any questions that you want, and you may "opt out" at any time during the focus group interview. Participant authorization was obtained from you prior to participation in the focus group activity.

All information shared during this focus group session must remain confidential and should not leave the session. This ensures that the information you provide will remain confidential. You will each select a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in recording responses and wear that pseudonym so others refer to you in that name. Any identifying information regarding your district or school will be edited in the transcription of this interview. The only person who will have access to the information collected during the focus group interview will be the researcher associated with the project.

Focus Questions:
1. What were your perceptions of the CCSS prior to implementation?
2. What are your perceptions of the CCSS since the implementation?
3. How did your instructional day change with the implementation of the CCSS?
4. What kind of changes have you made within your classroom?
5. Of the changes you've experienced, how have the changes affected your school or students positively?
6. What are the challenges you are facing?
   a. What do you need to overcome or make the challenges easier?
7. What type of support have you received from your team or department in implementing the CCSS?
8. How does your team or department influence your perceptions about the CCSS?
9. How did your administrative team share the transition plan for the CCSS?
10. What type of support have you received from your administrative team?
    a. Are there additional supports you would want to receive from your administrative team?
11. How has the school culture changed with the implementation of the CCSS?
12. Could you tell me what grade level you teach and if you have a specific content area?

APPENDIX D

ONLINE SURVEY

Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research project titled *Examining K-8 Teachers' Perception of Mandated Curriculum Change* being conducted by Sarah Cacciatore, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. The purpose of the study is to seek the teacher perceptions of mandated curriculum changes within an elementary district serving kindergarten through eighth-grade students. By examining the teachers' perceptions of mandated curriculum change, their ideas and thoughts can be used to help develop a comprehensive plan that would allow for building-wide implementation of a mandated curriculum change. The research questions guide this study are:

1   How do K-8 teachers perceive mandated curriculum change?

2   Are there differences in the perceptions between K-5 and 6-8 teachers?

3.   How do the K-8 teachers' experiences of implementing mandated curriculum change

       affect the teachers' perceptions in the change process?

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to answer questions in the survey as honestly as possible. I also understand that I am free to decline answering any question throughout the survey.

The survey will take no more than 10 minutes.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Sarah Cacciatore, the researcher, at [phone number]. I may also contact Dr. E-yung Shin, professor, at Northern Illinois University at 815-753-8492. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at 815-753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefit of this study is to inform educators, especially administrators, in developing a comprehensive transition plan for the next curriculum mandate change.

I realize that Northern Illinois University policy does not provide for compensation for participation; neither does the university carry insurance to cover injury or illness incurred as a result of participation in university-sponsored research projects. I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation.

I understand that my responses are strictly confidential. Data will be stored in a password protected data bank, and once downloaded, it will remained in a locked file cabinet that only the researcher has access to.

I understand that my completion of this survey gives my consent to participate in this research study.

Perceptions of the Change Process
Please select the level of agreement that is closest to your position with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
1a. The faculty of this school has implemented the requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).					
1b. Implementation of the CCSS has forced our administrative team to change their leadership style.					
2a. I am up-to-date on the progress being made toward full implementation of the CCSS in this school.					
2b. My team and/or department meets regularly with faculty leaders to discuss the progress and needs of the CCSS change.					
3a. My administrative team is willing and able to provide guidance to individual teachers regarding classroom, instructional practices, and other issues that may arise from the transition to the CCSS.					
3b. My administrative team shares research/best practices for CCSS with the faculty in appropriate formats.					
4a. Our school is moving forward rather than staying stationary or regressing regarding the CCSS transition.					
4b. I know that administration will regularly visit classrooms to monitor the progress of the CCSS implementation.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
5a. I am comfortable making suggestions or providing constructive criticism regarding the CCSS implementation process.					
5b. I am "in the loop" regarding the CCSS implementation process.					
6a. Teachers are held accountable for implementing new practices.					
6b. I am confident in my ability to create plans to address problems that arise throughout the course of the CCSS transition.					
7a. The administration's decisions regarding the CCSS implementation are shared continuously with all stakeholders.					
7b. Administration motivates teachers to try new ideas within the CCSS framework.					
8a. The CCSS transition plan was shared and a common vision was articulated to the staff and community.					
8b. I believe I am competent in helping my students learn the CCSS.					
9a. My prior experiences in education helped me make the change(s) to CCSS.					
9b. I was or am involved in the planning for the CCCSS transition process.					
10a. I understand the plan of our CCSS transition and why we need to accomplish the tasks.					
10b. The positive collegial support I received helped me implement the CCSS.					
11a. Teachers who understand the path for CCSS implementation contribute to its success.					
11b. The positive collegial support I shared helped my building implement the CCSS.					
12. How many years have you been a teacher?	Multiple choice: 0-4, 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21+				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
13. What subjects do you teach? Please check all that apply.	Check boxes: English Language Arts, Fine arts, Foreign Language, Health/PE, Math, Science, Social Studies, Special Education/English Language Learners, Other				
14. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? Please check all that apply.	Check boxes: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8				
15. What is your highest degree earned?	Multiple choice: BA, MA, Doctoral				
16. What is your gender?	Multiple choice: M, F				

The researcher is seeking volunteers to participate in a 45-60 minute follow-up interview for which each participant will receive a $15 gift card. Each interview will take place at a location of the participant's choice. Are you willing to participate in a one-on-one follow-up interview?

If yes, please send an email to Sarah Cacciatore, the researcher, at [email address] to express your willingness to participate. Thank you.

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Individual Interview Questions
(To be read to participants by the researcher prior to the interview)

Thank you for your voluntary participation in this research project. You will be asked to respond to eight open-ended questions. This individual interview will take approximately 45 minutes, and you may choose not to respond to any question during the process. This interview will be digitally audio-recorded for purposes of transcription. You can decline from answering any questions that you want, and you may "opt out" at any time during the interview. Participant authorization was obtained from you prior to participation in the interview.

You will select a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in recording responses. Any identifying information regarding your district or school will be edited in the transcription of this interview. The only person who will have access to the information collected during the individual interview will be the researcher associated with the project.

Individual Interview Questions:

1. What grade level do you teach?
2. What content area do you teach?
3. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching this content area and grade level?
4. Can you give me an example of a significant change in your professional life as it relates to the CCSS?
   a. Is this example of change something that was voluntary or mandatory?
   b. How would this change been different if it was voluntary/mandatory?
5. How has the implementation of the CCSS impacted your instructional practices?
   a. What is the most important change you have made on your curriculum?
   b. Do you think CCSS has helped improve students' learning? Why or why not?
6. What are some examples of things you have done to help with the CCSS change process?
7. What are some examples of challenges you had to face in implementing the CCSS change process?
8. What do you need that would help you with the change process?
   a. How would these things help you?