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This is a Big Change for Everyone: Defensive Implementation of the Common Core
State Standards in History-Social Science

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Paul Brian McHenry

August 2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

This is a Big Change for Everyone: Defensive Implementation of the Common Core
State Standards in History-Social Science

by

Paul Brian McHenry

Doctor of Philosophy, Education
University of California, Riverside, August 2016
Dr. Melanie Sperling, Co-Chairperson
Dr. John Wills, Co-Chairperson

The implementation of new policy is often influenced by factors within and

outside of an organization. This qualitative case study examines the implementation of

the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the field of history-social studies (HSS) in

a Southern California school district. The literature on implementation points to three

possible explanations for variations in policy implementation at the local level. One is

lack of understanding of the policy itself on the part of actors implementing the policy.

Another is competing priorities both inside and outside the organization that lessen the

importance of a new policy. The third is the role of front-line implementers in tailoring

policy to the particular needs of the client base they serve. Data from this study suggests

that all three factors played a role in standards implementation in the school district

studied. Teachers in the district were exposed to three different interpretations of the

CCSS and their meaning to the HSS curriculum. One interpretation, dubbed the

"literacy" interpretation, suggested that HSS classrooms were to be a location for explicit instruction on reading and writing. Another, labeled the "inquiry" interpretation, envisioned HSS classrooms as a location for student questioning and history education as a process of investigation. The third, the "rigor" perspective, saw CCSS implementation in HSS as a process involving higher levels of student cognition. Given these mixed signals, as well as other demands from district and site administration, teachers in the district studied implemented the CCSS in HSS in a manner I call *defensive implementation*. Drawing on McNeil's (1986, 2000) concept of defensive teaching, defensive implementation was characterized by three factors: a reliance on outside "experts" as the source of knowledge, compartmentalization of authority and responsibility, and essentialization and display of the reform as implementation of the reform. This study concludes that despite the label of reform carried by the CCSS standards, implementation of the CCSS in HSS classrooms was not uniform. Instead, teachers drew from existing understandings and were mindful of what they believed were more important priorities within the school district to implement the CCSS defensively.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This qualitative case study examines the implementation of the Common Core

State Standards (CCSS) in history/social studies (HSS) classrooms in an urban Southern

California school district. My study focuses on how the ways in which administrators

and teachers understand standards affects implementation choices that they make. I also

examine how contextual factors in the school district and a focus high school affect

implementation.

As someone who has taught history/social studies in urban public schools for the

last two decades, I have lived through many of the reforms that have been promoted to

"fix" our schools. As each reform has been enacted, however, it seems as though the

next reform is implemented to itself fix the new problem caused by the previous reform.

The reform that initially caught my attention was the use of essential standards by school

districts. Essential standards were a means of modifying curriculum in use during the

2000s in many school districts in California, including in Del Sur County (all names of

places and people are pseudonyms), where I conducted this study. Essential standards,

also known as "power standards" or "focus standards," were promoted by authors who

had taken up the mantle of reform as a way to narrow down what they claimed were an

unmanageable number of subject matter standards (Ainsworth & Reeves, 2003; Marzano,

2003; Schmoker, 2006). In essence, essential standards were a subset of standards drawn

from existing state subject-area standards that were to be given extra focus or attention by

teachers. In a pilot study I conducted on the use of essential standards in eleventh grade

United States history, I found that most districts described their essential standards as "need to know" information and that there were school districts in the state that had reduced their "essential" curriculum in eleventh grade United States History to less than one-third of the total number of state standards. There was little to no consistency among the nine school districts that I examined in my pilot study as to which standards were included as essential standards, nor was there consistency about how essential standards had been implemented. In some school districts the essential standards matched up very closely with those standards and topics the State of California identified as being a high priority for the state's standardized test. In others there seemed to be little to no correlation between what was deemed "essential" and what was tested by the state. In some school districts the essential standards were merely a guide for teachers, with one district stating in bold capital letters that their standards guide was intended to be flexible. In others, teachers were directed not to teach anything outside of the essential standards. One administrator from a district in which less than one-third of the content standards in United States history were deemed "essential" told me, "The essential standards are our new curriculum. That's what we want our teachers teaching."

The inconsistency in understanding and execution of essential standards came even as administrators from the very districts I had studied, save one, used the same foundational text to develop their understandings of essential standards, *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action* (Marzano, 2003). Moreover, according to an administrator at the Del Sur County Office of Education (DSCOE), administrators from many of the school districts in my pilot study attended meetings and workshops held by

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the DSCOE in which they heard the same things. Those administrators, however, went back to their districts and implemented essential standards in very different ways – ways that were sometimes inconsistent with the materials that administrators drew from. This, in turn, made me curious about this phenomenon, what was being included (and excluded), and why. Furthermore, what accounted for the variability that was evident among the school districts in my pilot study? The non-standard implementation of a phenomenon based on standards-based reform puzzled me. Initially essential standards were to be the focus of this study.

As I made contacts at the level of the county and local school districts for this initial idea, I was given fundamentally the same message: "We aren't doing essential standards any more." Instead I was told that districts had moved on to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). One administrator at the county level with whom I spoke bluntly told me, "You should do your research on the Common Core." Choosing to follow the wind instead of forge against it, I refocused my research to the implementation of the Common Core in social studies classrooms. Given the variation I had found with implementation of essential standards, I wondered if implementation of the CCSS would have a similar level of inconsistency. One thing I quickly found as I attended professional development opportunities offered by the California International Studies Project (CISP), Stanford University, the California Council for Social Studies (CaCSS), and the local county office of education was that there was no one consistent understanding of what the CCSS meant to any of these groups. Further, interviews with administrators at the county and district level left me even more confused as each had a

different understanding about what the CCSS represented – and what role social studies might play. This lack of uniformity mirrored what I had seen previously with essential standards. Not surprisingly, as I discuss in chapter 3, the phenomenon of a lack of uniformity in policy implementation is well represented in the literature (Cohen, Peurach, Glazer, Gates, & Goldin, 2014; Hill, 2001; Lipsky, 1980/2010; Placier, Walker, & Foster, 2002; Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Moreover, there is not a uniform set of expectations about what should be taught as HSS, let alone uniformity of implementation. Attempts at a national set of social studies standards were scuttled in the face of political opposition (Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997). In states such as Florida, HSS is mandated by law to be taught as established fact – and given the state's focus on literacy in state exams HSS classes have become a vehicle for literacy instruction (VanSledright, 2008; Yeager & Pinder, 2006). In California during the period of my study the state's accountability testing program for HSS was on hiatus until at least 2017, and new HSS standards were in the process of being reviewed but had not yet been adopted by the state. Given the tenuous nature of the social studies curriculum and the fact that the CCSS included anchor standards for literacy in history, I thought that the new CCSS might have a significant impact on history/social studies instruction. Moreover, my previous experience and the literature suggested that implementation and its effects would not necessarily be uniform, as this was a thread that was already common to what I had seen with essential standards and the CCSS. Thus, as I set out on my study I chose to focus on what administrators and

teachers understood the Common Core to be and how they implemented the CCSS in HSS.

The History of California Standards and Accountability

The history in California that led to the environment for my study includes the history of California's HSS content standards, the introduction of the CCSS, and an existing federal accountability scheme that would create tension for HSS teachers in the Buena Vista School District, the district that I studied. Below I give a brief history of California's HSS content standards. I then introduce the CCSS and its relationship to the HSS curriculum. I conclude by discussing federal and state accountability requirements to which schools had to attend.

California History/Social Studies Content Standards

In 1988, California for the first time had a statewide standards framework for History/Social Science[1] that was in many ways revolutionary for its time. The 1988 standards document prescribed a course of study that extended from kindergarten to grade 12. Unlike the current standards document, the 1988 document was a framework that provided course descriptions, but not explicit content standards. Led by Charlotte Crabtree and Diane Ravitch, professors of education and history respectively, the authors of the document set out three broad goals: knowledge and cultural understanding, democratic understanding and civic values, and skills attainment and social participation. Within these broader goals were a total of 12 curriculum strands that included concepts

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[1] As is often the convention in K-12 schools, I use the terms "history," "social studies," and "social science" interchangeably and without distinction in this manuscript. This most closely matches the language of my informants and is done to minimize confusion

such as critical thinking skills, historical literacy, and civic values, rights, and responsibilities. In outlining and explaining the goals and curriculum strands, the authors noted, "These curriculum strands are a constant in every grade, not options to be added or dropped from one year to the next" (California Department of Education, 1988, p. 10). The course descriptions within the document were a narrative that outlined the basic story of history and included integration with other subjects that the authors saw as vital. The authors wrote, "The measure of [the framework's] success will lie not only in test scores, but also in the extent to which students develop empathetic insight into the life of other times and places, as well as enlightened understanding of their own time and place" (California Department of Education, 1988, p. 28).

Perhaps as a repercussion of the ill-fated movement toward national history standards and the backlash against them from conservatives, the standards that California would write and later adopt during the tenure of Republican governor Pete Wilson had a very different character from those from 1988. Moreover, the makeup of the committee members who wrote the new standards was radically different from those who wrote the old standards. The committee from 1988 was heavily populated with university faculty in both history and education from some of California's most prestigious universities and included stakeholders at the local education agency (LEA) level, including curriculum coordinators and history teachers. The two key authors of the 1988 standards, Charlotte Crabtree and Diane Ravitch, were known nationally for their prominence in their respective fields of education and history. The development of the 1998 standards, however, was led by Ellen Wright, Robert Calfee, and Lawrence Siskind. Rather than

being discipline-specific, members of California's 1998 Academic Standards Commission served on committees for multiple subjects. Ellen Wright, the chair, was the principal at Wright Consulting Group, an organization that consulted on education funding. The Vice-Chair, Robert Calfee, had been a faculty member at Stanford University for 19 years and in 1998 had just been appointed Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Riverside. Professor Calfee's expertise was in educational psychology and reading research. The Chair of the history-social science committee was Lawrence Siskind, a prominent San Francisco attorney. While each of the three individuals heading the 1998 Commission were highly accomplished and respected within their own fields, it is worth noting that none of the three had a disciplinary background in history or history education. This lack of disciplinary background may help to explain why the 1998 standards were approached as a listing of what students should know about history rather than a framework that set forth how students should come to learn history.

In 1998, what had been a framework gave way to explicit content standards – the standards that remain to this day and are poised to be renewed largely intact in California's new social studies standards document. Citing the lessons from *A Nation at Risk* (1983), Yvonne Larsen, the President of the State Board of Education and Delaine Eastin, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, called the "lack of focus on rigorous academic standards" a "shortcoming of the (standards) movement up to this point." Thus, the "bold initiative" that content standards represented took California *"beyond reform"* (emphasis in original). Instead of focusing on disciplinary history, as

the 1988 standards had, the 1998 standards stated explicitly for the first time "the *content that students need to acquire at each grade level from kindergarten to grade twelve*" (emphasis mine)(California Department of Education, 2000, p. iv). The 1988 document had taken great pains to describe both the craft and content of history, with the idea that one could not be understood properly without the other. The 1998 document replaced the 17 pages from the start of the 1988 document that had been devoted to goals and curriculum strands with an emphasis on student understanding. Instead, the 1998 document included a page of analysis skills at the beginning of each grade level section (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). These skills were to be "learned through, and applied to, the content standards" and were "to be assessed *only in conjunction with* the content standards" (emphasis in document) (California Department of Education, 2000, p. 40). Not only were the historical and social science analysis skills of 1998 sharply reduced from the lofty goals of the 1988 document, given the context of standardized testing that was soon to come they would appear to be superfluous to the content standards.

The analysis skills that had been the hallmark of the 1988 standards document had but a token presence in the 1998 document. Encompassing three broader themes of chronological and spatial thinking; research, evidence, and point of view; and historical interpretation, the analysis skills in the 1998 standards seemed to call for students to engage in activities designed to build disciplinary literacy in history. This would include such skills as explaining how major events are related to one another in time, using context and sourcing to assess the credibility of sources and being able to distinguish both short and long-term causes and consequences of historical events. In the multiple-choice

testing environment, however, even to the limited degree that analysis skills were assessed, the questions that claimed to call for analysis could be answered with the simple recall of facts. On the 2009 sample of test questions released by the California Department of Education, 17 of 90 questions purported to test analysis skills – each in conjunction with a content standard. Of those 17, one question was aligned with the chronological and spatial thinking domain, no questions were aligned with the historical research, evidence, and point of view domain, and the remaining 16 questions were aligned with just two of the six subdomains under the historical interpretation domain. The question that the California Department of Education labeled as indicating proficiency in the standard, "Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs" did not call for meaningful analysis at all. The question, "Which religious group has had the greatest increase in membership due to the increasing immigration from Latin American countries to the United States over the last fifty years?" could be answered by simple recall (2009 released CST p. 9, 13). Likewise, the question, "Which event *most* contributed to the establishment of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)?" does not call for students to "interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present day norms and values" as the analysis skills standard calls for. So long as a student could recall that the SEC was established in response to the stock market crash of 1929, no interpretation would be necessary to answer this question. Thus, with

what could be termed at best token assessment of the historical analysis skills standards, it is no perhaps surprise I found in my pilot study that many school districts chose to focus on preparing students to recall historical facts on the CST rather than to build analysis skills.

The Common Core Standards

The Common Core State Standards are a product of a movement launched in 2009 through the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2014a). The goal behind the Common Core standards was to develop a set of standards that were "essential, rigorous, clear and specific, coherent, and internationally benchmarked" (Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2014b). The committee tasked with creating the standards defined rigor as including "high-level cognitive demands" that would ask students "to demonstrate deep conceptual understanding through the application of content knowledge and skills to new situations." The criteria used to set standards specified that high-level cognitive demand included "reasoning, justification, synthesis, analysis, and problem-solving" (Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2014b). While the CCSS are standards specifically tailored to math and English and are designed to act along a continuum from kindergarten through twelfth grade, the English standards also include anchor standards in reading and writing that are designed for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Anchor standards for History/Social Studies

While there has been no change in history/social studies content standards in California since the current standards were adopted in 1998, the circumstances surrounding the use of standards in history classrooms have changed greatly since that time. History content standards were part of the California accountability scheme up through the 2013 test cycle. Teachers and administrators in Del Sur County, the location of my study, explained that this meant that a good deal of history instruction was tailored to getting students prepared for state testing – favoring breadth and student recall of the content that was likely to be tested at the expense of depth and analysis.

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, California dropped its requirement for annual testing of students in history as part of its overhaul of state testing tied to the adoption of the CCSS. While the California legislature has mandated that history be assessed as part of the state's testing and accountability system, the earliest this might happen is 2017. In the meantime, California has implemented the CCSS, with stakes for schools at the federal and state levels, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. While HSS was not to be directly tested in the 2015-2016 testing cycle, CCSS English/language arts exams were expected to test expository text using passages from social studies and science. Given the new reading and writing anchor standards for social studies contained in the CCSS literacy standards, the potential exists for a significant change in the direction of history instruction in California's classrooms.

Ultimately, even as the Common Core State Standards are billed as a uniform set of standards, the decision about whether and how to implement the standards falls to the local education agency (LEA). Administrators at the CCSSO, California Department of

Education, and Del Sur County all deferred to the authority of the LEA to make decisions about how to implement standards. Even as they suggested that history classrooms should use literacy anchor standards primarily as a support rather than as another set of standards, administrators were quick to note that the ultimate decision on any implementation was the authority of the LEA.

Federal and State Accountability Systems

The State of California, up through the 2012-2013 school year, attended to two calculations that they then used to determine school quality: a state measure and a federal measure. The state's measure was the Academic Performance Index (API). While the API percentages might vary somewhat from the following depending on enrollment and testing data, the percentages that the state provided as content area weights for the total API score in grades 9-12 were:

- English-Language Arts   27.1%

- Mathematics   18.1%

- Science   22.9%

- History-Social Science   13.9%

- CAHSEE[2] English   9.0%

- CAHSEE Math   9.0%

(California Department of Education, 2010)

The API was then used to compare school quality across institutions statewide, with each school earning a statewide decile rank and a "similar schools" decile ranking that

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[2] California High School Exit Exam

compared each school to 100 schools statewide that were similar in size and demographics.

Shortly after California's school accountability system was established in 1999, the federal government passed a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that contained relatively more stringent accountability measures for those schools that received federal funds. The ESEA was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and contained a number of new requirements, measures, and metrics designed to evaluate and improve school quality and performance. In California at the high school level there were four factors taken into account to determine compliance at the federal level with annual yearly progress (AYP) for those schools receiving federal Title I funding. The first was a participation rate of at least 95 percent on the state standardized test across the school as a whole and numerically significant subgroups.[3] Schools were also required to have an increasing percentage of students proficient in English-Language Arts and Mathematics – with a target of 100 percent by 2014. In California, student proficiency was satisfied by a passing score on the CAHSEE. Schools also had to meet API growth targets and maintain a graduation rate of at least 90 percent of students. While only Title I schools were threatened with sanctions for not meeting AYP, under a state law first passed in 1988 and amended since, all California schools were required to issue a School Accountability Report Card (SARC) that included a number of measures of school quality, including the measures included in the AYP calculation.

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[3] Numerically significant subgroups included categories for race/ethnicity, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities.

The implementation of HSS standards in California was affected not only by those challenges mentioned in the implementation literature, but also by federal and state requirements geared toward testing and accountability more than toward disciplinary understanding of history. It was within this environment that I situated my study.

Statement of the Problem

As of 2015 there remained no clear consensus about what students should learn and how they should learn it in America's public schools. This lack of consensus was exemplified by the fight over the CCSS, whether those standards should even be implemented in public schools, and if so, what that implementation should look like. Battles in the popular media pitted advocates of the new CCSS against opponents, with political candidates staking positions for or against the standards and those in the education community also often making impassioned cases for or against the standards. Perhaps as a result of the political discussion surrounding the new standards, in April 2015 California's Superintendent of Public Instruction sent a memorandum to LEAs in which he said that "the term 'Common Core' has outlived its usefulness" and that he would henceforth be referring to "the new 'California Standards'" (Torlakson, 2015). This statement speaks to the political uproar that had surrounded the CCSS and the desire to get away from a term that, by 2015, had become divisive and had to some become a proxy for federal control of education and to others a departure from teaching the "basics." Texas senator Ted Cruz argued that the federal government "has no business sticking its nose in education. We need to repeal every word of Common Core." Kentucky senator Rand Paul called Common Core "a revisionist history that ignores the

faith of our founders" (Barrow & Hefling, 2015). Given that the federal government cannot repeal state legislation and that the CCSS are not history content standards, the arguments of Cruz and Paul positioned the fight against the CCSS as more symbolic than substantive in a larger fight over the role of the federal government.

Beyond English and math, the subjects for which the CCSS were written, the ELA standards also contain anchor standards for history, science, and technical subjects. While those responsible for creating and implementing the CCSS at the national and state levels have stated in interviews that those standards were not intended to supplant history standards, those same individuals also qualified their statements by stating that choices about whether and how to implement standards were ultimately the purview of each LEA.

Such political battles are not new to the field of history/social studies (HSS) education. Attempts to pilot a national curriculum in the 1970s as well as attempts to create a set of national history standards in the 1990s both failed in the face of political pressure. In the 1970s, the curriculum was "Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)." MACOS, an anthropology-based inquiry program developed for students in grades 4-6 with federal funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), was perceived as a threat to American values. MACOS was targeted by Congressman John Conlan of Arizona, who claimed the curriculum was a "dangerous assault on cherished values" (including religion, morals, and social and political behavior), and was "designed to raise questions, not answer them" (Evans, 2004, p. 142). In the 1990s the clash was over the creation of national standards for HSS, part of a process funded by the National

Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Tasked with creating a set of national history standards under President George H.W. Bush's Goals 2000 initiative, Charlotte Crabtree and Gary Nash co-directed a project to create a set of national history standards. To do so, they convened a group consisting of historians from the ideological center as well as teachers to create a set of standards that were de-politicized to the greatest degree possible. Their efforts, however, were unsuccessful. Amid a national political firestorm spurred by conservative politicians, the standards were voted down by Congress (Nash, et al., 1997). One of the reasons Nash, et al. gave for critique of the standards was not the standards themselves, but rather the teaching examples that were included with the standards that were "misperceived as a 'national curriculum'" which would effectively result in a loss of control for local school districts (Nash, et al., 1997, p. 249). Even in the absence of national standards and a national curriculum, the federal government created policy designed to foreground state standards, thereby holding schools accountable for funds that they received. The mechanism for accountability was to be high-stakes assessments based on standards to be implemented by the individual states. Chatterji notes that within the federal context, the term *standards-based reform* refers "to the ways in which individual states [respond] to the push for higher standards and school accountability" (Chatterji, 2002, p. 346). The form that standards-based reform took included a reliance on standards documents or frameworks as the source of what students should learn, an increased reliance on curriculum alignment and professional development tied specifically to standards, and a system of accountability measures tied in large part to standards-based standardized testing with stakes for schools

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and school districts consisting of rewards and sanctions (Betts & Costrell, 2001; Chatterji, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jester, 2005; Meier, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Spillane, 2004).

Schools that received Title I funding[4] from the federal government had been subject to accountability measures with decisions about what measures would be used decided by each state. In California there was a two-tier accountability system in which a school was responsible for making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in support of the federal requirements and also for meeting performance requirements under the state Academic Performance Index (API).   Both measures included high school graduation rate and student scores on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The state API also included student performance on the state's standardized test in four core subject areas: English, math, science, and social studies. Failure of schools to perform adequately on the federal measures resulted in schools being placed in performance improvement status (PI), with an increased risk of federal sanctions the longer a school remained in PI (California Department of Education, 2010). The specter of accountability sanctions has in some ways altered how schools address and implement reform. In some instances, the presence of a standards-focused curriculum and/or a high-stakes test was shown to alter social studies teacher practice considerably, restricting instruction in social studies classes to those items most likely to be tested (Gerwin & Visone, 2006; Grant, 2007; Vogler, 2008). In other instances, social studies was crowded

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[4] Title I funding is federal funding targeted toward students from low-income households to support students' mastery of academic standards. (cf. http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html)

out by other subject areas that were deemed to be more important to testing (Wills, 2007; Yeager & Pinder, 2006).

As schools move forward with the implementation of the CCSS, I have found that administrators and teachers do not yet have a clear picture as to whether and how the CCSS will be implemented by local agencies. Complicating this picture is the fact that in California the state accountability system is in a state of flux. California's accountability system for the decade leading up to this study, based on the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) exam, has been replaced. Students will now take the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which is based on the CCSS, yet school districts have little guidance as to how results from this test will fit into any state-wide accountability system. Whereas there had been a statewide HSS component in California's accountability system of Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), the current California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) has no such HSS test. While the California legislature has directed that such a test be established, the soonest state officials expect this to happen in California is 2018. Given the existing literature on implementation (to be discussed in chapter 2), and the state of California's accountability system, I elected to examine the implementation of the CCSS in a local school district, with a particular focus on HSS education. As such, my study seeks to fill a gap in the literature as it regards implementation of policy at the local level and to contribute to the body of literature surrounding the CCSS and HSS instruction. Moreover, my study seeks to broaden how the field conceptualizes and theorizes policy implementation in schools. Further, my study endeavors to illuminate

issues of policy implementation – specifically regarding social studies standards – to inform the ongoing discussions on education reform in the education and academic communities. My research addressed the following three questions:

1. How are the Common Core State Standards presented in the Buena Vista School District as they relate to history/social studies?

2. How do history/social studies teachers understand and implement the Common Core State Standards in the Buena Vista School District?

3. How might we conceptualize policy implementation based on what we learn from questions 1 and 2 above?

Findings

The CCSS were presented in the BVSD in multiple, sometimes contradictory ways. In one professional development opportunity presented by the BVSD and attended by teachers from Truman High School, teachers were presented with an approach to the CCSS in which HSS was to be a location for literacy instruction using HSS content. HSS teachers were presumed to be content area experts who were trained on packaged literacy activities to implement in the classroom. In another professional development opportunity presented by the Del Sur County Office of Education and attended by Truman's teachers, teachers were presented with the CCSS as calling for inquiry, and the focus was on depth of understanding and a broader inquiry arc that was associated with a national HSS framework. In a third venue sponsored by the BVSD that spanned several months of district-wide professional development, teachers were presented with a vision of the CCSS that emphasized rigor and focused on reaching higher levels of cognitive

rigor under Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge.[5] The professional

development opportunities in the BVSD also focused on different standards from the

CCSS. The literacy approach focused on a CCSS writing standard that called for

students to write informative texts that included history as a narrative. The inquiry and

rigor approaches, however focused on a different CCSS writing standard that promoted

student development of argument.

Individual teachers in the BVSD understood the CCSS in ways that were

consistent with their existing understandings of education. While teachers drew from

outside experts to understand and implement the Common Core, the degree to which they

relied on those experts varied. The two focal teachers in my study understood and

implemented the CCSS "defensively," but in different ways. Mark Laidlaw saw himself

as a "buffer" who implemented the CCSS in a way that allowed him to maintain outward

compliance with what he saw as the expectations of administration while modifying

instruction to include the CCSS. Jeannie Thompson served as a "conduit" for CCSS-

aligned materials and implemented the CCSS as a series of stand-alone drop-in activities

that had been developed by outside experts. Thompson understood the CCSS as being

mostly about literacy skills, and as separate from HSS knowledge.

Teachers in my study engaged in outward compliance with the implementation of

the CCSS, even while often prioritizing other concerns ahead of implementation. This

compliance resulted in teachers prioritizing what they understood to be the true priorities

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[5] As I discuss further in chapter 4, Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge
are frameworks for classifying intellectual rigor (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, &
Krathwohl, 1956; Krathwohl, 2002; Webb, 2002)

of the school – pass rates and graduation rates – ahead of Common Core implementation.

Teachers at Truman High School reported that the teachers who "held kids accountable,"

in this case meaning teachers who did not give students passing grades, were punished by

administration. Teachers reported that administration held control over teaching

assignments and other working conditions, and given that some teachers had been

"punished" in the past for not "play(ing) ball," administration would wield that power to

get what it wanted. Teacher accounts of implementation in classrooms suggested

implementation was in the form of "common core" activities that were not necessarily

integrated with what teachers considered to be the "real" HSS curriculum. Moreover,

teacher accounts of implementation in classrooms did not indicate a uniform

understanding of the Common Core. As with the differing views highlighted in

professional development, the teachers in my study implemented the CCSS in ways that

could be aligned with an interpretation of the CCSS.

Teachers in my study reported that the impact on history instruction was likewise

not uniform. Mark Laidlaw's accounts of his instruction saw very little change, with the

CCSS being implemented in his classroom in a way that would demonstrate compliance,

but with the core of his instruction remaining the same. Jeannie Thompson reported that

her instruction changed to a greater degree in terms of the method of how information

was delivered. The question of what the CCSS meant to the HSS curriculum for

Thompson, however, was more limited. Thompson's change in practice resulted in her

repackaging the same fundamental history facts and events in a different form – relying

on students to access them rather than "spoon feeding" students by presenting them

herself. Thompson's conception of what history knowledge entailed did not change – and remained student knowledge of facts, events, and terms. What I saw and studied in the BVSD and at Truman High School led me to posit the concept of *defensive implementation*, which I will discuss later in the dissertation.

Overview of the Dissertation

Following this chapter I review in chapter 2 the literature on implementation in general and education reform implementation in particular. I include both because much of the literature on implementation of policy, including works by Johnson and O'Connor (1979) and Lipsky (1980/2010) as well as the seminal work by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), informs research on education change and reform. I go on in chapter 2 to discuss the literature on social studies standards, key to the topic of my research – standards implementation in social studies classrooms.

Chapter 3 details the methods I used in this qualitative case study, the conceptual framework I used in analyzing and presenting data, and background about the school district where I studied and the state of HSS standards in California.

Chapter 4 examines how administrators in the BVSD understood and implemented the CCSS. This chapter discusses how the relationships of outside experts and the organizational culture of the BVSD played a role in administrators' understandings.

Chapter 5 examines how teachers in the BVSD understood and implemented the Common Core with a particular focus on teachers at Truman High School. As with chapter 4, this chapter discusses the role of outside experts and the organizational culture

of the district. This chapter also examines how teachers drew from their existing

understandings of what it meant to teach social studies to interpret and implement the

Common Core.

Chapter 6 examines the significance and implications of CCSS implementation in

the BVSD on social studies instruction. This chapter argues that given the organizational

culture of the BVSD and the competing priorities faced by administrators and teachers in

the BVSD, the appearance of implementation of the CCSS was prioritized over the actual

implementation of substantive change. It further argues that implementation of the CCSS

in the BVSD was affected by control mechanisms that allowed administration to attain its

goals and prompted teachers to engage in defensive implementation. This chapter also

examines possible implications for HSS instruction, addresses limitations of my study,

and ends with a call for further research in the role of the local context on policy

implementation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

After over four decades of wrangling at the federal, state, and local levels over the role of standards and standards-based education, in 2001 standards were written into law for the first time on the federal level as part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Spellings, 2005). While the law itself precluded federal control of standards, courses of instruction, and assessments in the same way as its predecessors, there was for the first time a common national standard states had to satisfy in order to receive federal aid ("Elementary and secondary education act," 2001). What resulted were effectively two somewhat interrelated systems: each state's own construction of standards and accountability -each with its own standards and assessments, and a common framework that all states were required to adhere to as a condition of federal funding.

Chatterji notes that within the federal context, the term *standards-based reform* refers "to the ways in which individual states [respond] to the push for higher standards and school accountability" (Chatterji, 2002, p. 346). The literature on standards-based reform within the states consistently describes a movement with the following elements:

- Standards documents or frameworks that spell out what students should know and be able to do,

- Alignment of curriculum and professional development with the standards and/or frameworks, and

- A system of accountability mechanisms that includes testing and rewards or sanctions based on performance (Betts & Costrell, 2001; Chatterji, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jester, 2005; Meier, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Spillane, 2004).

While there is widespread agreement on the principles on which standards-based reform is predicated, implementation of standards themselves is less clear-cut. The literature on implementation points to gaps between the intent of policymakers and the actual implementation of school reform measures (Betts & Costrell, 2001; Cohen, 1990; Cohen, et al., 2014; Datnow, 2006; Hill, 2001; Placier, et al., 2002; Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004; Spillane, 1998, 2004; Spillane, et al., 2006; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). I discuss below three general themes from the literature on implementation that seek to explain that gap and how other factors mitigate implementation of policy. The first is the way in which understandings and misunderstandings that actors have of a reform itself affect how they implement policy. The second is the complexity of the system into which reforms are to be implemented and how other priorities within and outside an organization constrain and compete with a reform. The third is willful adjustments to the enactment of policy on the part of actors to implement policy in a way they deem best for their own environments. These themes are not mutually exclusive, yet each has explanatory value on its own. I then discuss the literature on the politics of social studies standards.

Implementation as Misunderstanding

One strand of the literature on implementation explains differences between policymakers' intents and the execution of policy as a misunderstanding of policy on the part of implementers. Spillane, Reiser, and Gomez (2006) examined the body of implementation literature that applies actors' cognition to the implementation of policy. The authors included within the broader frame of "cognition" terms such as "interpretation," "learning," "sense-making," and "reading" used in the existing body of implementation literature (Spillane, et al., 2006, p. 47). The authors concluded that "different agents will construct different understandings even when they have complete knowledge of reform demands and view new demands in terms of what they already know and believe" (Spillane, et al., 2006, p. 51).

Spillane, et al. found three ways in which actors' cognitive sense-making framework interfered with implementation. The first was different interpretations of the same message. In this regard, teachers' existing beliefs about subject matter, teaching, learning, and students directed their implementation more than teachers' acceptance or rejection of reform. The second was teachers' misunderstandings of new ideas as familiar. Teachers imputed their existing understandings to the new reforms that were designed to bring change. The third was a focus on superficial features of a reform rather than deeper relationships between the reform and education. Spillane, et al. proposed that missing from the research of how the cognition of actors affects implementation was the social perspective. That is, the fact that "social agents' thinking and action is situated in institutional sectors that provide norms, rules, and definitions of the environment that

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both constrain and enable action" (Spillane, et al., 2006, p. 56). Further, within

institutions there is a diffusion of responsibility for enactment of policy. As such

multiple, sometimes contradictory, interpretations of policy situated actors' sense-making

differently. As an example, the authors noted that reading specialists, staff development

specialists, and psychometricians all might view and enact the same reading reform

through different lenses.

In the distributed cognition framework Spillane, et al. proposed that attention

must be paid to three areas. First, "reform ideas, as represented by standards documents,

are not simply read and made sense of by teachers in a single sitting. Rather, standards

documents and related materials (e.g., student test data, curricula) are apprehended and

used in various social practices in schools" (Spillane, et al., 2006, p. 61). Second, teacher

sense-making takes form over time as teachers' understandings of reform ideas evolve

and teachers work out their understandings in instructional practice. The last area is that

materials, routines, and practices are also part of the sense-making process. The authors

specify that these materials, routines, and practices take two forms. The first is concrete

lesson plans that call for a uniform set of procedural tasks that can be readily followed

from a curriculum guide. The second are tasks such as lead-in discussions that seek to

"problematize aspects of subject matter or new activity content" (Spillane, et al., 2006, p.

62). Depending on how teachers make sense of reforms and the social practices of a

given school, they may prioritize content coverage over problematizing content. The

authors conclude, "The situation both defines the practice of sense-making, and is defined

by this practice." As a result, "Actual implementation requires thoughtful use of these

artifacts in ways that involve understanding their underlying intent" (Spillane, et al., 2006, p. 63). Spillane used this same framework in a 2004 study of standards implementation in schools.

In his 2004 multi-site case study of school districts' responses to new science and mathematics standards, Spillane used a mixed-methods approach to draw from interview and survey data at the state, district, and classroom level. He found that even in the face of what were seemingly the same standards school officials responsible for implementation responded differently to those standards. Spillane postulated that this occurred in part because state policy does not represent a given solution so much as it sends a signal to local officials. Those officials must then construct what that signal means in terms of their local behavior. A common result is that local officials, in trying to carry out policymakers' intentions, fail to do so because of misunderstandings about the policy itself (Spillane, 2004). In Spillane's study, districts worked to support what they understood new standards to be. In large part, however, their interpretations of standards were based largely on existing conceptions about learning. As a result, new standards that called for mathematical problem-solving were interpreted to be a re-packaging of old ideas (story problems and word problems) or a call for greater application to real-world situations as opposed to greater understanding of both procedural and principled knowledge. Spillane noted that the focus on surface-level aspects of standards caused district policymakers to miss deeper structural changes. Thus, they instead maintained conventional views that math and science knowledge is procedural in nature and considered to be learned if remembered. Teaching such

knowledge involved showing and telling rather than inquiry. In school districts where

support for standards was high, policymakers were more likely to develop deeper

understandings of the standards – with about half having such an understanding. In

school districts where support for standards was low, almost 95 percent of policymakers

had only surface-level understandings of the standards. Those policymakers with

surface-level understandings missed out on deeper elements of the standards themselves,

such as transforming what counted as knowledge and inquiry (Spillane, 2004).

Hill (2001) likewise found a disconnect between state standards and enacted

policy in her qualitative case study of mathematics standards implementation in Oldtown,

a school district in the northeastern United States. As Spillane (2004) found in his study,

teachers whom Hill observed making decisions about what to keep and exclude in new

mathematics standards did not make distinctions between those conceptual, problem-

centered, constructivist standards presented by the state and the more traditional

mathematics that was promoted by the publisher of the district-adopted math curriculum.

While Hill argued that there is room for local construction of standards by virtue of the

words being "taken, debated, understood, and if necessary transformed into a more usable

form" (2001, p. 293), in this instance that did not happen. Instead, standards and

objectives provided by the textbook publisher and represented to be aligned with the state

standards – a claim at which state leaders "raised their eyebrows" (Hill, 2001, p. 298) –

were deemed to be as the publisher represented them. Hill attributed the teachers'

acceptance of congruence between the meaning of state standards as understood by their

authors and the textbook publisher's presentation of standards to the *communities of*

meaning[6] of which each was a part. While state leaders assumed that teachers would ascribe a constructivist meaning to the words in the standards, because teachers did not have access to that community, Hill explained, teachers imputed their own meanings Ultimately, the committee's work became that of ensuring that both the state's and the publisher's standards were represented in the final document, rather than reaching an understanding about the nature of mathematics or how it was to be taught. As a result, Hill notes that "[a]s teachers imputed conventional definitions to words reformers meant to describe unconventional practices, the state standards lost their force" (2001, p. 305). Further, having inadequate expertise to critically evaluate the publisher's claims, teachers took the word of the publisher's representative that its program aligned well with the state standards and interpreted the standards on the publisher's terms. Because of this, Hill argued that agents other than the state supply both meanings and everyday practices by which teachers try to implement policy (Hill, 2001).

Hill suggests that there are multiple ways to understand what happened in Oldtown. The One, she argued, is through the lens of professional development. Hill suggests that a change in policy must be accompanied by some sort of professional development process because the prior knowledge of actors matters. Absent this, actors will interpret new ideas using their existing cognitive frameworks. Another, she argues, is through the lens of implementation. Seen in this way she posits that meanings of

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[6] Hill uses this term to refer to how a word is interpreted given both the context of a term and the situation of which the actor is a part. As an example, as the state leaders who authored the standards meant a term like "test" to involve reasoning and proof of a theory, one teacher who interpreted the word test in the standards saw it as a summative assessment. Thus, the meaning of "test" in the district's curriculum – and thus in practice - became summative assessment (see Hill, 2001, pp. 301-303).

policy are constructed from what agents already know or do, from symbols around policy, or from cues sent by other actors in the environment. Consequently, differences between policy and practice can often be understood "as a series of honest differences over what particular words mean, rather than shirking or willful disobedience on the part of agents" (Hill, 2001, p. 311). Hill positions this tension as that between a more complex, nuanced meaning of particular words such as "explore, discover, construct" held by policy leaders and a more traditional interpretation of words held by teachers in conventional classrooms.

While Hill found that there might be differences as to what words mean to actors within the context of reform as opposed to the nature of what words meant in carrying out reform, Cohen and others found misunderstanding in terms of teacher understandings and beliefs about how to carry out reform (Cohen, et al., 2014). In their comparative analysis of three school-based reform programs over more than a decade, ending in 2008, the authors sought to "provide policy makers, practicing educators, reformers, and educational researchers with a perspective on the central challenge of the Common Core: How to create, manage, and sustain the standards-aligned educational infrastructure that could support improved leadership, instruction, and leadership in many schools" (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 21). Cohen, et al.'s study looked at three programs: Success for All (SFA), America's Choice (AC), and the Accelerated Schools Project (ASP). They analyzed these programs (which they called the "interveners") along with their designs, organizations, and networks. Rather than view implementation as "an orderly progression from applied research to widespread utilization, the authors instead viewed

implementation as "a collection of puzzles that can be understood and managed, but that often unfold in overlapping and nonsequential ways" (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 26). The authors found four common puzzles faced in implementation regardless of which of the three programs was being implemented. The first of these was the *design puzzle*, which centered on developing plans for "coherence and capabilities among schools, designs, intervening organizations, and environments." The second was the *implementation puzzle*, which included the "unanticipated and dysfunctional interactions that arise among schools, designs, intervening organizations, and environments." The third was the *improvement puzzle* that sought to understand and address issues raised in the implementation puzzle. The fourth was the *sustainability puzzle*, which sought to "maintain the interventions' viability in complex, turbulent, and uncertain environments" (Cohen, et al., 2014, pp. 22-23). The authors explain that teacher attitudes blunted the effects of a reform model, Success for All (SFA), in one school district they studied. However, teachers' fidelity to reform implementation was not necessarily defined by their willingness to enact the new reform. Equally misguided, the authors explained, were teacher views of external support as "bureaucratic, unwarranted, and unwelcome" as well as those that saw external support as "technocratic, warranted, and welcome" (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 66). It was the latter view that contributed to greater "rote, mechanistic" implementation by teachers rather than the "expert, adaptive" implementation the creators of the program had hoped for. This mechanistic implementation was compounded by the prevalence of scripted curriculum in the SFA

model. Cohen, et al. attributed teachers "following scripts mechanically" to the prevalence of scripts and the ease of implementation for weak teachers.

This mechanistic-type of implementation is not a recent phenomenon, and was present over 25 years ago in another study Cohen (1990) conducted regarding the implementation of a new model for learning mathematics in an elementary classroom. Cohen studied the mathematics instruction of Mrs. Oublier[7], a teacher who "eagerly embraced" a new mathematics curriculum and used many of the reform's attendant curriculum materials. In his qualitative case study, Cohen explained how a new mathematics framework in California invited students to think differently about mathematics.

> [Materials and activities based on the new instructional framework] could make mathematics relationships more accessible by coming at [students] with ordinary language rather than working only with bare numbers on a page. It also could unpack mathematics relationships by offering different ways to get the same result. It could illuminate the relations between addition and subtraction, helping children to understand their reversibility. And it could get students to do "mental math," that is, to solve problems in their heads and thereby learn to see math as something to puzzle about and figure out rather than just a bunch of facts and procedures to be memorized.
> The new framework exhorted teachers to reconceptualize their teaching of math. Rather than viewing math as a set of procedures and formulas, students might understand math better if teachers were to present math as a puzzle or as a set of relationships that could help students understand how math works.

Cohen explained that in many ways Mrs. Oublier was an ideal teacher because of her attitude toward the new reform. Mrs. Oublier was enthusiastic about including activities from the new framework into her classes, including work with concrete materials. She sought out materials that might enable her to better accomplish the goals

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[7] In what was almost certainly an intentional act by Cohen, it is worth noting that *oublier* is French for "to forget."

of the new math framework. Although she used the new materials and eagerly embraced the new curriculum, she did so in a way that presented a traditional view of mathematics. That is, rather than using activities as a springboard to uncover and illuminate mathematical relationships, she instead used the activities as a means to get to right or wrong answers. The result, according to Cohen, was "an extraordinary mélange of traditional and novel approaches to math instruction" (Cohen, 1990, p. 312).

Cohen explained that rather than integrating the goals of the new mathematics framework in her instruction, Mrs. Oublier combined new pedagogical approaches with traditional understandings about mathematics. In part, Cohen explained, this was because of Mrs. Oublier's own limited knowledge of mathematics. Because Mrs. Oublier understood math as a "fixed body of truths" and not as a "source of puzzles" or a "terrain for argument," she did not pursue opportunities for understanding because she was unaware that they existed (Cohen, 1990, p. 322). Beyond her own limited knowledge, however, were other constraints that precluded Mrs. Oublier's fully implementing the new method of understanding the framework promised. Among these was the use of a method of lesson planning and instruction actively promoted in her school that called for a clear explication of lesson objectives, pacing and control to ensure coverage of content, and checks along the way to ensure that students were working and understanding. Cohen suggests that this more rigid approach to planning and instruction limited discourse in Mrs. Oublier's classroom and kept the focus on her as the source of information.

This strand of the implementation literature positions actors as the recipients of reforms and successful implementation is framed in terms of faithful enactment of both the substance and intent of reforms. The authors presume a top-down hierarchy that privileges faithful enactment of a reform as the ideal outcome. But this is not the only perspective. Another strand of the implementation literature focuses on competing priorities within systems as the cause for different implementation outcomes.

System Complexity – Competing Internal and External Priorities

Another factor identified in the literature that influences the implementation of policy is the complexity of internal and external priorities that come to bear on an organization. Because changes in one area of policy do not necessarily result in changes in other priorities, actors must determine how new policy fits within an organization's existing operations. Further, the priorities for one actor within an organization are not always the same as those of other actors within or outside the same organization (Datnow, 2006; Nash, et al., 1997; Placier, et al., 2002; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Thus, actors do not necessarily equally share the same motivation to enact all parts of a reform equally. Nor do they share the same priorities when enacting reform.

In one of the classic works on policy implementation, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) examined the implementation in Oakland, California of an employment program under the Economic Development Act of 1965 (EDA). In examining how individuals and agencies worked together to enact a major public works program designed to reduce unemployment among unemployed minorities in Oakland, Pressman and Wildavsky

made clear the complex relationships between and within each of the parties in the project. One of the complexities was that although the project goal was to meaningfully reduce unemployment in Oakland, not every participant in the project shared the same goal or had the same stake in the project. For instance, the Port of Oakland, including the Oakland International Airport, was chosen as a project site not because of its commitment to the overall goal of reducing unemployment, but because the Port had projects available in the short amount of time needed to spend funds and it would be a willing recipient of federal dollars. The Port and project beneficiary World Airways were concerned less about unemployment and more concerned with the prospect of capital improvements to their facilities. These competing priorities came to be magnified as other interested agencies entered the process within their own sphere. As an example, one of the issues involved the quality of landfill being used to extend the project into the San Francisco Bay. While this was of little concern to some actors and was seen as producing an unnecessary delay, the quality of landfill was of great issue to those concerned with navigation in the bay and environmental quality for life in the bay – much more so than the employment goals or capital improvements of the project. Pressman and Wildavsky identified six key reasons that although the parties may have been united in their overall desire to increase minority employment in Oakland, the execution failed.

- A direct incompatibility with other commitments within and outside the project.
- No direct incompatibility, but a preference for other programs. This was particularly true higher up in the federal agency implementing the EDA.

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- Simultaneous commitments to other projects. The Port of Oakland project was not the top priority for all involved.

- Dependence on others who lacked a sense of urgency in the project.

- Differences of opinion on leadership and proper organizational roles

- Legal and procedural differences. Among these were concerns of a nearby naval air facility about air traffic safety and concerns about potential pollutants in dirt being used to fill the bay.

The authors explained that the greater the number of decision points along the way, the less likely a project will be implemented. Further, unexpected developments cause divergences in any implementation path. Indeed, the authors expressed their wonderment that in spite of obstacles anything gets done at all (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). The authors concluded that implementation should not be divorced from policy. In designing and implementing new policy, the number of decision points should be minimized to the greatest degree possible. Many of the issues that Pressman and Wildavsky identified above can be seen in other literature on standards and instructional reform. In fact, the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) is foundational to other implementation research in education (Hill, 2001; McLaughlin, 1987; Spillane, 1998).

In her qualitative case study of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) in Florida, Datnow (2006) found that given competing priorities in a high school implementing ATLAS, a comprehensive reform program, loose connections between those at many levels of program implementation diminished many of the reform's effects. At issue were priorities both outside and within the organization. Datnow found that issues within

the school included a lack of staff support, an absence of leadership for the reform, and a change in principals resulting from a merger with the area junior high school. These were complicated by inadequate implementation support from ATLAS in part due to the school's rural location and difficulty of access. Perhaps the larger issue, however, was that teachers prioritized the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), Florida's standards-based state exam, over the ATLAS reforms. Because of the stakes attached to the FCAT for teachers and schools, for administrators and teachers ATLAS was not a priority aside from the Title I director who had secured funding for the program and the teachers who had been trained at Harvard to implement the program. Instead, since Florida's state standards and the FCAT were the drivers of a school's state rating, those became the true priorities. Datnow concluded that it is not a given that a program like ATLAS would motivate schools to improve given the loose connections among policy levels. Federal policies such as that which provided funding for ATLAS had to co-exist with state and local policies that had previously been implemented and maintained an overriding importance to local actors. In this instance, because the reform itself was not perceived to have nearly the level of importance as other existing programs, it lacked legitimacy and was not implemented.

In their study of how academic standards were written in Missouri, Placier, Walker, and Foster (2002) examined policy-making as a discursive process, in which decisions about what all students should know were part of a competitive, politicized society. Placier, Walker, and Foster traced the development of Missouri's "Show Me Standards" through examination of draft copies of standards, records relating to meetings

related to standards adoption, and review of news stories and editorials related to the standards. The original group of educators tasked with writing Missouri's standards was focused on writing standards that were academically sound, broadly stated, assessable, and clearly worded. They further sought standards that were pedagogically appropriate, supported higher-order thinking skills, promoted equity, and were defensible and acceptable to stakeholders. Most important to the eventual discussion, however, was that the original group's standards were *process* standards rather than content standards. This focus prompted a groundswell of complaints from critics who believed that, among other things, students should learn content first, then its application. Placier, Walker, and Foster (2002) identified four fundamental conflicts that emerged as part of the standards adoption process: interdisciplinary processes vs. discipline-specific content, professional vs. public audience, "red flag" terms vs. neutrality, and generality vs. specificity.

The result of the above conflicts was a set of standards that were, for many, disappointing. As Spillane (2004) also found in Illinois and Hill (2001) found in Oldtown, Placier, Walker, and Foster (2002) likewise found that there were those who had difficulty understanding the distinction between content and process standards.

Thus, as the standards came up for adoption they were changed to reflect specific content areas. As language was simplified and sanitized to be more accessible to the lay public, the standards were also "denatured," with fundamental meanings changed as a result of language simplification and removal of those ideas that suggested developmentalist, social meliorist, or multicultural views of knowledge – a move made to placate white Christian fundamentalists. The authors quote Portelli and Vibert in their conclusion that

the standards debate "is for teachers in classrooms simultaneously critically important and something of an irrelevant luxury" (Portelli & Vilbert, 1997 as cited in Placier, et al., 2002, p. 303). In short, because they are removed from the daily conditions of classroom teaching, the Missouri standards lose their relevance to instruction even as they are simultaneously used through alignment with standardized tests as the measure of quality of instruction.

In her qualitative study of a Texas magnet high school, McNeil (2000) found an environment in which the curriculum, including history instruction, was reduced to "lists and facts" (p. 212). McNeil found that, in order to ensure high student scores on standardized tests and their own high scores on teacher rating scales, teachers taught *school knowledge*, a type of knowledge that served the credentialing function of the high school but did not provide students with depth in the subjects being taught. The use of school knowledge was a part of *defensive teaching*, by which teaches reduced course requirements to gain "minimal participation with minimal resistance" (McNeil, 2000, p. 12). Characteristic of defensive teaching was the tendency to omit topics that were difficult for students to understand or prone to be controversial, mystification of topics that were declared to be the domain of "experts" in the field. Also characteristic was fragmentation of the curriculum, including divorcing the curriculum from students' and teachers' prior knowledge and from the subject's own epistemologies. At the heart of school knowledge and defensive teaching was the state standardized test for which teachers had to prepare. According to McNeil, Texas's accountability system, which would serve as a model for No Child Left Behind, "nuked" the state school system by de-

skilling teachers' work, trivializing and reducing the quality of curriculum, and

distancing children from the substance of schooling (McNeil, 2000, p. 189). Teachers

were forced to choose between teaching methods McNeil described as "meaningful" and

"authentic" and defensive teaching that would allow teachers to maintain high ratings

(McNeil, 2000, p. 268). Though some teachers sought both, ultimately defensive

teaching and the school knowledge associated with it prevailed. Defensive teaching was

effectively a way for teachers to comply with the mandates of administration while at the

same time exerting their own control over curriculum in the classroom. McNeil found

teachers who were forced into a transformed and relatively limited curriculum designed

to enhance student performance on high-stakes exams and maximize coverage of content.

This revised curriculum was presented as a minimum foundation for teaching, but

McNeil found that this new minimum curriculum was problematic. In science especially,

complex concepts were reduced to vocabulary terms to be memorized. As the pressure of

high-stakes testing became more extreme, the pressures to alter the curriculum to fit

subjects being tested was significant. As a result, students spent "enormous amounts of

time and mental energy on material they are *intended to forget*, further widening the gap

between these students and their peers at more privileged schools" (McNeil, 2000, p.

247). This was evident in a blatant display in an elementary school in which business

and community leaders were brought in to see the progress of Latino students who had

been taught using a packaged curriculum. After a group of children displayed their skills

in addition, the White master of ceremonies remarked, "Isn't this great? Now, this may

not be the math you would want for *your* children, but for *these* children – isn't this just

great?" (p. 253). Rather than equalize the curriculum as had been intended, the imposition of proficiencies had the effect of widening the difference between middle and lower-class students (McNeil, 2000).

Aside from policy itself, the research shows that external factors implementers must attend to can play a great role in how or whether policy is enacted. This is not to say that actors themselves do not play a role, as front-line workers are the focus of another body of literature.

The Role of Implementers

As I noted earlier, a good body of the literature on implementation of education reform starts from a premise that top-down reform is itself a desirable thing and that problems of implementation are issues of the capacity of actors and/or the will of actors to enact reform. These themes are present not only in the literature on education policy implementation, but in the literature on implementation in general. As with the Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) study I described above, studies on implementation in which front-line workers have a good deal of discretion as to how they carry out their jobs can inform our understanding of education policy. Johnson and O'Connor (1979) questioned the top-down view of reform in their study of a state welfare agency. Johnson and O'Connor found that while workers might not follow what their managers wanted in terms of specific policy, workers often found alternate, more effective ways to meet broader organizational goals and objectives. Among the findings in Johnson and O'Connor's quantitative study, the authors found that the most change-oriented workers in the state welfare office they studied were also the most likely to bend or break rules if needed for

the client. When faced with regulations that conflicted with workers' sense of their

responsibility to the public, workers were more likely to either find another regulation

that supported their preferred action or bend or ignore the regulation they found in

conflict. When workers found regulations unrealistic, not serious, or an impediment to

client service the data in Johnson and O'Connor's study showed almost consistently that

greater than 80 percent found another regulation or bent or ignored the regulation in

question. Johnson and O'Connor found that while front-line workers change or ignore

policy directives, this is often done with broader organizational goals and client service in

mind. The authors suggest that research should give more attention to lower-level

personnel in the study of implementation and that policymakers should craft policy with

implementation in mind.

Further examples of the role of the front-line worker in implementing policy can

be found in works that have identified and studied the role of the "street-level

bureaucrat." Lipsky (1980/2010) defines *street-level bureaucrats* as "public service

workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have

substantial discretion in the execution of their work." A *street-level bureaucracy* is a

public service agency that employs "a significant number of street-level bureaucrats in

proportion to their work force" (p. 3). Street-level bureaucrats are typified by public

employees such as teachers, police officers, and social workers in that these professions

both grant access to government programs and provide services (Lipsky, 1980/2010).

Weatherly and Lipsky's (1977) study of street-level bureaucracy at work in

Massachusetts schools and Lipsky's (1980/2010) comprehensive work on the nature of

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street-level bureaucrats and bureaucracy illuminate many of the ways in which actors at the level of implementation have discretion over whether and how policy is implemented.

In their study of school districts' responses to changes to Massachusetts special education laws, Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) suggest that consistent with findings from the RAND Change Agent Study (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1987), the "street level bureaucrats *are the policymakers* in their respective work arenas (emphasis in original) (p. 172)." Weatherly and Lipsky explain that this is because street-level bureaucrats have substantial discretion in the performance of their jobs, their work objectives are "vague and contradictory," and "consumers of services are relatively insignificant as a reference group" (p. 172). Their example was the implementation of special education reform in Massachusetts, a reform that was inadequately funded yet required of all public school districts in Massachusetts. Weatherly and Lipsky identified competing priorities within the Massachusetts public school system, including a mandate to provide extensive individualized attention to each child while simultaneously maximizing efficiency. Given that there were no explicit priorities included with the new legislation, local actors did not have firm guidance on how to proceed. Further, given that there was no guarantee of funding for reforms and the possibility that increased funding for special education would come from a school's general education allotment, districts and schools were in some cases reticent to fully enact many of the new requirements. In other cases local agencies prioritized and implemented reforms in ways that met the letter, if not the spirit, of the new legislation. In one example, a series of steps that were designed to ensure greater parent participation in the identification and

placement process for special education was reduced to a checklist that actually resulted in less parent participation than had existed before the reform.

Lipsky (1980/2010) makes clear that while street-level bureaucrats might "make" policy by virtue of their discretionary behaviors becoming the pattern of behavior for a given agency, they only do so within a broader, already established context. Whereas street-level bureaucrats often have substantial discretion in the performance of their jobs – that discretion is circumscribed by the goals of the organization of which they are a part.

In her study of a reform movement in California in the 1980s and 1990s that was cut short when California's governor vetoed funding for statewide exams, Chrispeels (1997) found that many of the changes and reforms associated with the movement kept hold even as the impetus for the movement – preparation for a new state testing system – went away. Chrispeels attributed the persistence of implementation even without the specter of the state exam was influenced by a policy web that had unfolded over the decade prior and involved "mandates, inducements, capacity building, and hortatory calls for high standards and excellence" (Chrispeels, 1997, p. 476). Thus, in the absence of new guidance from the State of California, LEAs persisted with their work toward previous goals and implementation continued. Chrispeels attributed this continuation to the interactions between state and local educators in the policymaking and implementation process. Chrispeels noted that these interactions "helped to develop teacher leaders and professionalize educators, created greater collaboration between administrators and teachers, and fostered the implementation of school reforms"

(Chrispeels, 1997, p. 477). The net result was implementation that was not linear or top-down, but instead recursive in nature over a decade, bringing about a policy change that was systematically enacted over time. McLaughlin (1987) likewise suggests that marginal, incremental implementation may be more successful at ensuring stable change than externally introduced practices that are "inconsistent with local routines, traditions, or resources" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 175). McLaughlin therefore suggests that rather than examining implementation at the level of a program or project, the proper unit of analysis for policy implementation is within its institutional context. Indeed, it is the street-level bureaucrat who ultimately puts policy into action based on his or her local routines, traditions, and resources, and thus would seem appropriate for study. While the implementation of standards is itself a complicated field, so is the field of what counts as History/Social Studies (HSS) education. Given the already politicized nature of HSS standards, the inclusion of the CCSS anchor standards promises to add to the complex issues surrounding implementation.

History/Social Studies Education

A movement to create a national set of social studies standards briefly took wing in the early 1990s. Inspired by George H.W. Bush's Goals 2000 initiative and with strong support from the American public, Charlotte Crabtree, Gary Nash, and others joined Lynne Cheney to work to develop national history standards. Nash and Crabtree, as co-directors of the project, made it clear that consensus would be difficult, if not impossible to obtain if the "most fervent ideologues" from the left and right politically were invited to participate (Nash, et al., 1997, p. 159). While this decision may have

been advisable in terms of crafting standards, it was less advisable as a means of getting

standards adopted. When published, the final standards were subjected to a political

attack by Rush Limbaugh, Lynne Cheney[8], and others on the political right. The subject

of their attacks was what conservative commentators saw as a lack of "traditional"

history. They supported these attacks with cherry-picked examples of traditional items

that were missing and non-traditional items that were included in the new standards. As a

result, the standards that had been a product of public debate, consensus, and input from

stakeholders at all levels were voted down in the United States Senate by a vote of 99-1.

The United States Congress thus sought to legislate curriculum on the basis of what Nash

et al. described as politically acceptable rather than to rely on the work of experts,

consensus building, and the democratic process (Nash, et al., 1997). While much

attention was given to the national uproar over the standards as a whole, Nash et al.

suggest that the root of the problem may very well have been the fear that local

communities had of giving up curricular control over what was taught in their schools,

especially in light of national examinations that had been expected to follow the adoption

of national standards (Nash, et al., 1997).

In her chronicle of the process that California's Oakland Unified School District

used to establish and implement a curriculum framework in the absence of history

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[8] If this seems contradictory, it is because it is. Cheney attributed her change of position to having been "flimflammed" by the committee writing the standards. Nash, et al. attribute her change of position to politics – particularly a possible presidential run by her husband, Dick Cheney, in 1996 (cf. Nash, et al., 1997, p. 221).

textbooks for grades 3-7[9], Weintraub (2000) detailed the process by which the school district created a framework for instruction. The committee in charge of developing local standards for Oakland felt that the California State Framework for history-social studies was both useful for the structure it provided, and also limiting in that it did not provide an avenue for multiple interpretations of events throughout history. Another limitation cited by Weintraub was that there was simply too much content to cover in a way that would encourage historical thinking. In many ways the Framework was a double-edged sword: providing structure and a resource for teachers whose expertise might be less developed while acting as a contradiction to the notion of historical thinking. The new local standards developed by Oakland were designed to develop student "historical thinking" in a way that encompassed five major historical themes: chronological and spatial thinking, use of evidence, multiple perspectives and diversity, interpretation, and significance. Moreover, the school district was committed to the idea of institutionalizing an approach in the district where disciplinary history was integrated with content. While seemingly the depth called for in the new standards would serve to develop historical thinking, a lack of resources, training, and the transient nature of teacher assignments from year to year meant that implementation was not uniform across the district. Furthermore, resources in the district were not guaranteed to be consistent and state assessments called for a different type of knowledge than curriculum leaders in Oakland sought to impart (Weintraub, 2000).

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[9] Over concerns that it was not sufficiently inclusive, Oakland Unified chose not to adopt the Houghton-Mifflin series of textbooks for these grades. As those were the only state-adopted textbooks in social studies, this left the district with no textbooks.

As it stands, while the machinations and fights over what history should look like rage in the public sphere, the history that is taught in classrooms can be different in different classrooms. Researchers have found that white, upper middle-class children often have had access to an inquiry curriculum in which cultural diversity and social conflict play a role in the production of history (Anyon, 1981; FitzGerald, 1979). Those students at heavily minority or lower and working-class schools instead have had access to a curriculum that was based in facts and simple skills rather than inquiry (Anyon, 1981; McNeil, 2000).

Curriculum in the Classroom

As school subjects are included in the curriculum, the representation of the subject itself sometimes changes to fit the goals and expectations of the individual classroom teacher. In a study on how the Holocaust is taught in classrooms, Schweber (2006a) observed classes at a public high school and at a fundamentalist Christian private school. In her study, she found that although the Holocaust was viewed with a different perspective at each school, the treatment of the subject could be likened to the notion of "screen memory" in which teachers projected a particular version of history. The story that students got was that which teachers choose to "project" with students themselves "in the dark" regarding anything that was not projected (Schweber, 2006a, p. 11). In each of the classrooms that Schweber visited, the Holocaust was not treated as a complex historical event. Instead, it was used as a vehicle to represent each teacher's view of the world. For the public school teacher, the message he used the Holocaust to convey was an anti-racist message designed to foster multicultural acceptance. For the private school

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teacher, the Holocaust was an event she used to reinforce Christian faith. In both cases, the historical actors themselves were decontextualized from the event in a way that reinforced their individual agency rather than the historical forces and context of which they were a part and gave students a more modernist perspective on a historical event (Schweber, 2006a).

Teachers regularly pick and choose what content to include and how to include it, thus imbuing the curriculum with their own views, values, and ideologies. In many cases, teachers will leave out content in which they have no training or feel that their knowledge is inadequate (Nash, et al., 1997). In others, the choice of pedagogy the teacher employs results in a different level of understanding by students. In his examination of two teachers' practices in teaching a civil rights unit, Grant (2003) found that although the two teachers he observed taught the same topic at the same school in preparation for the same exam, and the two teachers had similar academic backgrounds and attitudes about the importance of civil rights, the end result was very different. George Blair taught the unit in a way that emphasized history as a settled series of events, where Linda Strait taught the unit in a way that presented students with an opportunity to engage with the material under study. What Grant found was that Blair's students saw history as a set of facts that was itself fairly set. Strait's students, on the other hand, had a view of history that emphasized complex ideas and saw the events of history as more complex (Grant, 2001, 2003).

In sum, the battles over what should be taught and how rage at all levels and shape not only state standards and policy documents, but also what is privileged at the

local level. While the national standards fight chronicled by Nash et al. (1997) got a great deal of attention because of its scale, even when standards are adopted their implementation is not guaranteed. Weintraub's (2000) piece detailed how officials in Oakland felt free to pick and choose which standards to follow and how to implement them based on the local desires of their community. Likewise, the inclusion of standards in a framework does not mean that those standards will be implemented. When standards are implemented there is no guarantee that the implementation will be faithful to the goals of those who created them. In the end, even with larger frameworks and bodies of standards, the decisions about what to teach and how to teach it are made at the local level (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; McNeil, 2000; Sandholtz, et al., 2004; Schweber, 2006a, 2006b; Spillane, 1999, 2004; Weintraub, 2000).

In his review of research surrounding the narratives at play in school history education, VanSledright (2008) examined how school textbooks and their narrative represent a type of collective memory. The collective memory VanSledright describes, grounded in the Americanization of foreigners and representing a type of heritage narrative of the American nation, creates its own set of consequences for history education. VanSledright notes that history education in the United States has often been characterized by an expectation that students have command of details and events. Yet although students may be able to reproduce details and events that produce a narrative of history, the narrative is commonly lacking in substance. Thus, Van Sledright notes, mastery of the "succinct freedom-quest narrative" is more important than a detailed understanding of the complexity and detail of the American past (VanSledright, 2008, p.

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125). The prospect of introducing complexity into the classroom is further stymied by the multiplicity of "mentions" of various groups that all must be included in the curriculum and given relatively equal status. The result, VanSledright explains, is that teachers must attend to each of these mentions in the curriculum as it is presented while also blending those mentions into the master narrative of American progress and ensuring that they cover the entire curriculum. When accountability stakes are entered into the equation, the result is that teachers match what they teach to what will be assessed and counted as results.

The Research Literature and My Study

While the literature on implementation of policy – and specifically that on the implementation of standards – has a rich history, the ever-changing nature of federal and state education policy calls for an ongoing re-evaluation of how and why policy is implemented as it is. Moreover, the uncertain status of HSS education as it relates to the new CCSS makes the study of implementation of the CCSS in HSS classrooms timely.

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the strands I have identified above are not mutually exclusive. The literature on implementation has many explanations for the variation in fidelity of implementation from original policy, from misunderstandings of policy by actors charged with implementing it, to the plethora of internal and external demands on organizations and actors that often compete with the goals of policy, to the initiative taken by the street-level bureaucrat in implementing policy. Each of these three strands informs my study. Actors in my study at all levels of the implementation process had different ideas of what the "Common Core" meant, and this was reflected in how

those actors went about implementing policy. Moreover, with other priorities such as graduation rates, pass rates, and the unknown that was state testing at the time of my study, implementation of the CCSS was sometimes blunted by other priorities. Through all of this, the policy that reached the classroom was ultimately determined by the teacher – the "street-level bureaucrat" in the classroom.

My study not only contributes to the literature in each of these three themes, it breaks new ground in examining ways in which those themes work together. Not only does my study illuminate the complexity of CCSS implementation in an urban school district's HSS classes, it also illuminates how each of the three strands I have identified above is responsible for some part of the variability of implementation. Furthermore, my study illustrates how varying understandings that actors had regarding the role of the CCSS impacted what the standards-in-use became in HSS classrooms.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

My study is grounded in the idea that the social and cultural context in which we live affects how we interpret the world around us (Gee, 2012). Using this perspective, meaning is not a fixed thing, but is instead "primarily the result of social interactions, negotiations, contestations, and agreements among people. It is inherently variable and social" (Gee, 2012, p. 21). Gee also suggests that meanings differ given the differing social practices of groups involved in making meaning. He uses an example of what "sausage" is from a court trial to illustrate that while producers and consumers of sausage may have a similar fundamental notion of what sausage is, the degree to which sausage might contain impurities is bound up in each group's social practices. For the producers

of sausage, this is making a profit. For the consumers of sausage, this is obtaining sausage "at a low price and feeling well after eating it" (Gee, 2012, p. 23). The boundary of what is and what is not sausage is thus defined by a group's social practices. Meaning is made as a negotiation between two groups based on common interests, in this case a desire for the health and well-being of its members. Further, each side holds power in that negotiation process – the power of producers to call a product sausage and market it versus the power of consumers to buy or not buy. Even meanings themselves can be tenuous, however, and subject to negotiation and re-negotiation.

This is instructive with regard to educational standards and objectives, as different localities and groups have responded with vastly different interpretations of the same standards (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1989; Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005). As a result, standards documents, like any text, are not static, but are instead documents that themselves are viewed through the interpretive frame of the reader and reflect the social milieux of which they are a part.

With regard to implementation of standards, Spillane (1998, 1999, 2004) posits a cognitive perspective toward policy implementation, in which he suggests that policy messages and meanings, rather than being "signals to be extracted by implementers," are actually "constructed by local enactors in the interaction of policy signals with their knowledge, experiences, and situation" (Spillane, 1999, p. 549). As a result, when local officials respond to higher-level policy, "they respond to the ideas about local behavior that they construct from policy" (Spillane, 2004, p. 7). Accordingly, policy instruments such as standards documents are not univocal in nature but necessarily constructed by

local officials in terms of their own understandings. Spillane compares this ongoing

construction to the telephone game in suggesting that each successive iteration (in this

case of communication about standards) produces a different version of the story, until

the result is considerably different from the original. Failures to faithfully implement

policy are not themselves intentional so much as "honest misunderstandings" that are a

result of "the nature of human sense-making" (Spillane, 2004, p. 8). For different actors

in the process this may very well be a function of the context in which they operate.

While Spillane's "sense making" at the local level is in part a product of the environment

in which actors are situated, his use of the telephone game metaphor suggests that those

concepts and ideas of which people are making sense at the local level are themselves

shaped and re-shaped by the layers through which they pass. Thus, once such a concept

or idea has been altered, it is that alteration and not the original of which the recipient

makes sense.

Spillane's concept was useful to understand the process by which policy is

transformed as it passes through layers of implementation. It provided me with an

explanatory tool that helped me make sense of how actors framed the Common Core as

they did not only at different levels of the communication process, but also at the same

level within different agencies or contexts. The concept was also incomplete, however.

It fails to account for the meaning-making that takes place at each level of

implementation and the negotiation that takes place at each level of the process. Instead

of solely a unidirectional transmission of information that is "misunderstood," a social

and cultural perspective suggests that while actors may indeed not understand meaning as it was intended, this comes as a result of negotiation over what meaning is.

Defensive Teaching

As I analyzed my data, I found that Spillane's cognitive perspective toward implementation, while useful as a lens, did not fully work as I sought to explain how and why local actors constructed their ideas about the Common Core and its effects on social studies as they did. I found explanatory power in McNeil's (1986, 2000) concept of *defensive teaching*. At the center of McNeil's concept is the idea of *school knowledge*, which is a type of knowledge that serves the credentialing function of a high school but does not provide students with depth in what they are taught. Defensive teaching is characterized by four factors that allowed teachers to gain "minimal participation with minimal resistance" (McNeil, 2000, p. 12). One element of defensive teaching was *omission*, in which teachers tended to omit topics from the curriculum that might be difficult for students to understand or be prone to controversy. In explaining omission, McNeil went beyond simply the presence or absence of a topic in the curriculum. She noted that in history classrooms she studied teachers shied away from teaching topics like the Vietnam War because they believed student passions on the issue led to "unbalanced" discussions. One teacher chose not to teach the Vietnam War because "he had 'heard Vietnam for the past ten years.'" McNeil also noted that a teacher had cut research papers from his curriculum because weaker students had difficulty thinking up topics on their own and brighter students had become what a teacher called "self-indoctrinated," whereby McNeil stated that students "learned something that contradicted the teacher's

analysis of events" (McNeil, 1986, p. 172). Omission thus included not only the explicit absence of a topic in the curriculum, but also any activities that might unearth a controversial side of topics that were in the curriculum.

Another element was *mystification*, in which information was presented that students would be expected to learn but not understand – as understanding was the domain of "experts" in the field. McNeil characterized the curriculum being mystified as "very important but unknowable" (McNeil, 1986, p. 169). These could take the form of items on which the teacher might have little or no knowledge, such as the Federal Reserve or the gold standard. Another form mystification took was that of ideas designed to elicit an emotional response of respect or reverence such as capitalism, free enterprise, or progress. Those terms would then be left as slogans. The coverage was such that students might internalize the emotional quality of the term without necessarily understanding the term itself.

A third element of defensive teaching, *fragmentation*, involved not only limitation of the curriculum itself – divorcing it from the subjects' own epistemologies – but also presentation of the curriculum as apart from students' and teachers' prior knowledge. The reduction of curriculum to bits of information and lists allowed teachers to avoid having to elaborate beyond the list. It also took "the issue-ness out of issues by collapsing contradictory opinions into a single enumeration of fragments of the story" (McNeil, 1986, p. 167). Thus, rather than the list of bits of information being an aid in studying the larger curriculum as a whole, the list itself became the curriculum. McNeil noted that such a list could be valuable for defensive teaching in that teachers could draw

from it to teach the "true story" of American history, following the list would make for an "efficient use of time," and would also facilitate quantifiable testing (McNeil, 1986, p. 168).

A fourth element of McNeil's concept of defensive teaching was *defensive simplification*. Items that might need a great deal of "unpacking" yet could be reduced to a list were often subject to defensive simplification – a presentation of items absent context or detail. McNeil proposed that there were three primary reasons for this. One is that students and teachers often "met in a path of least resistance" and much of the resistance teachers anticipated from students about the assignments were circumvented by making assignments less difficult (McNeil, 1986, p. 176). McNeil also suggested that low pay and high demands of teachers may have sapped teachers of their drive to teach more complex subject matter. McNeil also noted that curriculum was not a priority for administration as the curriculum was "clearly secondary to the maintenance of order," and thus teachers simplified their curriculum as a form of "retaliation" (McNeil, 1986, p. 177).

This framework gave me a robust start toward analyzing and understanding my data. Yet, as I explain later, the framework did not fully capture the process of implementation that I saw in the field. While I could make use of the framework to explain why teachers acted as they did with regard to their instructional behaviors, its explanatory power at the school and district levels was more limited. As I discuss in the following chapter, my study, then, encompassed the creation of an altered framework that encompassed reliance on outside "experts" as the source of knowledge,

compartmentalization of authority and responsibility for implementation, and

essentialization and display of the reform as implementation of the reform.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I detail the methods used in my study. I conducted a qualitative

case study of implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in

history/social studies (HSS) classrooms in one Southern California high school. Below I

detail in depth the rationale for my choice of a case study, the location and participants

that I studied, and how I went about collecting and analyzing data. I conclude with a

discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework that ultimately formed the basis

for the analysis of my data.

Case Study

The method I used was the single-site case study. My choice to pursue a case

study was based on my desire to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors responsible

for variations in policy implementation. As I discuss further in chapter 3, the literature

on policy implementation offers three broad explanations of why implementation of

policy often varies from the original intent of policy. What is lacking in the literature –

especially recent literature - is an examination of the role of local-level implementers in

the enactment of policy, what Lipsky (1980/2010) calls the "street level bureaucrat." The

use of a case study allowed me to see how various levels within one organization

interacted to enact a change in policy and how that policy was translated and interpreted

by teachers tasked with implementing it. A case study was an ideal research design

because my questions focused on how a specific change in policy – in this case the adoption of new standards that had language pertaining to HSS – affected how teachers view their practice. By conducting a qualitative case study using sociocultural theory as a lens, I was able to see how teachers and administrators made meaning of new standards in light of their current practice and existing priorities. Stake (1995) calls this type of case study an instrumental case study. Thus, as I went about finding a location for my study, I focused on finding a school district where I could observe CCSS implementation in HSS.

Location

I had completed my master's degree in the same program as the Director of Special Projects and Assessment in the Buena Vista School District (BVSD), so I took advantage of that contact to reach out and ask to do work in Buena Vista. After a submission to Buena Vista's IRB and a wait of a couple of months, my request was approved. The BVSD had a demographic mix that I was looking for. With nearly 80 percent of its students socioeconomically disadvantaged and an overwhelming majority of Hispanic students, Buena Vista had the advantage of being home to teachers I had worked with before on the California International Studies Project (CISP), so there was already a degree of rapport established. I found that entering into a district where I was known, either personally or by reputation, made it much easier to engage with teachers throughout the period of my study as I had either their trust or the trust of someone teachers I didn't know trusted. I collected data in the BVSD across parts of two school years, the "planning year" of 2013-14 during which curriculum units were being written

but not implemented, and the "implementation year" of 2014-15 during which the curriculum units were being refined and implemented in classrooms.

Participants

At the school district level participants in my study included both teachers and administrators. Administrators I interviewed included the district's director of curriculum, principals from three of the district's comprehensive high schools (a total of four interviews because of staffing changes), and an assistant principal in charge of curriculum. Administrators and their clerical staff were also the source of several memos and e-mails that I drew from for data.

Participants at the district level also included teachers on the BVSD Curriculum Development Committee (CDC). After a period of three to four months of participant-observation during the planning year at CDC meetings I began to approach teachers to ask for one-on-one interviews, with an eye toward following up on themes that we had discussed informally as we discussed the development of curriculum units. I conducted interviews with three teachers from the CDC apart from those I interviewed from Truman High School: one high school department chair, one high school teacher, and the district's teacher on assignment for social studies. While teachers from all high schools in the district offered to participate in my research, and I conducted one-on-one interviews with those I noted above, I focused on Truman's teachers early in the process. This was in part because teachers in the Truman social studies department were just beginning to look at using common lessons in their classrooms at the time of my study. Truman's teachers on the CDC were all willing and I believe enthusiastic to participate in

my study. Moreover, as Truman was not affected by teacher staffing changes the way some other high schools in the BVSD had been, teachers remained consistent from the first to the second year of my study.

Data Collection

Interviews

In the Buena Vista School District I interviewed six administrators and eleven teachers. I interviewed each administrator once over the course of my study. Interviews with administrators ranged from 15 minutes to one hour. They occurred at the end of the first year of planning (May and June, 2014) and at the beginning of the first year of implementation (August and September, 2014) of the BVSD's implementation of the CCSS and curriculum unit plans (CUPs) developed by teachers in the BVSD. I engaged with eight of Truman's social studies teachers informally over a period of several weeks, and formally in two focus group sessions. The purpose of these focus groups was exploratory – I wanted to get more information to further refine my research focus and select key informants to interview further (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The first focus group session took place at the beginning of the implementation year and included seven teachers from the Truman High School social studies department. This session took place during two 35-minute lunch periods. I recorded and transcribed these sessions and used what I had learned to make my selection of focal teachers. Based on my initial focus group and feedback from Truman's administration and social studies teachers, I invited Mark Laidlaw and Jeannie Thompson to participate in my study in further depth. Both Laidlaw and Thompson readily agreed to my requests.

Along with their participation in focus groups, I had two one-on-one interviews with each of my two focus teachers. The first interview, held shortly after the focus group interviews at the start of implementation, focused on teacher background and understandings of the common core. Each of these interviews lasted a bit more than half an hour. My second interview with each teacher, held midway through the first semester of implementation, captured teachers' perspectives on implementation within their classes. These interviews lasted about 40-45 minutes each. Given what I learned from those interviews and questions I still had as a result, I conducted a follow-up focus group with teachers from the department midway through the first year of implementation during one lunch period in which I discussed with them their perspectives on implementation of the Common Core.

My strategy early on in the interviews was on what Spradley (1979) calls structural questions, in that my questions served primarily to elicit what teachers meant when they said "common core" and what the term meant to teachers. I then segued into descriptive questions, to a lesser degree in the focus group interviews and to a greater degree in one-on-one interviews. As an example, as I spoke with teacher Jeannie Thompson, one of my informants, about the Common Core, my first questions were structural questions about what she understood the Common Core to be. When she explained that the Common Core called for her to focus more on literacy skills in her classroom, I used descriptive questions to elicit what Common Core activities she was doing in her classroom, and thus what activities Thompson understood to be "Common Core."

One factor that both facilitated and complicated my interviews was my having

been a participant-observer at many of the same professional development opportunities

as Truman's teachers. Thus, when it came time for interviews I had established an

extensive rapport with teachers and I found that teachers were willing to say things to me

that they wouldn't necessarily say to others. This was evident as I examined teacher

discourse in our interviews as opposed to their more public pronouncements. Our

conversations were akin to what Spradley (1979) called a "friendly conversation."

Interviews with teachers were the least formal in nature of the interviews I conducted in

that teachers' statements in interviews largely matched the degree of candor in our

conversations outside of interviews. The fact that there was such a degree of familiarity,

however, sometimes meant teachers believed that they and I had a common frame of

reference. When I asked teachers questions regarding how they understood the Common

Core, especially in light of what they had learned from professional development and

inservices, teachers often glossed over or skipped entirely explanations of things they

believed to be commonly held ideas – even when those ideas may not have been as

common as teachers thought.

To attempt to avoid filling in blanks with my ideas or impressions where it was

assumed by my participants that we had a common understanding, I employed two

primary tactics. The first was that I re-visited points where my participants or I presumed

that we both understood things in the same way. This helped me to fill in any gaps in the

participant's account so that I ensured I used his or her understandings instead of my own

to fill in blanks. This also helped to ensure that I understood participants' overall

perspectives. The exchange below is an example.

> Researcher: So what I'm understanding you to say is that, you know, it's good to
> have these guidelines and it's good to have all of the pieces, but really the teacher
> as the buffer is the one who decides, well this piece and this piece and this piece
> are best for this group of students that I have, or this specific student.

> Laidlaw: Right. Thank you. (chuckles) You did a fine job summarizing that.
> Yes, but that's it. Right? The teacher ultimately, and this is what I'm sort of
> afraid of a little bit with this new curriculum, is that the teacher as facilitator of
> learning - there are more kids, there are a lot of kids, or there are a segment of
> kids that need more than just a facilitator of learning.

I audio recorded each interview on a Pulse Livescribe smart pen. I followed each

interview by writing field notes about the interview. This generally took the form of

reviewing the in-interview notes I had jotted down immediately after the interview and

making a first pass through the notes as I filled in additional detail or context along with

those interactions that were not necessarily recorded – such as pre and post-interview

conversations (Fontana & Frey, 2005). This first pass was followed by a second, more

detailed, pass during which I fleshed out additional details. I later transcribed the

interviews from my audio recording of each interview and matched up important pieces

of interview data with significant portions of my field notes. When transcribing

interviews I initially transcribed what participants and I said using standard orthography

(Ochs, 2006), including phatic discourse such as pleasantries and greetings that was often

not germane to the purpose of my interview and filler speech such as "um" and "okay." I

also marked instances in my initial transcription where there was overlapping or latched

speech. I marked audible, but non-speech utterances such as laughter or sighing with

parenthetical references in the transcript. Non-verbal behaviors were noted in the

margins of transcripts when transcriptions were matched with field notes. For those

portions of transcripts that I included in this manuscript I reviewed the audio a second

time to ensure accuracy of transcription and made corrections as needed.

Participant-Observation

Much of the data I collected came from my being a participant-observer in

Truman's staff development and faculty meetings. I attended the meetings of Buena

Vista's Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) for social studies and participated in

both the committee trainings and the development of units for 29 days total – generally

one or two days a month - over the two year period of my study. I also attended many of

the same professional development opportunities as Truman's teachers, including a one-

day workshop on the Common Core at the Del Sur County Office of Education

(DSCOE), a two-day training on the DBQ Project, and a three-day workshop at Stanford

University. Thus, as the teachers in my study learned about the Common Core, I learned

along with them. I also participated in staff development opportunities on campus.

Because of my ongoing, frequent interaction with teachers at Truman, I was asked to

present on disciplinary literacy to the Truman social studies department. As with the

interviews, I took field notes during my participant-observations and made subsequent

passes through the notes, filling in additional detail both immediately after the

observation, when practical, and then again later as I had more time.

As I had at the district level with the CDC, I also participated in many of the same

professional development opportunities as Truman's teachers. In the fall of 2013 I

attended and participated in a workshop with Truman's social studies department offered

by the Del Sur County Office of Education. I also participated in training on the DBQ Project with all of Buena Vista's secondary social studies teachers during the 2013-2014 school year. Over this period I also sat in on many of Truman High School's social studies department's department meetings. As a participant-observer I often interacted with teachers as they examined curriculum units that had been created by the CDC, heard their questions, and came to understand how teachers understood the CCSS. Over the course of the time I was at Truman it was as though I had three roles. One was as a researcher – gathering data, conducting interviews, collecting documents, and outwardly wearing my researcher hat. Given that I had become very familiar with the Truman social studies department faculty, I also had a second, more nuanced role. In this role I was treated as a trusted colleague, privy to the "insider" information about the politics, struggles, and challenges of the department that would not ordinarily be shared with outsiders. At other times, I was treated as an "expert" because of my role with the university. Often when there were questions about some aspect of the CCSS, members of Truman's social studies department came to me for answers or guidance. So as to not alienate myself from the teachers I worked with, I offered my advice and opinions when asked. When Truman's principal asked me to present on disciplinary literacy at a staff meeting toward the end of my fieldwork, I agreed. While I was often asked questions, it was interesting to me that teachers' understandings did not seem to appreciably change based on many of my answers. Between my initial focus group interviews with the Truman social studies faculty and my later, follow-up focus group interview after much of my data collection was complete, it seemed that what changed with teachers was not

how they understood the CCSS so much as how they had settled into how to implement the CCSS in a way that fit their environment. As I discuss further in my theoretical framework and the discussion of my findings, this was likely a result of teachers attending only to those parts of what I said that made sense to them given their existing context and understanding of the culture of Truman High School and what the CCSS meant.

Documents

While I collected much of my data on implementation from interviews and participant-observation, documents I collected were another important source of information. Not only was the content of the documents themselves significant, but perhaps even more important was what was not included in documents.

Documents I collected at the district level included materials from the district's training on implementation. Included among these were e-mails and memoranda to participants, model curriculum units, and instructional materials provided by the district's expert on how to construct her model of curriculum units. I also collected copies of written documents and PowerPoint presentations by various district administrators at CDC meetings, including instruction on how to modify for special needs students such as English learners (EL) and special education (SpEd) students.

At the site level I collected e-mails and copies of memoranda related to CCSS implementation in HSS. I also collected copies of teachers' unit plans and documents related to teacher training on the CCSS and activities associated with the CCSS, such as the DBQ Project, from Truman High School.

Data Analysis

I engaged on ongoing data analysis at all phases of my fieldwork. My standard procedure consisted of engaging in a period of reflective reading after having fleshed out my fieldnotes following an interview or participant-observation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As I read the field notes, I would mark questions in the margins and include notes where I thought I had a particularly salient piece of data. For instance, in one interview with Jeannie Thompson, one of my informants, she mentioned sitting down "to plan the next day's lesson." I keyed in on that characterization of her planning process and used it not only to look for similar characterizations in her account, but also as a point of comparison with Mark Laidlaw, another informant. I would follow with a brief bit of writing during which I would jot or summarize what I thought I knew and what questions I still had. I used those questions to further inform what I looked for and questions I asked in subsequent fieldwork.

I also examined the words and language used by participants in interviews, participant-observation, and in written materials I collected as a part of my study. I organized and re-organized information, experimenting with categories and sub-categories based on my theoretical and conceptual frameworks. I also used the notes I made in margins of my field notes as an aid in focusing on categorizing information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used my analysis to identify three primary perspectives on implementation of the CCSS (literacy, inquiry, and rigor), to describe the perspectives of my two focal teachers (buffer and conduit), and to build and populate my conceptual framework of defensive implementation (Stake, 2010).

As I examined and re-examined my data I made multiple passes through the same notes, artifacts, and transcripts, drawing out multiple pieces of data consistent with my coding categories. For instance, I color-coded interviews, documents, and field notes for instances where I saw the use of outsiders as experts, compartmentalization, and essentialization and display of the CCSS, consistent with my evolving conceptual framework based on McNeil, which I discuss below. At the same time, I also used a similar color-coding process for Spillane's theoretical framework. Within those color codes, I then looked for similarities and differences within and between actors in my study. This led me to find commonalities – especially between uses of the terms "literacy, reading, and writing" among those who understood history as established fact and the use of "rigor" among those who saw history as argument.

Defensive Implementation

As indicated above, as I continued to analyze the data from my study, I found that the data from my study did not marry entirely well with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks I was using. In particular, even as I found a great deal of usefulness in McNeil's concept of defensive teaching, I found issues that needed to be addressed. The context of my study is different from that in which McNeil developed her construct in that I looked at implementation throughout an organization rather than solely at the classroom level. Moreover, since McNeil published the initial research from which she developed the construct of defensive teaching in 1986, and followed up with work published in 2000, her work pre-dates the passage of No Child Left Behind and the increased federal oversight of schools (McNeil, 1986, 2000). Although her 2000 work

addresses a similar context in Texas schools, the federal role in education policy, and changes in state policies as a result, have changed significantly since 2001. As I studied my data iteratively, I realized that I had a conceptual framework that might work as I analyzed and made meaning of the data from my study. Thus, I used McNeil's framework as a conceptual guide for one I created that expanded the foundational concepts of defensive teaching to the process of implementation as a whole – not only at the classroom level, but also at the site and district levels of implementation. I call this concept *defensive implementation*. Defensive implementation has three characteristics: a reliance on outside "experts" as the source of knowledge, compartmentalization of responsibility and authority for implementation, and essentialization and display of the reform as implementation of the reform.

In McNeil's (2000) framework, what she termed *mystification* allowed curriculum and material to be presented, yet also something that was within the domain of experts and not something that students would or should be able to understand. In this study I found that there was a similar level of authority and legitimacy afforded to experts. I thus use *outsiders as experts* as one of the three markers of defensive implementation. The use of outsiders as experts is characterized by two main components. First, in the school district I studied outside experts were regarded as the authority on the reform and its interpretation. As I detail further in chapter 4, rather than being encouraged to learn and understand the Common Core, teachers were instead trained on how to implement the Common Core, with the expert's view serving as the "official" view of what the Common Core was. Furthermore, by commenting little and pointing back to the expert's

version as the reform, administrators could plausibly distance themselves from the reform if it were a failure, yet take credit if the reform was a success.

Another component of defensive implementation is *compartmentalization*. In McNeil's framework, fragmentation divorced the curriculum from the curriculum's epistemologies and teachers' and students' prior knowledge. Compartmentalization served a similar function in my study, yet on a larger scale. In terms of curriculum, the Common Core was often compartmentalized in HSS, with teachers differentiating between "Common Core" activities and "history" activities. In the case of implementation, responsibility and authority for implementation of the Common Core were divided among levels, with limited communication between levels and communication that was often ambiguous.

Essentialization and display of the reform is the third component of defensive implementation. Much as McNeil (1986, 2000) found that teachers maintained the illusion of compliance with school district mandates while teaching the "real" curriculum subversively, so too did teachers in my study work to comply on the surface. As I detail in my data chapters, the concept of essentialization and display extended beyond teachers and also included administrators. In part this is because administrators and teachers valued any display of students reading and writing as being "Common Core." This having been established, it was then easy for some teachers and administrators to re-brand existing practices that involved reading and writing as "Common Core" practices. Like with McNeil's concepts of omission and defensive simplification, teachers and

administrators did not have to delve too deeply into what the CCSS meant conceptually, so long as the use of reading and writing was evident.

With the use of Spillane's, McNeil's, and my own theoretical and conceptual frameworks I was able to make sense of many of the practices actors in the BVSD engaged in as they worked to implement the CCSS in HSS. I detail those practices and my findings in the coming chapters.

Contextual Factors

My initial interviews were focused on trying to understand what the CCSS were from the perspective of those who were responsible for the creation of policy. I spoke with individuals at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and at the California Department of Education who provided information on how the standards were intended to be implemented according to each agency. While I have not included this information as a part of my study, I believe that it is important to include this background because of the degree to which the national and state level seemed to mirror what I found at the local level of implementation. In short, information was tightly compartmentalized and controlled, and it was difficult to find someone who understood the full picture of the CCSS, even at the "top" when I contacted those ostensibly in charge of implementation at the national and state level and likewise when I contacted the standards' authors to seek clarification.

The response I got in a phone interview from the individual I spoke with at the CCSSO, an individual tasked with answering questions about implementation of the standards, were guarded, and the answers I received to my questions were succinct and did not go

beyond the information publicly available on the CCSS website. The one area where I was able to get off-script was with the question of social studies anchor standards. When I mentioned that David Coleman, the architect of the ELA standards, had said that "practitioners as well as higher education" in history were "wonderfully involved" in the development of the anchor standards for literacy in history (Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2011) and asked who those individuals had been, the person I spoke with was flummoxed. While I spoke to several people at the national and state levels, including the executive director of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) and one of the lead authors of the CCSS literacy standards, none was aware of who had been involved in crafting the anchor standards. As I noted above, this presented an interesting question related to the development of the standards themselves and the compartmentalization of responsibility and authority in crafting and implementing the standards. Ultimately, however, I chose to study implementation at the local level.

Chapter 4 – "This is a Big Change for Everyone"

Implementation in the Buena Vista School District

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in history/social studies (HSS) in the Buena Vista School District (BVSD) was characterized by multiple, sometimes competing, understandings – both in what actors understood the CCSS to represent and in the level of importance given to the CCSS. In this chapter I introduce the Buena Vista School District, which was the location of my study. I go on to show that across professional development opportunities in the BVSD, views of what the CCSS entailed were not uniform as they related to HSS. In one professional development the CCSS were presented as a set of standards that primarily brought an enhanced literacy focus to HSS. In another, the CCSS represented a greater focus on inquiry and critical thinking in HSS and standards were presented in tandem with a national social studies framework. In yet another, the CCSS were presented in a way that focused on "rigor" and student-centered learning. In the face of uncertainty, teachers in the BVSD creating curriculum units for HSS implemented the CCSS defensively. Teachers included "common core" activities into unit plans in ways that were designed to have minimal impact on the existing HSS curriculum and teacher flexibility and did not necessarily align with any of the above perspectives completely. While teachers included "literacy" and "rigor" components in curriculum unit plans, the inclusion of those items seemed to often be a pro forma inclusion rather than one that meaningfully

interacted with the HSS curriculum. As a result, the HSS curriculum was supplemented rather than transformed by inclusion of the CCSS anchor standards.

The Buena Vista School District

The Buena Vista School District (BVSD) is located in Grand Valley, an urban center in Inland Southern California. Like many of its counterparts locally, at the time of my study the BVSD had seen ongoing changes in its student demographics. Whereas data from the BVSD dated two decades prior to my study showed that the majority of Buena Vista's students were white, over the 20 years leading up to my study the percentage of white students consistently decreased in a manner that was almost directly proportional to the corresponding increase in Hispanic students. Data from the 2013-2014 school year showed that nearly 80% of Buena Vista's students were Hispanic. Over 40% of Buena Vista's students had limited proficiency in English, and about 55% spoke a language other than English in the home.

A drive around the Buena Vista School District revealed businesses that catered to many of the Spanish-speakers in the area, with *mercados* and *carnecerias* occupying many of the storefronts. Many neighborhoods were a product of the area's growth in the 1950s and 1960s when what had been agricultural land gave way to tracts of homes. Buena Vista saw its greatest population surge during this time period and this was reflected in the age of school facilities. The neighborhoods' middle-class families gradually were replaced in the decades since, with many neighborhoods by the 2010s containing houses that were often home to more than one family and apartments that

were home to families receiving Section 8 benefits.[10] It was likewise not uncommon for single-family homes to house more than one family. While the BVSD received McKinney-Vento[11] funding for very few homeless students, it seemed that every teacher had a story of at least one student who was living in a motel or whose family did not have a stable place to call home. Nearly 80% of Buena Vista's students received free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch through the federal government's school nutrition program.[12]

The BVSD Before the CCSS

In the decade before the adoption of the CCSS, the BVSD, like other similar districts in California, was tasked with meeting state and federal targets under NCLB. At the time of my study the BVSD was in district-wide program improvement[13] (PI), and had been in PI for more than four consecutive years. PI was a state-level status for schools and school districts that received federal Title I funding and did not meet annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for all students and for each subgroup, which included socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability, and English proficiency. One of the key

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[10] Section 8 is a federal program that provides housing assistance to families making less than 50% of the area's median income.

[11] McKinney-Vento is a federal program that provides additional funding to school districts for the education of students classified as homeless.

[12] Free breakfast and lunch is available to students whose families' earnings are at or below the federal poverty line. Reduced-price meals are available to those whose incomes are 185% of the federal poverty line or below.

[13] Effective the 2014-2015 school year, the State of California suspended making PI status determinations because of the change in standardized testing from the STAR to the CAASPP. This meant that districts would not enter or leave PI until at the earliest 2015-2016.

reasons that the BVSD was in PI was that the district as a whole had not met state and federal targets on standardized tests, one of the AMOs. As the school district received federal Title I funding, meeting both state and federal targets was necessary to avoid potential sanctions. Title I accountability measures effectively ceded local control over curriculum and graduation requirements to state and federal agencies from the LEA. In order to attempt to avoid sanctions, the BVSD tied its curriculum more closely to what would appear on the state test. Faced with the imperative to improve test scores, the district embraced several initiatives directed at focusing instruction on what would be tested. One such initiative was the use of essential standards.

The practitioner literature positions essential standards as that "content considered essential for all students versus that considered supplemental or necessary only for those seeking postsecondary education" (Marzano, 2003, p. 25). Kyung (Kati) Song, the department chair at Copper Canyon High School, one of the BVSD's comprehensive high schools, explained the BVSD used essential standards often to the exclusion of other standards in tested social studies classes, which included tenth grade world history and eleventh grade United States history at the high school level. Song explained,
If [the content] wasn't outlined in the essential standards, we were not to be teaching it. As far as the CST's were concerned, if we had people in our classroom, if we had our lesson plans pulled and we were teaching something that was outside of the essential standards then that was a reprimandable offense. So it became almost a combative sense of what should be taught because it's in the standards or because it's needed for continuity versus what is a test question. Song also explained how teachers were expected to have

"a clearly defined objective that was measurable that day when [administrators] were [in the classroom]." In the circumstance described by Song, the BVSD took steps to control what would be taught by mandating that instruction be explicitly tied to the district's essential standards. In this instance, the control was direct: reprimands of teachers who taught material outside of the essential standards. The curriculum was compartmentalized, focused on test questions to the exclusion of continuity or other HSS standards.

Joy Papathakis, department chair at Truman High School, another BVSD comprehensive high school, recounted from her experience on the district committee responsible for setting the essential standards that the standards themselves were closely tied to standardized testing. She explained, "the bottom line, [the district is] trying to maximize what [students] can do on the test." Papathakis said that the district department responsible for Title I compliance tried to find the "content that was going to be tested and that [became] the driving force for those essential standards." This same department at the district level, rather than curriculum and instruction, was responsible for creating and implementing benchmark exams. Papathakis explained that when teachers and administration got together to determine essential standards, teachers were guided toward the standards that would be on the test. "There was some at least illusion that you were involved in choosing," explained Papathakis, "but there was a big emphasis on 'make sure you get the things that are tested.'" BVSD pacing guides from prior to the CCSS

reflected the same emphasis on essential standards. Of 73 total standards[14] in eleventh

grade United States History, only 44 standards were "essential standards" that were the

focus of the district's pacing guide. District benchmark exams that students took every

six weeks were built around the same essential standards. These benchmark exams were

one of the key unofficial tools used to measure teacher efficacy. While not formally part

of the evaluation process, as Truman teacher Simon Yates stated, low benchmark scores

"put a spotlight on you" that he claimed teachers did not want.

Given that previous curriculum guides were tightly aligned with what was

expected to be on the state's standardized test and that measures of program quality had

been in large part based on standardized test scores, it follows that the environment in the

BVSD up until this point had been one in which test scores held the highest priority.

Furthermore, the BVSD was in district-wide PI, having had three years of failure to meet

federal targets. This put the school district in the position of having to contract with an

organization approved by the state to provide outside consulting services. The BVSD

had contracted with the Del Sur County Office of Education (DSCOE) to provide

consulting services for its school district assistance and intervention team (DAIT). The

DAIT process was focused on improving BVSD's performance on federal and state

academic performance targets – targets that consisted primarily of standardized test

scores. This focus on instruction geared toward the standardized test is hardly a unique

phenomenon to the BVSD, as instances of "teaching to the test" are represented in the

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[14] I refer to the number of standards here in the way that teachers and administrators in
the BVSD did. That is, each of the sub-standards underneath 11 broad content area
master standards counted as a "standard."

literature as a consequence of high-stakes testing (Gerwin & Visone, 2006; VanSledright, 2008) – though it should be noted that the practice was not ubiquitous enough to be a pre-ordained result of the presence of a high stakes test (Grant, 2007; Vogler, 2008). With the change to the CCSS, and with a change in the format of standardized test students that would be used to measure student proficiency, many of the old practices were viewed by district administration as incompatible with new expectations. The result was a large-scale effort by the district to meet the challenges of the CCSS. One of those challenges, however, would be coming to understand exactly what the new CCSS were and how they should be implemented.

The CCSS – The Same, Only Different

The CCSS were first and foremost standards for ELA and mathematics. The bulk of the CCSS standards document in ELA, for instance, was devoted to reading, writing, listening, and speaking standards for ELA grades K-12. Moreover, although there were content-area specific ELA standards at the end of the CCSS ELA document, these supplemented, rather than replaced, content standards in other disciplines. At the time of my study, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) had been adopted by the State of California for science and the state was in the process of adopting a revised version of standards for HSS. As I discuss below, different versions of the same CCSS standard resulted in multiple potential points of entry to the CCSS. Furthermore, distinctions between individual writing standards in the CCSS played a role in what presenters chose to emphasize in professional development – and thus how HSS would interact with the CCSS.

Part of the challenge in implementing the CCSS was the existence of different versions of the same standard. In the BVSD these different versions were routinely conflated so that ELA standards effectively had the same weight to HSS as subject-specific standards. The CCSS secondary reading and writing standards had three components: ELA standards, anchor standards, and subject-area standards for HSS, science, and technical subjects. Each of these sets of standards was fundamentally the same across each of the forms of the standards – the majority of wording was the same across all three versions of the standards. There were differences among the standards, however, and those differences went largely unacknowledged by actors in the BVSD as they interchangeably used the three different versions of standards under the same broad name for a standard.

In order to understand how the CCSS were presented to teachers, it is important to have more than a passing familiarity with the standards themselves. This is especially true with the CCSS writing standards, as writing standards were the focus of CCSS professional developments as the product of students' units of study. As I discuss later in this chapter, the CCSS writing standards focused on three main genres of student writing – genres that would be referred to as "buckets" of writing in professional development workshops attended by BVSD teachers. Standard 1 called for students to attend to writing arguments. Standard 2 called for students to write "informative/explanatory texts," and Standard 3 called for students to "write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events" (California Department of Education, 2013).

The CCSS standards for ELA were designed to supplant existing ELA standards in the states that adopted them (California Department of Education, 2013). The standards contained an iterative continuum along which students would progress from grades K-12 in four primary domains: language, speaking and listening, writing, and reading. An example of this can be seen in figure 4.1. Figure 4.1 displays ELA writing standard #2 at three different grade levels: kindergarten, grade 6, and grades 11-12. The genesis of 2a and 2b in the grade 11-12 standards is evident in the kindergarten standard. Where the standard calls for kindergarteners to "name what they are writing about," the same concept is evident in the grade 11-12 standard as a topic or thesis. In a similar way, when kindergarteners are expected to be able to "supply some information about the topic," by the time a student is ready to graduate he or she should be prepared to develop a topic thoroughly.

Of note is the similarity between the standards for grades 6 and 11-12. It would appear that most of the foundational pieces called for in writing standard 2 would have been addressed by the end of a student's 6th grade year. Both sets of standards call for introduction of a topic or thesis; development of the topic, the use of transitions, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary; a formal style; and a conclusion. Additions to the 11-12 standard from the grade 6 standard call for attention to complexity and technique. This is important because at the secondary level, the level of my study, standards called for students to refine and enhance existing skills rather than to be introduced to new ones.

Figure 4.1

Common Core State Standard
Writing Standard #2 in Grades K, 6, and 11-12

Kindergarten: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Grade 6: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

Grades 11-12: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Source: California Department of Education. (2013). *California's common core state standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education. Reproduced with permission.

Included in both the elementary (K-5) and secondary (6-12) versions of the ELA standards were a one-page listing of college and career readiness (CCR) anchor standards. The California standards document explained the distinction. "The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements – the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity – that together define the skills and understandings that students must demonstrate" (California Department of Education, 2013). As figure 4.2 illustrates, the anchor standard in this instance replicates the ELA standard without the additional detail provided.

Of particular interest to social studies are the subject-specific standards also illustrated in figure 4.2. Not to be confused with the content standards for HSS, the CCSS also contains a set of specific standards for literacy in HSS, science, and technical subjects. For reading, HSS has its own subset of CCSS standards. For writing, HSS shares a subset of CCSS standards with science and technical subjects. As is illustrated in figure 4.2, the HSS standard removes the phrase "examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately" and replaces it with "the narration of historical events." While writing standard 1 calls for students to "write arguments based on discipline-specific content" (see appendix A for a full listing of the CCSS HSS standards) and thus allows students the opportunity to do other types of writing, it bears noting that standard 2 considers an informative/explanatory text to be a narrative rather than an examination of complex ideas and concepts.

Figure 4.2

Common Core State Standard
Writing Standard #2 – Grades 11-12
Standard, Anchor Standard, and History/Social Science, Science, and Technical Subjects Standard

Grades 11-12:   Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Secondary Writing Anchor Standard (Grades 6-12):   Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

The list of secondary writing standards was also accompanied by this text:

Note on range and content of student writing. For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be college- and career-ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it.

History/Social Science, Science, and Technical Subjects Standard: Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

a. Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation provided (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Another item of note in figure 4.2 is the three different versions of what is effectively the same standard. In the Buena Vista School District and in professional development workshops hosted within and outside the district, the ELA standard, the ELA anchor standard, and the HSS standard were often used without distinction. Teachers and presenters used each of the three standards at some point and referred to it as the same "writing standard 2." This is significant because beyond simply the understanding and interpretation of one set of CCSS standards, there were three sets from which teachers and administrators could choose: the ELA, anchor, or subject-matter standards. In some instances, the differences were minor to the degree they existed at all. In other cases, however, as I noted above with writing standard 2, the difference was a fairly large one. In this case, the question was one of history as a complex discipline vs. history as an established and accepted narrative of events. Not only is the anchor standard different, but other sub-standards are changed between the ELA standard and the HSS version of the same standard. In sub-standard (a) the phrase "or thesis statement" is removed, suggesting that a student need not go beyond collecting facts. In addition, whereas substandard (e) of the ELA standard calls for "attending to the norms and conventions of which [students] are writing," that portion is combined with part (d) in the HSS standards and asks that a student "responds to the discipline." While this distinction might seem a minor one in terms of ELA, the distinction feeds into a battle that has raged for years over the nature of the HSS curriculum (Evans, 2004; Nash, et al., 1997; VanSledright, 2008). Namely, the presumption in the CCSS writing standard 2 for

history is that a narrative could be written based on an authoritative other rather than students using disciplinary literacy. In chapter 6 I delve further into implications of this understanding for HSS instruction.

On the Nature of CCSS and HSS Standards

One key difference between the CCSS and HSS content standards was the nature of each type of standard. Hill (2001), in discussing mathematics standards, spoke of existing "conventional standards for student proficiency…without regard to how knowledge about the problem might be held" (Hill, 2001, p. 292) that were to be replaced. One difficulty teachers in Hill's study had in interpreting the new state standards, however, was reliance on a textbook publisher's perspective that teachers used to impute "conventional definitions to words reformers meant to describe unconventional practices" (Hill, 2001, p. 305). Placier, et al. (2002) found a similar dichotomy in the construction of Missouri state standards through which students were to master disciplinary content – the *what* of the subject matter before mastering disciplinary knowledge – the *how* and *why*. The political climate in the 1990s surrounding HSS standards was decidedly in favor of standards that were content specific. An attempt to create a national set of history standards in the early 1990s was strongly rebuffed, first by conservative critics and later by the United States Congress. One key reason for the controversy surrounding national standards was a lack of specificity in what students should learn. Critics of the national standards read what had been intended as examples as *the* content that would be taught under the new national standards, failing to

understand that the standards in question were not designed as explicit content standards (Nash, et al., 1997).

California's HSS standards likewise had a content-first perspective, and had been lauded by Delaine Eastin, California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction at the time they were published, for that very perspective. Moreover, there was a specific repudiation of the 1988 HSS framework that had been a process framework. In the introduction to the standards, Eastin and Yvonne Larsen, President of the State Board of Education, explained how, "A shortcoming of the movement up to this point has been the lack of focus on rigorous academic standards. The desire to improve student achievement guided the effort, but it lacked a comprehensive, specific vision of what students actually needed to know and be able to do." The remedy for this lack of vision in the standards according to Eastin and Larsen was a set of explicitly focused content standards. They explained,

> With the adoption of content standards, California is going *beyond reform*. We are redefining the state's role in public education. For the first time we are stating – explicitly – the content that students need to acquire at each grade level from kindergarten to grade twelve. These standards are rigorous. With student mastery of this content, California schools will be on a par with those in the best educational systems in other states and nations. The content is attainable by all students, given sufficient time, except for those few who have severe disabilities (California Department of Education, 2000, p. iv).

As I noted earlier, in the BVSD, years of testing and accountability under NCLB and these HSS standards had privileged the teaching of disciplinary content over that of disciplinary knowledge. As the experiences of Kati Song and Joy Papathakis indicated, the curriculum in HSS was a narrow one, guided by not just the content in the California HSS standards, but in those specific standards deemed to be most likely on the state test.

BVSD pacing guides from the decade prior to the CCSS reinforced those essential standards and Song, Papathakis, and others explained that district benchmark exams that students took every six weeks reflected the same narrow focus. The BVSD pacing guide for eleventh grade United States history, for instance, consisted of the essential standards followed by representative test questions for which students should be prepared for each of those essential standards. Prior to the CCSS social studies teachers in the BVSD taught in a district environment where what was privileged was student performance on a standardized test that rewarded recall of content. Moreover, procedures were in place via monitoring of daily instruction, pacing guides, and district benchmark exams to facilitate district control over what was taught in classrooms and to identify who was or was not in compliance with district directives.

The CCSS represented a sea change from the content standards that teachers in HSS had been used to. Specifically, the CCSS did not specify content that students should learn, but rather they specified what students should be able to do – with course content as a foundation for students to use to meet process standards. At the same time, however, the existing HSS content standards were still in force. Thus, the state had in place HSS content standards and literacy standards in the CCSS. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, teachers found this to be a quandary when it came to implementation in the classroom. A further quandary for teachers preparing units was the question of what the CCSS meant to HSS instruction.

Understandings of Standards

Professional development opportunities provided to teachers from the BVSD focused on different perspectives – and different points of entry to the CCSS. Below I discuss three professional development opportunities attended by BVSD HSS teachers that had three different areas of focus for the role of the CCSS in HSS. While the professional development opportunities focused on different perspectives, this is not to suggest that the perspectives were mutually exclusive. The three perspectives had a number of elements common to two or all three of the perspectives. I refer to the perspectives presented in professional development as the literacy perspective, the inquiry perspective, and the rigor perspective. It should be noted that perspective labels in this instance refer to areas of focus, and that each perspective had elements of the others in presenters' explanations of the CCSS.

As I detail below, the first presenter, Nadine Hilton, saw the CCSS as applying to HSS through the use of expository text in HSS classrooms. Hilton framed the CCSS in terms of the SBAC and was likely to use the term "literacy" in explaining the CCSS. To Hilton, the role of social studies was as a location for students to learn reading and writing – a role that was trainable using packaged curriculum that could be dropped in to the social studies curriculum. The perspective supported by Brad Miller of the DSCOE was that of social studies classrooms as a place for inquiry. Miller drew from the C3, a national social studies framework to describe an "inquiry arc" that would support students in conducting investigations that would involve reading and writing. Janice Conrad, the district's consultant, viewed the CCSS as inviting teachers to increase the

level of rigor and critical thinking in their classrooms. She tended to focus more on the term "rigor" when describing the CCSS. When she discussed the role of the CCSS in CUPs, their center of attention was on student learning experiences. I refer to these perspectives as the "literacy" perspective, the "inquiry" perspective, and the "rigor" perspective respectively.

The CCSS in HSS as Literacy

One viewpoint presented to HSS teachers in the BVSD represented a focus on literacy first, with the standards being viewed as an opportunity to improve the literacy practices of students. The CCSS were paramount over HSS standards and history consisted of an established factual narrative. For this group the English standards were an end goal for students to achieve and student success was measured by his or her success on the state test. The role of HSS teachers was to support teachers in ELA, specifically in the teaching of expository text. Training on the CCSS for HSS teachers consisted of activities that were designed to be easily replicable in classrooms. Methods were thus trainable to teachers and students and did not require much beyond a sequenced, scripted checklist for implementation. The role of the teacher in this instance was to use history facts to build literacy skills and direct students to a "right" answer. A successful student, presenters suggested, would be one who could apply the skills she or he had learned to passages on the SBAC that drew on HSS expository text.

Teachers were introduced to this perspective at a collaborative day for teachers in English and history from Truman High School, one of the BVSD's comprehensive high schools. Nadine Hilton, one of the district's ELA TOAs, presented on the effect of the

CCSS on the need for collaboration between ELA and history. The inservice day was divided into three segments. The first was breakdown of a sample test item from the new SBAC that would use history texts as a foundation for asking students to write a reflective essay. The second was teachers being "trained on summary writing as a starting point for implementation of CCSS writing across content areas." The third was teachers being "trained on writing language objectives and on the use of sentence frames."

One of the key terms that was used in Hilton's agenda was "train." Combined with other aspects of those professional development sessions, the term suggested a particular method to be used the same way by each teacher of coming to know and understand the CCSS. As I discuss further below, use of the term was paired with the use of a pre-packaged curriculum – in this case Step Up to Writing. "Training" for teachers consisted of learning to implement a fixed series of steps to guide students through constructing sentences and then paragraphs that would allow teachers to complete "Common Core" activities in their classrooms. Teachers were not expected to contribute their own pedagogical knowledge to the implementation of the CCSS. As I note below, Hilton led teachers step-by-step through a pre-planned checklist of activities. Hilton described HSS teachers as the "content experts" and "subject experts" who would contribute the "instructional content" to be plugged into the pedagogical tools of others – in this case Step Up to Writing.

The first part of the inservice day involved teachers in reviewing sample questions from the SBAC assessment. Hilton introduced teachers to items she explained they were

then expected to "deconstruct" in order to pinpoint the specific types of reading and writing that students would need to answer a question from the SBAC successfully. The first task teachers were introduced to was one where they were asked to match types of writing students were asked to do under California's old ELA standards with the new "3 big buckets of writing" in which students were now expected to be able to demonstrate proficiency. Hilton explained that these buckets were "a new way of thinking about types of [student] writing" rather than the "lists and types" under the old ELA standards. ELA and HSS teachers sat and worked with others to determine how writing genres such as information reports, summaries, fictional narratives, and responses to literature would now fit into the three "buckets" of opinion/argument, informative/explanatory text, and narrative. Notably, most teachers placed the genre "historical investigation reports" under the genre of informative/explanatory text rather than opinion/argument. Hilton encouraged this classification, and in her explanation pointed to students being able to report the "facts [students] find in their research." This set the stage for history to be discussed across the remainder of the inservice as a fact-based discipline. I will discuss the significance of this perspective on history and literacy and its implications further in chapter 6.

"Deconstruct" was a common term used by presenters across professional development venues, and was likewise a method called for in the literature presenters drew from and the handouts they distributed. Deconstruct had the same fundamental meaning to those in the literacy and rigor contingents – to seek out the important elements of an item and focus on those elements - but it was applied in different ways. In

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the literacy group the term deconstruct was used to refer to the state test and items that students would presumably have to complete. Items to be deconstructed were those presumed to be on the test and the CCSS as presented to teachers was focused on preparing students to be successful on the state exam. A successful deconstruction in this instance would allow teachers to be able to pinpoint what skills would be called for on the SBAC so that teachers might target instruction toward those skills. An example of a deconstruction Hilton shared was tied specifically to a draft SBAC sample question and suggested students should do the following to be successful:

- Review two sources of information to critically analyze each piece for relevant information

- Synthesize information from multiple sources and across content areas to determine perspective for argument

- Cite relevant information from sources to support argument

- Organize ideas to communicate effectively

- Use domain-specific vocabulary (Language Use)

- Observe conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics appropriate for grade level

Hilton's explanation of the first three steps of the deconstruction process was limited to reading the items from the list and identifying how the released sample question she was about to discuss fit the deconstruction process. For instance, in discussing the first two items on the list, her commentary included the fact that there were five sources included with the released sample question and that students would need to work with all of the

sources to be able to answer the prompt effectively. The latter part of the list was the focus of most of Hilton's attention and the next segment of the inservice, and that dealt with using a packaged curriculum to help students organize their writing. As I detail below, this deconstruction was designed to maximize the potential for student performance on the state test, and privileged a literacy purpose over a HSS purpose in its application.

The next segment of the inservice as listed on the day's agenda called for teachers to be "trained on summary writing as a starting point for implementation of CCSS writing across content areas." The training offered by Hilton was on the Step Up to Writing program, a program the BVSD had adopted under NCLB and that had been one of the interventions the district had taken under the DAIT process. Hilton defined a summary in her PowerPoint as a "short restatement of the main points of articles, stories, films, or chapters/sections in texts." Teachers were then led through the process of creating summaries using the Step Up to Writing IVF method, which consisted of "**Identify** the item. Select a **verb**. **Finish** your thought" (emphasis added for clarification). Each teacher was given a copy of a worksheet titled "Four-Step Summary Paragraph" to use during the workshop and another that Hilton told them they could copy and use with students in their classes. Using Jessie Pope's 1916 poem, "Who's for the Game?" as an example, teachers were led through the process of creating an "informative summary paragraph." First, teachers were asked to read the poem that had been written by an English author during the height of World War I:

Who's for the game, the biggest that's played,

The red crashing game of a fight?

Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?

And who thinks he'd rather sit tight?

Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'?

Who'll give his country a hand?

Who wants a turn to himself in the show?

And who wants a seat in the stand?

Who knows it won't be a picnic – not much-

Yet eagerly shoulders a gun?

Who would much rather come back with a crutch

Than lie low and be out of the fun?

Come along, lads – but you'll come on all right –

For there's only one course to pursue,

Your country is up to her neck in a fight,

And she's looking and calling for you.

The poem was broken into four-line stanzas, which were handed out on slips of paper.

Each teacher was presented with a stanza and asked to analyze the language in their

stanza. Teachers were asked to consider the meanings of words within the context of the

stanza as well as the meaning of the stanza as a whole. As Hilton led teachers through

this process, her focus was on communicating the individual steps of the process. Hilton

would approach each component one at a time. For the first part of the process, identify

the item, Hilton told teachers, "you're going to work with your elbow partner (the teacher sitting next to a teacher) to identify the item in your stanza." If each teacher in the pair had a different item, according to Hilton that was "okay" so long as they could "give a clear reason" why that item was chosen. "We're not all going to see this (poem) the same way," said Hilton, "and that's okay."

Teachers then shared the meanings of their stanzas with the whole group and were guided through a process by which details from each teacher's piece of the poem were used to make meaning of the entire poem, with a sentence from each stanza being brought together to create a summary paragraph. When teachers interpreted stanzas differently, Hilton reiterated that if teachers had different interpretations of various stanzas, "that's okay," so long as teachers used the I-V-F process and the interpretations "made sense" given the poem. For instance, two interpretations of the four-line stanza that began "Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'?" offered different views of the role of the "seat in the stand." For one pair of teachers, the seat in the stand referred to "cowards" who were "afraid to fight." For another pair of teachers, the seat in the stand referred to "supporters of the war" who might provide help or assistance at home. To Hilton, both of these interpretations were "okay." She made no further commentary on the latter interpretation as she used the former description to build the group summary paragraph. Save for the one or two sentence descriptions teachers gave, there was no discussion of how or why teachers might have come to the contradictory conclusions they did. Instead, Hilton moved on to the next stanza – and next sentence in her summary paragraph.

The above exercise appeared to be intended to support teachers in helping students to meet CCSS writing standard 2 through the use of history content (see table 4.2). The standard as shared by Hilton called for students to "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the **effective selection, organization, and analysis of content** (emphasis added by presenter)." The level of analysis called for in this activity, however, more closely resembled HSS writing standard 2 than its complementary ELA standard and called for students to view the poem as a rhetorical device. The focus of the activity was the poem itself, not the role of the poem in a larger panoply of historical artifacts. To wit, teachers were trained on how to lead students in the creation of a summary paragraph. The use of historical documents in this exercise did not invite students to "examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information" about the documents as called for in the ELA standard so much to be able to pull out facts. The above poem, for example, was presented without context, save for the title, author, and approximate date of publication. Nowhere in the document was a mention, for example, that the author of the poem was from England. To the degree that students were asked to engage in any analysis, it was to be to compare the poem with four other documents to serve as a foundation for a short essay giving students' views on war. Thus, the analysis was not an analysis of the historical content and context of students' documents, but it was instead the foundation for an analysis of the poem as a piece of literature.

Text Types and Purposes

Instead of treating the poem as an artifact of the era, that is, as a piece of propaganda that was to be understood within the context in which it was written, this exercise called on students to examine the poem as a poem. The CCSS has three writing standards under the heading "Text Types and Purposes." Writing Standard 1, which correlated with Hilton's first "bucket" of writing, calls for students to "write arguments to support claims." Writing Standard 2, which correlated with Hilton's second bucket, calls for students to "write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information." Writing Standard 3, which correlated with Hilton's third bucket, calls for students to "write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events." Whereas Hilton had placed this activity under standard 2, this activity would not fit there as a HSS exercise. The exercise called for students to interpret the author's message in a poem, and the reaction was to the meaning of the poem itself and not the poem's place in a historical context.

The literacy perspective was also evident in many of the documents Hilton used to exemplify the Common Core. Many of these documents were taken from Step Up to Writing, a program described by its publisher's promotional materials as for "at risk and special student populations." Documents describing the Step Up to Writing process called for students to draw facts from what they read and then use those facts to create a "fact outline" as the basis for their writing. Step Up to Writing exercises teachers were given were from a selection titled "Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension." One other key component to the literacy perspective was the use of

academic vocabulary. For Hilton, academic vocabulary was treated as a set of terms for which students should know definitions and have some understanding. Academic vocabulary was seen as an end in itself rather than as a support to other learning. Hilton referred to academic vocabulary as a way to front-load a lesson with terms that students should know. After this, very little mention was made of academic vocabulary. When academic vocabulary was mentioned, it was as though it were an item on a checklist. For example, one of the charts used by Hilton detailed the shift from "the old way" of NCLB to "the new and improved way!" of Common Core. In this chart, the old way had students defining words from the "words to know section[15]," memorizing words, and testing. The new way called for students to complete a "vocabulary pre-reading chart" using "academic tiered vocabulary." After students read a passage, they were then to complete a post-reading chart that would examine the vocabulary in context. Academic tiered vocabulary was defined in her PowerPoint and on a handout as follows by Hilton:

- Tier 1 Vocabulary: "Basic vocabulary." "Frequently occurring" words of "everyday speech and everyday interaction." It was noted that tier 1 words "seldom appear as tested vocabulary on Common Core assessments."

- Tier 2 Vocabulary: "General academic words found in all domains or fields of study; not specific to a particular discipline." These words represented a "more scholarly way of expressing meaning than everyday language." An example

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[15] Though it was never explicitly discussed, the context of the presentation and the use by teachers of areas in their textbooks labeled "key terms" and/or "vocabulary" suggest that the "words to know" in this instance were those selected by the textbook publisher.

given of these "precise ways to say simple things" was "saunter instead of walk, mention instead of tell."

- Tier 3 Vocabulary: "Work that is specific to a domain or field of study." These terms carried "content meaning" and were "key to understanding a new concept within a text."

Although the new method called for vocabulary to be examined in context, one of the handouts presenters shared that had been published by the SBAC included "important tier 2 words to be **taught and tested** (emphasis added) at every grade level." While vocabulary was discussed as terms students should know and as terms that should be understood in light of their context, there was no discussion of extension of academic vocabulary beyond student knowledge of the terms. Save for the mention of "precise ways to say simple things" in the tier definition above, student use and application of academic vocabulary was all but ignored by Hilton. Instead, academic vocabulary was something to be "taught and tested." In this instance especially, the purpose behind inclusion of academic vocabulary appeared to be not to support the CCSS or academic rigor so much as to prepare students for the upcoming exam. The existing practices such as Step Up to Writing fit an essentialized definition of "literacy" while also serving a purpose relative to preparation of students for the standards-based test.

The method presented by Hilton displays the three hallmarks of defensive implementation. The first was the use of outsiders as experts. Teachers were not expected to contribute their own pedagogical knowledge to the teaching of writing. Instead, they would be "trained" in a way that would preserve uniformity and reduce

variability in implementation – presumably maintaining control by the district over what counted as the Common Core (*Step Up to Writing*), how the Common Core would be implemented (as an easily replicable formula), and what would be taught (paragraph writing using history facts). It is important to note that Hilton was the only one of the three perspectives to which teachers were exposed that originated from within the BVSD. It was also the perspective that called for the least amount of teacher capacity, instead presuming that expertise resided outside of the district.

The literacy perspective also was characterized by compartmentalization. In this case, compartmentalization took the form of history teachers taking responsibility for their own discipline, yet not for student writing. Hilton communicated this by calling history teachers "content experts" and "subject experts." She further divorced the writing process from the content area, by describing the process in such a way that history "facts" had a role as filler in a formula rather than as a product of inquiry or a tool in building rigor as the two perspectives I discuss below might suggest. Also evident in Hilton's description is her own compartmentalization of history as a discipline. In this case, it was reflected in a willingness to see history as an established narrative rather than as socially or culturally constructed. Not only was HSS thus essentialized in Hilton's explanation, but so was the CCSS as what was called for in the new standards was overlaid onto the previous methods and understandings from the NCLB-era *Step Up to Writing* curriculum.

The CCSS as HSS Inquiry

One other professional development opportunity on the CCSS attended by teachers from the BVSD was a workshop offered by the Del Sur County Office of

Education on how to implement the CCSS in HSS. The workshop was presented by Andrew Miller, the administrator who specialized in HSS for the DSCOE. Miller had explained to me in an earlier interview that HSS occupied about "ten to twenty percent" of his job responsibilities and that HSS was his responsibility at the DSCOE because of his prior experience as a secondary history teacher.   The workshop was to focus on the use of the CCSS in history classes. Miller's focus within the CCSS was on the use of argument and evidence by students. Miller supported this view of literacy with standard WH 11-12.1. Unlike standard WH 11-12.2 that focused on informative and explanatory texts, standard WH 11-12.1 focused on writing argument. This difference in focus tended to privilege viewing history as unsettled and subject to investigation and argument rather than history as a body or narration of established facts and events.

HSS teachers from the BVSD, Del Sur County, and surrounding counties gathered at the DSCOE offices in November, 2013 for a one-day professional development workshop on integrating the CCSS into HSS. Miller opened the workshop by describing what he was about to present as "not a 101, but really a 201." Under the NCLB, Miller explained, teachers had been "focusing on trees" for the past several years, and that the time had come to "focus on the forest." To punctuate this point, Miller added, "If you just try to focus on the individual lesson you're really going to miss the boat." Miller said of the CCSS, "[the CCSS] entails reading text and responding to information. Students are not passive recipients of information. In the past students have been waiting to be told what to think and whether the information will be on a test – this is not the way we will be teaching." Miller also explained that the goal of the CCSS was

to "get students ready for college, career, and citizenship," which were the primary goals of the social studies C3 standards Miller would discuss later in the workshop. The entire workshop included references to both the CCSS and the C3 standards. While it would be mistaken to say that Miller conflated the two standards, as it might appear from the above example, there were several examples from his presentation where Miller included the C3 under the umbrella of the CCSS – especially when it came to student use of argument, reasoning, and evidence.

The C3 framework was a product of fifteen professional organizations and was published by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). The framework document itself was composed of two sections: an Inquiry Arc that provided "the organizing structure of the document," and an overview of connections between the C3 standards and the CCSS. The inquiry arc itself included four elements: developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 12).

When Miller presented the CCSS, although he made reference to the CCSS standards for HSS, which he referred to as "history anchor standards," his reference point for his presentation was often the ELA versions of the standards. As an example, as Miller guided teachers through the writing standards for history, science, and technical subjects he crossed between the history anchor standards and the ELA standards fluidly, making little if any distinction between them. Miller's PowerPoint displayed ELA

versions of the CCSS, though when Miller talked about the CCSS he referred to "history anchor standards." Handouts teachers had been given that Miller referenced throughout his presentation contained the HSS version of standards as well. Miller began by asking teachers to take two to three minutes to read through the CCSS history anchor standards and highlight and underline key words. Miller then asked workshop participants what students should be able to do when they write about history. Different teachers responded that students should be able to, "present an argument," "support an argument," and "stay objective." Miller expanded on the teachers' input, and explained that the CCSS addressed purposes of writing, not forms of writing. Of the three purposes Miller identified, presenting an argument, conveying information, and telling a story, Miller explained teachers had to attend only to the first two. "We don't write narrative pieces in history," he stated. He further noted that although there was a standard 3 in the ELA writing standards, there was no corresponding standard 3 in the disciplinary writing standards for HSS.

Miller's presentation also included information on the "nuts and bolts" of the CCSS. That is, Miller presented on the basic structure of the CCSS, but even those nuts and bolts were subsumed under a broader umbrella of the CCSS as a set of tools for "build[ing] knowledge." This was made evident by where Miller chose to spend much of his time in his presentation. When Miller stopped and delved into a topic more deeply, it was a topic that dealt with using the CCSS as an umbrella or way of thinking about a unit. Miller explained that "[The CCSS] sit above the whole [set of history standards]." As an example, when Miller discussed building units of study in HSS under the CCSS,

his first priority was HSS content. He shared, however, that in order to focus on the forest teachers should focus on an essential question, which he defined in his PowerPoint as, "[A question] that lies at the heart of a subject or curriculum and promotes inquiry and uncoverage of a subject." Once teachers had identified what they would teach, the focus would then turn to "determining a Common Core literacy purpose" for the unit by seeking out "rich primary sources" that represented multiple perspectives. Whereas before the CCSS Miller explained there had been analysis skills in the HSS standards, the multiple choice format of the state exam made it next to impossible to assess those.

There are two key points of distinction between Hilton's inservice and that led by Miller. Whereas Nadine Hilton had chosen to focus on writing standard 2 in her presentation, Andrew Miller chose to focus on writing standard 1. The distinction between the two is not insignificant. Standard 1 calls for students to "write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*." Moreover, each of these two writing standards seems to complement a different view of HSS instruction and use of HSS standards. Writing standard 1 called for the type of argument building and critical thinking that is called for in the inquiry arc of the C3 standards. Writing standard 2, on the other hand, matched well with California's content standards and the transmission of a factual narrative of history through writing.

Hilton's writing product called for a narrative piece. The rhetorical device that Miller specifically eschewed was the key to Hilton's writing exercise. That is, the product Hilton called for involved the use of period literature and other primary sources as a tool for students to develop a viewpoint on war. Instead of using evidence to support

a claim the end product of this writing activity called for students to use emotion (their own view on war) as the end product.

The Exemplar Lesson

One of the resources Miller used to acquaint social studies teachers with the CCSS was a model lesson on the use of close reading in examining the Preamble to the Constitution. This lesson was presented as an exemplar of how social studies teachers could help students engage in close reading and satisfy both content and common core objectives. Over a time span of two class periods, the lesson called for students to examine the Preamble to the United States Constitution. Students were to be guided by the essential question: "What are the goals of the Constitution and why are they important?" At the end of the second day students were to produce a written response to the essential question.

The first day of instruction was to be spent using guiding questions to develop a "tree map" on which students would list a different "reason" (quotations in original) for the Constitution. The teacher would begin this exercise by reading the Preamble aloud in class after the students had read it silently themselves. The plan then prompted the teacher to ask guiding questions that asked students to make and justify claims ("Is this Constitution [*sic*] for every person who lives in the US or just some? How do you know?") and focus on details ("What are the six reasons why this Constitution was written?"). Those "reasons" formed the "branches" on the student tree map.

Day two of the lesson was designed to be spent on analysis of the tree map. The plan called for teachers to ask guiding questions of students that included:

- The authors say they want to "form a more perfect union," what does that suggest about past governments they had?

- Why would a nation need to provide for a common defense? How would a Constitution help with that?

- How might a Constitution secure liberty (freedom) for its people?

- Who are the "Blessings of Liberty" for? Why is this important in a Constitution?

- What does the phrase "establish Justice" mean? Why is Justice, all people treated equally under the law, so important?

As a Common Core lesson, this lesson served several literacy purposes. Students were asked to read the text for explicit statements and determine the central ideas of the text – in this case the goals listed in the Preamble. They were guided through both defining terms and making sense of what terms such as "Blessings of Liberty" and "establish Justice" meant. They further were guided through the process of writing an explanatory text that drew from evidence to support why the goals of the Constitution that they listed were important. Yet for all of Miller's discussion about history as argument, this exemplar lesson seemed more focused on transmission of information and students' perspectives and opinions on the six goals listed in the Preamble of the United States Constitution.

Instead of students asking why the authors of this document would need to write it and choose the specific ideas they did, the questions invite the student to consider the passage in terms of their present-day understandings. This focus was reflected in the

verb choice in the essential question. Rather than asking why the goals of the Preamble *were* important, the question asked why those goals *are* important. Furthermore, the questions were decontextualized from the United States Constitution. The use of the indefinite article *a* rather than the definite article *the* opened the exercise to student opinions about government writ large. When combined with the authors asking about "this Constitution," as though it was one of many, it further suggests that the exercise was about students looking at the ideas of government in general rather than those circumstances specific to the United States Constitution. Students were not asked to gather evidence to pose an argument as to why the authors of the Constitution chose the goals they did.   While Miller's presentation focused on inquiry in social studies, there were paths to alternate interpretations of the CCSS, such as those outlined in the model lesson, which would conceivably have allowed multiple interpretations and points of access to the CCSS for HSS teachers.

It is notable that Miller's perspective was one that combined a reliance on outside experts such as Wineburg with a format in which teacher pedagogical input was both solicited and valued. When Miller asked teachers what students should be able to do, the question served as a foundation for further discussion on integrating the CCSS with HSS instruction. In this regard, Miller's presentation was the least defensive of the three. Rather than being a set of steps or a "type" of instruction, Miller conceptualized the CCSS as a way of thinking about history – and as a way for teachers to approach thinking about instruction.

The CCSS in HSS as Rigor

Another professional development opportunity for teachers in the BVSD was led by Janice Conrad, a consultant brought in by the BVSD to lead implementation of the CCSS in ELA and HSS. As I detail further below, to Conrad, rigor represented the attainment of students of higher-order levels of Bloom's taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. This would ideally be displayed through student-driven inquiry and creation of knowledge based on what they had studied. Rather than the easily replicable, arguably reductive activities of the literacy group, Conrad saw successful CCSS instruction as consisting of complex activities that relied on student understanding. In contrast, because the HSS standards did not call for more than factual recall, Conrad referred to those standards as "poorly written." To Conrad the teacher was a facilitator, and the HSS teacher in particular was one who gave equal attention to HSS and CCSS standards in the classroom. While Conrad saw student performance on the state test as a priority, priority was also given to student growth and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to other schoolwork and life. Whereas activities promoted by Hilton pointed to packaged curriculum, "academic vocabulary," and word lists, those promoted by Conrad did not have the same level of explicit structure. Conrad tended to favor a student-centered approach in which the end goal was student mastery of a concept or idea rather than one of recall and performance on a test.

Janice Conrad's view of the curriculum that the CDC was creating under the CCSS was one that focused on the standards as a support to student learning rather than the end product of student learning. Conrad called the CCSS "word pictures for where

we need to take teaching and learning." That is, Conrad viewed the standards as a foundation from which to build rather than a finite curriculum in themselves. Conrad explained, "we need to put systems in place where our kids aren't saying 'just tell me what I need to think.'" This concept was a new one in the BVSD, as HSS teachers had been operating under essential standards for several years before the CCSS where the end goal was performance on a multiple choice test. Like Hilton's perspective, however, Conrad's perspective also had its roots in practitioner literature that was used by school districts trying to raise test scores under NCLB.

Conrad's view was based on *Rigorous Curriculum Design* by Larry Ainsworth (2010). Ainsworth's book supported creating "curricular units of study that align standards, instruction, and assessment" (Ainsworth, 2010, p. cover). At the heart of Ainsworth's method was the use of *priority standards*, which he defined as synonymous with *power standards* and *essential outcomes*. Priority standards are a subset of the complete set of standards for a course and grade level that would ideally be based on three factors: leverage, endurance, and readiness for the next level of learning. Standards with leverage are those that can be used both within and across curricular areas. Standards with endurance are those needed beyond the material in the course of study, including those standards that support skills needed in life. Readiness for the next level of learning suggests that standards will provide a necessary foundation for upcoming instruction in the next grade level. Beyond these three characteristics, Ainsworth also argues that the criteria of school, life, and test are also equally important. Thus, consideration should be given to what students will need to know to be successful

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in school, in life, and on the standardized test (Ainsworth, 2010, pp. 53-54). One

important consideration in Ainsworth's work is not that other standards should be

ignored, simply that priority should be given to mastery of those given priority. These

principles espoused by Ainsworth were nearly identical to those he advocated in his 2003

work, *Power Standards* (Ainsworth & Reeves, 2003), a text that had been used by several

school districts as a foundation for their NCLB-era curriculum. Whereas Conrad's view

was new to the BVSD, it was also grounded in a pre-CCSS methodology that was

designed, among other things, to maximize student performance on standardized tests.

As with Hilton's writing exercise using Step Up to Writing, Conrad's use of Ainsworth's

priority standards represented using the old methods of a pre-CCSS work by an outside

expert to apply to implementation of the CCSS.

Ainsworth's priority standards should not be conflated with the essential

standards that the BVSD had used prior to Conrad's arrival. Whereas the district's

essential standards had identified specific standards to be taught and tested, Ainsworth's

priority standards were less rigid. As with his power standards before, Ainsworth saw

those standards as a "safety net" that would guarantee that all students would have access

to the same curriculum and that teachers would be able to prioritize if needed. Ainsworth

was very clear that the inclusion of standards as priority standards did not mean other

standards would not be taught. Ainsworth noted, "The most persistent misconception

about priority standards that I have encountered over the last decade is the idea that

prioritizing, or "powering," the standards is synonymous with *eliminating* certain

standards in favor of others" (Ainsworth, 2010, p. 45).

When Janice Conrad referred to "poorly written" HSS standards, she referred to what the standards asked of students and the level of student performance required to satisfy the standards. For example, the skill called for in eleventh grade United States history standard 11.1.1 (see figure 4.3) was for students to "describe the Enlightenment and the rise of democratic ideas." For Conrad, description alone did not provide a satisfactory level of rigor. Description to Conrad was the same as "repeating facts," and in Conrad's view students did not need to learn facts "unless [they are] preparing for a game show." To Conrad, the CCSS provided an opportunity to add what she thought the HSS standards lacked: an element of rigor. Asking students to describe did not allow students to meet Conrad's vision of "engag[ing] students as active learners," nor did it allow teachers to "keep [their] curriculum appropriately challenging to invigorate learning."

For Conrad rigor was displayed in three primary ways. One was the use of *essential questions*. For Conrad, the essential question captured a corresponding "big idea" of each curriculum unit, and represented an enduring understanding that students would ideally have of what they had studied. In describing the enduring understanding, Conrad asked teachers to focus "not on what [students] know, but on [students'] understanding." When working with groups building curriculum units, Conrad rejected essential questions that she believed did not fit her focus. For example, in one curriculum unit teachers used the essential question, "What are the six goals listed in the preamble to the Constitution?" Interestingly, this was very similar to the essential question from

Figure 4.3

United States History Revolution/Constitution Unit
Priority Standards

Current History Standards	Common Core Literacy Standards
11.1.1 Describe the Enlightenment and the rise of democratic ideas as the context in which the nation was founded.	READING – 11-12.2 – Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
11.1.2 Analyze the ideological origins of the American Revolution, the divinely bestowed unalienable natural rights philosophy of the Founding Fathers, the debates on the drafting and ratification of the Constitution, and the addition of the Bill of Rights.	READING – 11-12.4 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of the text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist No. 10*)
11.3.5 Describe the principles of religious liberty found in the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment, including the debate on the issue of separation of church and state.	WRITING – 11-12.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

Miller's exemplar unit that asked for six reasons the Constitution was written. Conrad pointed out to the group that an answer did not call for students to exhibit higher levels of thinking, but rather asked students to reproduce what they had read. As I detail further below, Conrad pointed to Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy as resources for teachers to use in developing essential questions. The revised question with which teachers replaced the above question was, "How are the ideals outlined in the Declaration of Independence also reflected in the Constitution?" This new essential question was much more acceptable to Conrad. As she left the group working on United States History curriculum from which the question had originated members of the group smiled. When I later asked Jack McNally, one of the group members, what had happened, he told me that Conrad had come by and "fixed" the group's essential question.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Another tool that was used to assess the "level of cognitive rigor" around which teachers were to build curriculum units was Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain. Based on the 1956 work of Benjamin Bloom and others (cf. Bloom, et al., 1956), the revised Bloom's (cf. Krathwohl, 2002) replaced the old progression of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation with a new one of remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The new Bloom's as presented by Conrad consisted of:

- Remembering – Recall appropriate information.
- Understanding – Grasp the meaning of material.

- Applying – Use learned material in new and concrete situations.

- Analyzing – Break down material into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood.

- Evaluating – Make judgments based on criteria and standards.

- Creating (previously synthesis) – Put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

To Conrad, the final three levels of Bloom's, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, were those levels in which rigor was present. Conrad used Bloom's in conjunction with Webb's Depth of Knowledge as a way of identifying levels of rigor present in a standard, activity, or unit of study. This portion of units of study was, as Conrad put it, "all about scaffolding" so that students would eventually be "self-motivating, monitoring, modifying" as learners by the time they reached the level of creating.

Webb's Depth of Knowledge

Conrad saw the levels of cognitive rigor under Bloom's taxonomy as being complementary to Webb's Depth of Knowledge. The product of Norman Webb of the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, Webb's Depth of Knowledge both served as a complement to Bloom's taxonomy and provided specific vocabulary that could be associated with each level. A handout Conrad gave teachers laid out Webb's Depth of Knowledge:

- Recall and Reproduction (Correlates to Bloom's 2 Lowest Levels) – Recall a fact, information, or procedure.

- Skill/Concept – Engages mental process beyond habitual response using information or conceptual knowledge. Requires two or more steps.

- Strategic Thinking – Requires reasoning, developing plan or a sequence of steps, some complexity, more than one possible answer, higher level of thinking than previous 2 levels.

- Extended Thinking (Correlates to Bloom's 2 Highest Levels) – Requires investigation, complex reasoning, planning, developing, and thinking – probably over an extended period of time. *Longer time period is not an applicable factor if work is simply repetitive and/or does not require higher order thinking.

According to Conrad, the first two steps might be part of the "building blocks of a unit," however a rigorous unit would go beyond the initial two steps to include "complexity and reasoning." "Depth of knowledge is the key here," explained Conrad. Conrad warned that this would not necessarily be as linear as previous units and might be "a little more fragmented" in an approach to a unit. Her goal was to have higher levels of Bloom's and Webb's represented in a curriculum that would "start with the standard and then go very deeply."

Teacher materials were emblazoned with reminders about both Bloom's and Webb's as they worked to create units. Both measures took center stage in unit plans, as teachers were expected to attend to both as they deconstructed standards and created performance tasks. Conrad presumed teachers were capable of understanding the curriculum in context – and that teachers' understandings would be the same as hers – hence her description of a "thinking person's curriculum," suggesting that a thinking teacher would use the same way she had intended. When teachers in the workshop raised questions about how other teachers in the district might interpret or understand curriculum units that employed RCD, Conrad repeatedly explained that it would take effort on the part of teachers to understand the curriculum, but did not link her explanation to any tools teachers might use to aid in their understanding. Conrad also

presumed that her understandings were the same as the district's understandings – an idea that teachers were not entirely sure of. Conrad spoke of having the "support of the superintendent" and reminded teachers that the district would not have spent "hundreds of thousands of dollars" for a program that it wouldn't use. Teachers pointed to mixed signals and a lack of clarification on important issues as their reasons to be wary. Thus, teachers fell back on their existing understandings of the district in creating CUPs. The curriculum unit plans produced by teachers included essential questions and both Bloom's and Webb's in the appropriate locations, however for teachers the inclusion was little more than a formality and did not drive creation of units or lessons. In part this was because teachers were unclear on what was expected of them by administration.

"This is a Big Change:" Understanding the CCSS

Administrators in the BVSD were proud of being on the forefront of the shift to the CCSS. The district's website proudly displayed a link to the work of the district's Curriculum Development Council (CDC) on its front page. Mentions were made of the work being done by teachers to build the district's new curriculum in district-wide communications and to take the district "from ordinary to extraordinary." Administrators were conspicuously absent in the implementation of standards and creation of units, however. This resulted in a lack of instructional leadership for teachers.

Gladys Perry, the district's director of curriculum, was described by one site administrator as the "point person" for the CCSS in the BVSD, yet her role did not seem to fit that description. Perry had been in the BVSD for over 20 years, starting her career as a teacher, becoming a site administrator, and then moving on to the district office as

director of curriculum. Perry had a bubbly enthusiasm, and was quick to compliment

others or to seek input. While she seemed early on in my fieldwork to be very much the

"point person" she had been described as, I quickly began to see what one teacher had

advised me of early in my fieldwork – that Perry would be short on specifics for answers.

Everything Perry discussed or advocated for was the work of an outside expert and Perry

would point to others for answers. Perry rarely, if ever, took an active role in the

curriculum planning process. During meetings she would generally stand on the

periphery of the room and talk with other district-level administrators. When I asked

bout what changes had come about, she told me that the new standards and curriculum

were "more rigorous" than previous standards. I think asked her about her meaning

behind the term "rigorous."

> Researcher: So when you use the term rigorous, how is that a change from what you had been doing before?
>
> Perry: I think that's it, right? Rigorous. And that's something we weren't doing before. We were teaching students to bubble. Now we're doing more than that, right? We have these units that are going to be full of rigorous activities where students will be reading and writing instead of just bubbling.
>
> Researcher: So the rigor is in the reading and writing?
>
> Perry: Yeah, not just the reading and writing though. You've seen the [materials]. You can see the rigor there. Look at the Webb's.[16] This is a big change from what we used to do.

Perry's lack of specificity as to which perspective she aligned with had two effects

among teachers creating curriculum units. As I will discuss later, Perry's use of

terminology from both the literacy and rigor perspectives in this and other instances sent

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[16] Webb's Depth of Knowledge

a signal to teachers that either or both might be valued. Perry's lack of specificity also led some teachers to believe that she did not have a clear grasp on either definition, and that as long as they made sure all of the "right things" were in the "right boxes" the units teachers completed would pass muster.

Perry was not the only administrator from whom signals were unclear for teachers. District-level administrators were rarely, if ever, available to answer teachers' questions during the creation of curriculum units. Instead, teachers were expected to submit a question or proposal to one of the TOAs, who would then take that to administration. Answers were not immediate, and more often than not would not be forthcoming on the same day as a question was asked. This presented a quandary for teachers as they sought guidelines in order to understand for what they were to be held accountable. Teachers were suspicious that no guidelines came from administrators in writing. Likewise, no assurances were ever put in writing. District administrators also seemed to tightly control information. In one instance Carmen Harvey, one of the TOAs, was compiling a list of challenges faced by teachers working on curriculum units as they spoke with Jim Bemis, the district's director of professional development. This meeting was to gather concerns from teachers about what they believed was not working. Bemis did not answer any of the teachers' concerns at the meeting, nor did he answer any questions, but he collected information and assured teachers that all of their concerns would be "taken under consideration." During one session, I asked Harvey for a copy of the list of teacher concerns. Harvey told me she would e-mail me a copy, yet Bemis looked concerned. Immediately after the meeting and before calling over another group,

Bemis could be seen huddling with Harvey and other administrators in a corner talking and occasionally looking at me. While I ended up getting a copy of the list, I got the impression later from Harvey that she had been spoken to for agreeing to give me a copy. Her public communications with me afterward became much more guarded.

I gained a bit of understanding about this phenomenon when I spoke with Jeff Tucker, an assistant principal at one of BVSD's high schools. While talking with Tucker I mentioned how difficult it was to get any specific information from district-level administrators about the Common Core. Tucker's response was, "that's not an accident, you know." Jeff explained that district communications were "tightly controlled" and that the lack of communication was "a CYA (cover your ass) move" by administration. Tucker explained, "they don't know which way this is going to fall yet, so they want to keep all their options open." This lack of trust was evident among teachers as well, and helps to explain why teachers were reticent to create curriculum units that would result in substantial changes. This tight control of information was a form of compartmentalization. By limiting what was communicated and what could be understood, administration could limit the universe of options available to teachers creating curriculum unit plans. Moreover, administrators could maintain an illusion of control over the process. This allowed administrators to tailor unit plans from the outside by allowing access to a limited range of outside experts. As Jeff Tucker noted, this gave administrators flexibility. As I address further below, this defensive implementation by administrators would affect the creation of unit plans in the BVSD that were to be used by teachers to implement the CCSS.

The Curriculum Development Council

Early in the 2013-2014 school year the BVSD put together an ambitious project consisting of teachers from all grade levels and subject areas to create new rigorous curriculum that was expected to align the district's curriculum in English, math, science, and history/social studies with the Common Core. To that end, the district brought in consultants to guide creation of units and hired a bevy of Teachers on Assignment (TOAs) to oversee and guide the process. As part of the BVSD's large-scale effort to revamp its curriculum to better support the Common Core, the school district created a curriculum development council (CDC) that met over a period of more than 30 full days spread over two years. The history/social studies group (HSS) and the English/language arts (ELA) group were composed of nearly 100 teachers in total and met together, with representatives from each of the district's comprehensive high schools in each subject area and grade level. For HSS this meant that there were groups for tenth grade world history, eleventh grade United States history, and twelfth grade government and economics. The goal of each grade and subject area was to develop a year-long curriculum composed of several curriculum unit plans (CUPs).

As I explain further below, the CUP gives insight into how teachers developed curriculum defensively. For teachers creating the CUPs, activities involving the CCSS in HSS were treated as drop-in activities, often separate from what teachers called "real" history instruction. The creation of unit plans was likewise treated as a technical exercise, with teachers often inserting items into a unit plan not for their educative value, but because they were a part of a checklist. Because teachers treated history instruction

as separate from "Common Core activities," there was often little if any meaningful crossover between the two. Moreover, finished unit plans represented none of the three perspectives discussed earlier in its entirety, but contained enough markers of each that teachers could point to elements within each as "evidence of Common Core."

In the CDC unit development process, the TOAs served as the front line. TOAs were responsible for all the CDC's day-to-day functions, including being responsible for introducing teachers to the CCSS and explaining not only what the new standards represented, but how those new standards would impact instruction. The TOAs were also the point of contact for teachers in the chain of command. To the degree that district-level administrators were present at CDC meetings, it was generally seated or standing on the periphery of the meeting room where CDC meetings took place. While administrators would often speak with other administrators or TOAs, their interaction with individual teachers during meetings was minimal to non-existent. This would become a point of contention for teachers creating CUPs, as the protocol was to present questions to the TOAs, who would then forward the questions along to administrators or "write a proposal" to be considered by administrators. Answers were rarely immediate, and often a question would be asked or a proposal made only to be answered (or forgotten) at the next CDC meeting a month later. The result of this is that teachers presumed that answers from the TOAs were the "official" answers about questions relating to the CCSS and curriculum development, and information presented by TOAs was understood to have at least tacit approval by administration.

This compartmentalization of decision-making highlights one of the key elements that made the implementation of the CCSS in the BVSD defensive. Not only did communication pass through layers – themselves potentially subject to the pitfalls of Spillane's (2004) telephone game – but when decisions were made they happened in isolation. Rather than discussion, clarification, and negotiation between the parties involved, there was a chain of command present. Moreover, access to information was tightly controlled through this chain of command to such a degree that those in administration could choose not to answer and thus, as Jeff Tucker suggested, not have to commit to any particular answer.

The Curriculum Units

The stated purpose of the CDC was to build curriculum units, which were part of a sequenced, year-long plan for instruction in any given course. Each CUP was created as part of a template designed for that express purpose by Conrad, and finished curriculum units generally exceeded 20 pages in finished length. Each CUP was designed for three to six weeks of instruction in a given course. A master planning calendar for the school year, also created by teachers on the CDC, outlined the sequence of lessons that teachers were expected to follow and gave guidance as to unit length. The yearly calendar also contained "buffer" weeks in between units of study that were designed to be used for re-teaching if needed to ensure student mastery. Each CUP had a title page that introduced the title of the unit, the number of days the unit was expected to take to be taught, and the priority and secondary standards to be covered in the unit. Priority and secondary standards were broken down further on page 2, with "priority

standards," according to Janice Conrad, being those standards students were expected to "learn to mastery" by the end of a unit. Secondary standards, on the other hand, were standards that would be covered in a unit, but for which student mastery was not expected. The expectation outlined on each curriculum unit planner and reinforced by the TOAs helping with unit creation was that each CUP would contain in addition to applicable HSS content standards, at least one CCSS writing standard and one CCSS reading standard.

For purposes of this exercise, HSS standards and CCSS standards were given equal priority in terms of expectations of student mastery and teacher planning. Each type of standard had an equal presence on support materials and the CUP templates, and each type of standard was expected to be taught to mastery. Exactly what mastery entailed was realized by unwrapping each standard. As the template that teachers used originated with Conrad, the definitions of unwrapped and mastery reflected the rigor perspective. Thus, the goal in "unwrapping" a standard in this instance was to seek out higher-level thinking and to enhance the "poorly written" HSS standards. Mastery was expected to be a student's ability to perform what a standard called for using higher-level thinking skills. Each of the priority standards in a given unit was "unwrapped" into three different elements. One was the skill called for in the standard itself. As noted in figure 4.3, one of the history standards for the unit in question was standard 11.1.1. The skill is described as what the students would be expected to be able to do to satisfy the standard. For example, in standard 11.1.1 the standard calls for students to "describe." Thus, a demonstration of student mastery of the standard would include a description of

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enlightenment ideals. The "unwrapped" concepts provide a list of those things that students should be able to describe, including general ideas about Enlightenment philosophy and specific ideas from Locke and Montesquieu. Teachers creating unit plans, however, did not necessarily assign equal priority to each of the standards in their units of study. CCSS standards were often placed as secondary standards so that teachers would not have to be concerned with mastery of literacy standards. While this was not consistent with the stated intentions of Conrad, there was also no feedback from Conrad calling for changes based on her review of unit plans.

The unit plan template also called for identification of learning progressions from one grade to the next and called on teachers to identify which standards related to the grade level standard identified for a unit students would be expected to have learned already, along with which standard they would face in the future. For the CCSS, which were designed as iterative standards, this was a relatively straightforward exercise. For example, writing standard 11-12.2 was identical to its predecessor, writing standard 9-10.2. For HSS standards, however, this was sometimes a bit more difficult challenge. California's standards were designed so that students would be taught different eras in history in each of a progression of grade levels. While there were some areas that were repeated in the various grade levels such as Greece and Rome in grades 6, 7, and 10 and The Revolutionary War/Constitution in grades 5, 8, and 11, most of the HSS content standards were specific to eras of history not covered in other grade levels. In contrast to the 1988 HSS standards that called for attention to broader themes and method and could

be approached more easily in an iterative manner, the 1998 standards were product standards.

The history of HSS standards and their roles as process or product standards is instructive in what it tells us about perspectives on history. The 1998 HSS standards, which were largely product standards, contained two pages of process standards, titled "Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills," that were largely ignored by teachers and school districts (California Department of Education, 2000, pp. 40-41). In a 2010 pilot study I conducted of 11 California school districts, including the BVSD, not one district made mention of these skills in their district's pacing guide or curriculum handbooks for HSS. The C3, the new set of process standards Miller had referred to, sought to instill critical thinking and historical analysis skills through student inquiry. In an interview I had with Susan Griffin, Executive Director of the National Council for Social Studies, when I asked about the CCSS she immediately directed me away from the CCSS and toward the C3. Griffin explained that the C3 had then "inquiry arc" that the standards themselves described as follows:

- Developing questions and planning investigations.

- Applying disciplinary concepts and tools.

- Gathering, evaluating, and using evidence.

- Working collaboratively and communicating conclusions.

While the Seven Hills School District (SHSD), a district in a nearby community that had the same demographic mix as the BVSD, enthusiastically adopted the C3 as its

instructional model for HSS, in the BVSD attempts by teachers on the CDC to discuss the

C3 were met by a comment and then quickly forgotten, as this exchange demonstrates:

Kati Song: (to Gladys Perry) Have you looked at the C3 yet?

Perry: No I haven't.

Song: They're doing a lot with it in Seven Hills.

Perry: Oh, that's interesting. I'll have to look into it.

After Perry left the table, the following exchange happened:

Song: So that's a "no."

Researcher: You don't think she'll do it (look into the C3)?

Song: (dismissively) Not a chance.

Later in the period of my study, I noticed the issue of C3 had not come up again. I asked

Song if Perry had ever discussed it with her. Song rolled her eyes and said, "no."

Essential Questions/Big Ideas

Each curriculum unit was to include one or more "essential questions" which

would itself correspond to a "big idea" from the unit. The idea of the essential question

was drawn from Ainsworth (2010) and were defined as "engaging, open-ended questions

that educators use to spark student interest in learning the content of the unit about to

commence." These questions carried with them "underlying rigor" in that responding to

them would require students to demonstrate "genuine understanding" rather than

"superficial thought" (Ainsworth, 2010, p. 129). Each question was aligned with a

corresponding big idea, such that a student's answer to the essential question should give

him or her insight or understanding about the big idea. For teachers, however, the

essential question did not always serve that purpose. Instead, it was simply one more component of the unit plan to be filled in. For example, in the unit on World War II, one essential question was, "What are the different historical points of view of Atomic Bomb, Strategic Battles etc." [sic]. Rather than developing student understanding, as Conrad sought, this question suggested that points of view would exist for the student to identify. While perhaps not in keeping with Conrad's view of an essential question, this was in keeping with the literacy-first view in which history knowledge was a tool to be used to achieve other curricular goals. Because of competing views of what the CCSS represented and what counted as learning and knowledge under the CCSS, the interpretation under the literacy framework by teachers of a question intended to drive rigor was not something they viewed as problematic. In any event, identifying the perspectives of historians suggests that expertise exists outside of students' capacity for understanding, and that students should learn the perspectives themselves rather than understand the processes that went into the development of those perspectives. While this has implications in terms of the curriculum students would be exposed to and the level of understanding students might be presumed to have (McNeil, 2000), the question also reflects the defensive implementation of teachers writing units. Not only did teachers draw on outside historians for their expertise, in the process limiting the number of perspectives to the finite universe of historians consulted, they also repackaged their own existing practice from under NCLB. That is, the identification of the perspectives themselves served as a goal, rather than understanding about perspectives.

Another example of "filling in boxes" came as teachers were under pressure to complete unit plans near the end of the CDC process. I watched one group, under pressure to complete its own unit plans, engage in the process of "filling in boxes." Having completed what Brian Walker called the "main part" of creating activities, an engaging scenario, and assessments, it came time to do what Walker called "filling in boxes." I observed as Walker's teammate John Bishop entered items that Walker called out into the CUP template. These included targeted English Language Development (ELD) standards, 21st Century skills, and the learning progression of skills and concepts. There seemed to be little thought or analysis about what would belong where, and that was confirmed by Walker when I spoke with him shortly after this instance. Walker explained, "No one is ever going to look at these anyhow." He went on to explain, "The district has been doing these kinds of things for years. All anyone is going to look at are the lessons, the engaging scenario, and the assessments." Others nearby nodded in agreement with Walker's assessment. Joy Papathakis lamented what a "waste of time" creating the units had been. She opined, "The district is only doing this so it can look like they did something. Once the money runs out they will forget about this like they forget about everything else." In this instance, teachers were not concerned about the substance of the material they included, they were more concerned about its display. This marker of defensive implementation ensured compliance with something no one was ever going to look at, while according to Walker seemingly adding little to no value to the completed unit.

An area where there seemed to teachers to be a mismatch between what the consultant expected and what was expected of classroom teachers was the issue of benchmarks. The BVSD had implemented benchmark exams for the decade prior to the advent of the CCSS. Copies of previous benchmark exams used in BVSD social studies classes showed questions that were similar in style and format to those from the CST. Questions such as the example below tended to privilege student recall as a means of displaying knowledge.

In 1957, President Eisenhower used federal troops in Little Rock, Arkansas, to

     A. eliminate racial discrimination in housing.

     B. allow African Americans to vote in local elections.

     C. integrate the public schools

     D. admit African Americans to graduate programs.

Teachers creating curriculum units explained that they did not believe that these benchmarks were still meaningful or necessary given the new emphasis on reading and writing, however district-level administration still insisted on maintaining benchmarks. The following excerpt from my field notes details the interchange between teachers and Victoria Prescott, the social studies TOA.

Brian Walker, Kati Song, and Mark Laidlaw led the group that presented the teachers' case as to why there should no longer be benchmarks. According to Walker, "benchmarks no longer make sense" given "different expectations." Song insisted that benchmarks went "against this idea of formative assessment." Nina Schwartz sat and watched, not giving input, on the periphery of the "group." Other tables had some

listening in, others working. John Bishop seemed to be interested in something on his laptop – listening but not listening. Victoria Prescott's response was that benchmarks were "non-negotiable." "This is [the superintendent's] decision." Teachers were told, "don't waste your time" trying to argue, "it's a done deal."

Teachers took this to mean that curriculum units wouldn't be taken seriously. At the same time, teachers understood this to mean that the old expectations were still in force. Most notably, in discussions after this interchange, teachers shifted their discussions to issues of history content in the units rather than a focus on reading and writing. For some units, CCSS standards that had been "priority standards" in a unit were moved to secondary status. This is a key example of the compartmentalization of the CCSS and HSS in this process of implementation. Moreover, it was a signal to teachers that HSS content should be prioritized in their units and that CCSS expectations were secondary. This maintenance of benchmark exams as in the past and the movement of CCSS standards to secondary status was also a signal to teachers that whatever the talk of new units that would integrate the CCSS, the CCSS was valuable for its display in units, not for its execution.

This also reflects the lack of connection between teachers and administration – and thus the ongoing compartmentalization of decision-making. On one hand, administrators were excoriating the "old ways" of doing things that required students to bubble and lauding the new CCSS that would bring some notion of "literacy" and "rigor" into classrooms. On the other hand, administration maintained a relic of the old system – benchmark testing – which was ostensibly going to be replaced by the new curriculum

units teachers were creating. Teachers pointed to the district as one of the key reasons they wouldn't create transformative units, both because the district would "forget about" the units and because the district maintained its insistence on the inclusion of elements teachers believed to be unnecessary. The district, on the other hand, announced that the new CUPs were created "by Buena Vista teachers for Buena Vista teachers." This allowed administrators to point to the role that teachers held in the process while likewise allowing for distance if the curriculum units were not successful. No one truly "owned" the product in these units.

Some scholars have positioned differences in understanding as a lack of understanding on the part of the recipient. Spillane's "telephone game," for instance, suggests that policy communications are one-directional, and that failures to fully understand and implement policies reside in changes between versions of policy passed down through layers of communication that are themselves misunderstood by the various actors at each level (Spillane, 1998, 2004). Cohen (1990) and Placier, et al. (2002) likewise found that the misunderstandings of actors interpreting curricular reforms affected how those reforms were implemented – and how the reform as enacted was not the end product that reformers intended. While understandings and misunderstandings certainly played a role in this case of implementation, the effect was not as unidirectional as other studies might suggest. In the BVSD the perspectives of literacy, inquiry, and rigor painted for teachers a definition of "common core," even as their understandings of each differed. The transmission of each definition through trainings presented a picture of the CCSS to teachers that privileged certain understandings and interpretations while

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ignoring or dismissing others. It would be a mistake, however, to attribute variations in implementation solely to the information made available to teachers and their capacity to understand that information. Teachers who wrote curriculum units as well as those who implemented units in the classroom were also influenced by structural and institutional factors in determining what was important and what was not. Moreover, true to the role of Lipsky's (1980/2010) "street level bureaucrat," teachers often made decisions defensively that sought to maximize teacher autonomy and their ability to teach history as they saw best while minimizing conflict. Cohen, et al. (2014) sought to capture this type of complexity in their research on implementation of school reform models when they suggested school reform not be framed as "an orderly progression from applied research to widespread implementation," but instead should be viewed as "a collection of puzzles that can be understood and managed, but that often unfold in overlapping and nonsequential ways" (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 26). While the work of Cohen, et al. offers additional explanatory value, it is likewise one component of a broader picture of implementation. As I detail in the next chapter, even with the same organizational understandings and environment, teachers in the BVSD had vastly different understandings of the same standards.

Chapter 5 – Defensive Implementation of Common Core

Implementation at Truman High School

In this chapter I focus on the defensive implementation of the CCSS in HSS at Truman High School, a comprehensive high school in the Buena Vista School District. I focus on two veteran teachers at Truman, Mark Laidlaw and Jeannie Thompson. Teachers at Truman, and specifically the two teachers I profiled, did not have uniform views of the CCSS or what they meant to HSS instruction. As a result, the CCSS were not implemented uniformly by teachers. While the CCSS made little difference in terms of what teachers believed was important in their curriculum, it did influence the types of activities teachers did in their classroom. The impact of the CCSS on each teacher's instruction was a product of each teacher's understanding of the CCSS and of HSS education. Teachers at Truman High School maintained that CCSS implementation was secondary to what they believed were the "real" priorities of the school. These priorities included grades, graduation rates, and test scores. Mark Laidlaw understood the CCSS to be synonymous with student-directed learning. He described his role as a teacher as that of a "buffer." He implemented the CCSS in his classes using a gradual approach by which he incorporated CCSS-type activities that had been shared in professional development while maintaining many of the same structures and methods he had used in his class prior to the CCSS. Jeannie Thompson understood the CCSS to be primarily about literacy skills. Thompson implemented the CCSS in her classroom as stand-alone, drop-in activities that she attempted to faithfully reproduce consistent with her

understanding of the experts who created them. Rather than "reinvent the wheel," Thompson served as a conduit who would enact lessons produced by others.

Harry S Truman High School

Harry S Truman High School is a comprehensive high school serving grades 9-12 in the Buena Vista School District. Truman opened its doors as a comprehensive high school in the early 1960s and was fed by a boom in new housing in Grand Valley. Originally designed to house 1500 students, Truman's student population was nearly 2500 students at the time of my study. The result was a campus with a mix of older classrooms, newer construction, and portable classrooms. A veteran teacher from Truman who had attended Truman as a student in the 1980s took me on a tour of the campus and pointed out campus features. One building that had previously held the school's auto and metal shops now was home to math and foreign language classes. A campus that had once been open to the community was now fenced and gated, with security stationed at entrances to the campus to check the identification of visitors. My tour guide told me this had come as a response to gang activity in the neighborhood and a drive-by shooting more than a decade prior to my study. The school suffered from a great deal of apparent deferred maintenance, as paint peeled from buildings and landscaping was patchy and not lush. Sports fields had patches of turf that were not uniform and signage at the school was missing or incomplete. This, my guide told me, was because of the recent financial crisis that had resulted in the layoffs of "hundreds of teachers" from the BVSD. The result was a school where class sizes routinely were in the high-30s and sometimes were at or over 40 students in many of the core subjects.

In spite of the relatively poor conditions at Truman, most of the faculty members expressed to me that they were positive and happy to teach at Truman. Teachers were generally smiling and outwardly appeared happy. They frequently wore apparel to school that displayed their "Trojan Pride." Despite opportunities to transfer to some of the newer, more modern schools in the district, most elected to stay at Truman. One teacher described Truman as a family, "and not 'family' like the district says when it's trying to get us to do something, a real family. We go on vacations together, we socialize, my colleagues' kids call me Uncle Stewart." Indeed, Truman's teachers appeared to get along quite well, and stood united not just among themselves, but also against "the district." One of Truman's English teachers explained, "We don't need [district administrators] coming in to tell us how to teach. We know how to teach. They just need to leave us alone and let us do our jobs." Performance by Truman's students on standardized tests seemed to reinforce the idea that Truman's teachers knew how to teach. The school was ranked in the top half of high schools statewide and also consistently in the top quintile of schools in the state's similar schools rank, which compared schools of similar demographics. Many Advanced Placement (AP) classes at Truman boasted impressive pass rates on AP exams, with several classes consistently exceeding a 75 percent pass rate.

As with the Buena Vista School District as a whole, the area around Truman High School had gone from middle class neighborhoods to decidedly more working class in the 50 years that Truman had been open. At the time of my study nearly 75% of

Truman's student population qualified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Over 50% of Truman's students spoke a language other than English at home.

Rob Sheldon: Freedom to Teach

Truman's Principal, Rob Sheldon, had recently transferred to Truman from elsewhere in the district at the time of my study. Sheldon had started his career as a secondary math teacher, and moved into administration before the age of 30. Before coming to Truman, Sheldon had been a high school principal and had experience under NCLB. He explained that the environment under NCLB focused predominantly on test scores, and was high-stakes for administrators.

> Consistently every step, every element was about testing. It wasn't about teaching, it was about testing. Whether it be from the teacher end or the administrative end. I've seen administrators get replaced because of test scores, not because of the other factors that go into being a principal or AP (assistant principal), but simply because of the achievement of kids based on a test that was very much about drill and kill, not about creativity.

Sheldon was excited about the move to Common Core in part because it meant, "[Administrators] don't have to sit in a room in the fall and hope for a number, because every September when that score came out it was pins and needles for most of us because it really dictated whether you had a job or not."

Sheldon saw instruction under the CCSS as supported by "more of a framework than a day-to-day analysis." This would allow teachers to "be able to look at a concept and find a way of teaching as opposed to being stuck in making sure you're all on the same page on the same day." Sheldon also addressed the changes teachers would have to make under the CCSS.

It is very easy (for teachers) to just follow a day-by-day plan. Particularly because I think those of us who taught before this testing movement are happy again to have the freedom to teach but realize within that there's a set of teachers who never taught out of that (NCLB) mentality, so they have always been used to being handed almost every single thing. How to teach? What day to teach on? What examples to use? What tests are coming out? They've really been babied as to what teaching really is. And so those of us who started before are excited and conceive possibilities because we were teachers then. Some other teachers, and we're talking teachers now with 10 years experience, may have never known the freedom that teaching was and why we went into teaching.

To Sheldon the relative freedom of the CCSS also offered the possibility for schoolwide initiatives to increase the potential for student success after graduation. Sheldon's view was that "all education at some end is vocational, when you go to grad school or get your doctorate or get your MD, at some point it's vocational." To prepare students for life after high school Sheldon suggested implementing AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)[17] strategies schoolwide. He explained, "So we have this program that is successful, why wouldn't we try to expand that philosophy school-wide? Obviously not every kid is going to college, but that system (AVID) is such that every kid has the option and has a choice." Sheldon saw AVID as beneficial because "[AVID] has proven quantifiable results that are not just seen as important here at our level, but at the next level up, 13 to 16, where colleges know what to expect of the students."

Sheldon's praise for AVID was evident in Truman's staff development meetings, where time was offered twice a month for a different AVID instructional strategy to be

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[17] AVID is a structured program that ideally provides opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups in high school to have access to a college preparatory curriculum (cf. Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). Among the resources that AVID makes available to schools are instruction in a specific type of note taking (Cornell Notes) and strategies such as Socratic seminars that involve students in discussing topics and issues in class. AVID also makes available subject-specific strategies that are billed as helping students develop writing skills.

shared with teachers. The AVID strategies were presented as "common core," and the outside experts at AVID were presumed to know and understand "good teaching," and by implication, good "common core" teaching. Teachers were encouraged to use AVID strategies in their classrooms. For instance, in one instance an activity was presented at a Truman staff meeting that involved the creation of an "acrostic poem" that students would create. The activity had students use the letters in one term as the beginning letters of other terms related to the first term. For instance, for the term "CIVIL WAR," students might list "C" for confederacy, "I" for ironclad, etc. This activity, which was presented as a "Common Core activity" to the staff, was identical to an AVID activity that had been published prior to the CCSS. Moreover, the activity was presented as "Common Core" without any reference to specific CCSS standards. While strategies were presented at staff meetings and reinforced in follow-up emails, what was often presented was the "how" of the AVID strategy and not the "why." Thus, the AVID strategies had the potential to become drop-in activities that could serve as a display of "good teaching." Furthermore, AVID strategies brought the work of outside experts in as "common core," and were a hallmark of defensive implementation in that compliance did not require teacher capacity, only execution.

Teacher Understandings at Truman

As I sat down with Truman's social studies teachers in a focus group, it became clear quickly that the understandings of Truman's history teachers about what the CCSS meant to their students was rather uniform among Truman's teachers in one regard: teachers believed that the CCSS called for more student-directed learning. For Joy

Papathakis, Truman's social studies chair, the shift called for by the CCSS was frustrating for her and for her students. She explained that the student perspective toward the CCSS was, "Seriously? This is what school is? I've got to read this and inquire on my own and do all that?" Referencing the comments of administrators and instructional coaches that suggested students would be "excited" to "demonstrate what they had learned," Papathakis countered, "I don't think that kids get all excited about learning just because we give them sources." She went on to say, "I think it's much easier to build a relationship with kids when you are talking to them." Papathakis's preference was for a style of instruction that emphasized lecture. "There are some things that kids just need to know," Papathakis said. She characterized the CCSS as "a bias against verbal learning and a bias toward the printed word." While Papathakis referenced the CCSS as student-directed learning implicitly with their comments, Paula Edwards was more direct. She explained, "what I'm noticing is that [CCSS-based instruction] goes from *I* to *they's* and *you's* and *we's*." Comments and body language such as nodding of heads from other teachers in the focus group reinforced that the department shared these opinions of student-directed learning as being *the* fundamental change the CCSS brought to social studies classrooms at Truman. Opinions as to the appropriateness of this change varied, however, among teachers in Truman's social studies department.

This common understanding of what the CCSS meant did not necessarily translate into a uniform perspective on implementation. A couple of teachers, like Cheryl Baldwin, saw their problems with implementing the Common Core as arising from the students. Baldwin explained,

I think that part of the shift to Common Core requires an understanding of the maturity level of students. I see my seniors being capable of doing Common Core. They're naturally more interested and more motivated. They have also had more time learning the skills. They've had two more years, essentially, to experience and gain this kind of analysis and whatever. Sophomores are too immature from what I see in them. I'm trying to do things that are student-driven but they are not responsible. They don't go and do anything on their own. So anything that requires [sophomores] to do reading – reading a primary source or something at home – even if I give them time in class, they don't want to do it. I have one period especially – sixth period is the worst of course – but it's just impossible. A lot of students have very low grades. Part of it has to do with the maturity level of the students. I might not be able to do as much of the Common Core with my sophomores as say I can with my seniors simply because of maturity. [Sophomores] cannot be relied upon. They don't want to be independent learners and to inquire and to search for themselves.

As she indicated above, Baldwin placed the responsibility – and the blame – for failure to engage with the Common Core squarely with her students. The reason her sophomores could not do Common Core was their lack of responsibility. This deficit, coupled with others such as a lack of desire and willingness, made implementing the Common Core "impossible." Baldwin went on to explain that students should be able to do better because "history isn't that tough to do." "[History is] something that you (anyone) can sort of at least do decently with minimal guidance." Again, Baldwin saw the fault in students choosing not to do something that "isn't that tough." Moreover, Baldwin's statement seemed to point to her understanding of the CCSS not as a distinct set of skills to be integrated with the existing subject-matter curriculum, but instead as a different means of accessing that same curriculum that was more student-driven than teacher-driven.

Both Baldwin and Papathakis expressed difficulty with implementation of the CCSS in a way that did not neatly align to any of the methods that were shared in

professional development. For Papathakis, "talking to" kids, the admonition that "there are some things these kids need to know," and the "bias against verbal learning" point to a method of instruction that is unidirectional in nature and transmitted from teacher to student. For Baldwin, the comment that history can be done "decently" with "minimal guidance" likewise suggests history is something that should not require a great deal of teacher input.

Baldwin's statement also reflected the same understanding of the Common Core standards that was common among Truman's other teachers. Namely, this was the understanding that implementing the CCSS was a matter of students engaging in more self-directed activity with the goal of becoming independent learners. Baldwin's statement that, "I'm trying to do things that are student-driven," and her statement about students not wanting to be "independent learners" suggest that as with her colleagues, student-directed independent learning was her ideal outcome of successful implementation of the Common Core. Noticeably absent from Baldwin's explanation and her responses in the focus group was any discussion of students' reading or writing development. Even when Baldwin noted that students "don't want to do" activities that require reading, the focus was not on students' literacy skills but was instead on students' unwillingness to use skills they presumably already had to engage in what Baldwin saw as Common Core activities.

Paula Edwards, who also taught sophomores, had her own views on why students were or were not succeeding in her classes. Like Baldwin, to Edwards student motivation was a factor. Edwards explained,

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What I'm seeing is the students that maybe are naturally more intelligent or the students who are more motivated – they are doing well if we are having them investigate, we are having them write. And I think they're liking it. They're liking that we're working cooperatively. They're liking the discussion. They're feeling successful. But the students who are just kind of there because they have to be there, not because they are really excited about learning, either they're not doing [the CCSS activities] or they are doing it really poorly, and they're frustrated about their grades. I mean, I'm seeing a lot of students who are frustrated with grades. They're not willing to put the work in, but they're expecting that since they're there every day and just kind of doing enough that they should be getting a passing grade like they did before for doing enough.

Edwards attributed the issues she had with her instruction to the fact that Janice Conrad, the district's consultant, "was adamant that we needed to start off with the inquiry based learning." Because Edwards believed her students were not ready, she ran into problems in her classroom. She noted, "half my class can't say what a republic is…there are just some things that are valuable [for students to know]." To Edwards, the shift to the CCSS – and the student-driven inquiry she believed it entailed - was too extreme. Instead, she saw the need for instruction on basic facts and concepts, like the definition of a republic, prior to engaging in CCSS-type activities.

For teachers at Truman, integrating the CCSS into HSS classrooms was associated with a different way of accessing the same information students had previously learned. This makes sense, as the professional development opportunities teachers had engaged in were more associated with pedagogy than with content. Moreover, the state content standards in HSS were still in force, and teachers had to navigate their old requirements – and presumably continue to have students perform well on benchmark exams – while trying to incorporate new requirements. While most teachers in the department outwardly struggled with the CCSS, there were still teachers in

the department who were recognized as doing well in implementing the CCSS in their classrooms – even as they themselves struggled. As I discussed earlier, I have selected two of those teachers to focus on in greater depth. As I also discussed earlier, I selected the two teachers I chose to focus on because each of them had been pointed out by Sheldon and other teachers as doing well at implementing the CCSS in social studies. Each had taken a leadership role in site-based professional development and each had also attended multiple outside professional development workshops. Aside from the praise each teacher received for his or her implementation of the standards, he or she also approached the implementation of standards in his or her classroom with a view that given the correct support, students would be able to achieve the standards. Both Mark Laidlaw and Jeannie Thompson saw their jobs as providing that guidance and support. The two teachers I discuss in this chapter each came into education at a different time and with a different path.

Mark Laidlaw: The Buffer

Mark Laidlaw, the senior teacher of the two, taught AP World History and United States Government at Truman High School. Laidlaw was well-respected by colleagues and administrators. Truman's former principal told me she "jumped at the opportunity to be able to bring [Laidlaw] over" from another school in the district. Similarly, Joy Papathakis, the social studies department chair at Truman, told me Laidlaw had recently been recruited to transfer from Truman by yet another high school principal in the district who sought to fill one of his openings. In my time as a participant-observer at Buena Vista's Curriculum Development Council (CDC) meetings as well as at Truman's

department meetings, Laidlaw was regularly treated by other teachers with a type of respect accorded to those who have established themselves as true experts. Laidlaw's status was evident in the way others interacted with him. While Laidlaw did not appear to actively seek out a leadership role, other teachers in CDC meetings or staff development implicitly acknowledged him as a leader of the group for US Government by seeking his approval or "blessing" before moving on. At times this would take the form of Laidlaw offering input on a topic that others accepted as a coda, effectively making his word the "last word" and by extension the "correct word." In other circumstances, even with his self-effacing style and unassuming demeanor, teachers would defer to Laidlaw to the degree that he effectively became the group's leader. In one instance, teachers Kati Song, Nina Schwartz, and Laidlaw were discussing the possible inclusion of an activity on the First Amendment into an American government unit teachers were creating. Song and Schwartz tossed around possible ideas, including an activity highlighting the Establishment Clause and another on the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Laidlaw's pronouncement of, "We should probably do speech," effectively ended the discussion. The decision was made to do an activity on free speech. Kati Song, the department chair at Copper Creek High School, explained why Laidlaw was given so much respect. "I trust Mark Laidlaw one hundred percent. The time he puts into his teaching and his students and the results he gets – you can't fake that."

Mark Laidlaw's demeanor and teaching style can in part be explained by the route he took to become a teacher. Laidlaw graduated in the 1980's from a prestigious

Midwestern university. At the time, Laidlaw explained, "I had no intention of going into teaching whatsoever. It was the furthest thing from my mind." His entry into teaching was a by-product of his wanderlust. As Laidlaw explained, "[H]ow do you go to Japan and live there legally for an extended period of time? Well there's the English teaching racket, right?" It was at this point that Laidlaw explained he discovered he enjoyed teaching. He credits that experience teaching English in Japan with teaching him to be "an entertainer more than anything else." As Laidlaw explained, "that was part of the racket." After teaching English in Japan and then returning to the United States and teaching English at a language school to foreign students, Laidlaw decided to get his teaching credential and enter the realm of public education.

Early experience

Laidlaw's experience in public schools had always been in schools with larger percentages of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English learners. His student teaching and first teaching assignment were in San Martín, a community that shares its southern border with Mexico and is home to many low-income, immigrant families. Laidlaw explained that whereas his experience in a language school taught him how to teach, his first experience in a public school was a "whole different ballgame." "I realized the idea that with public school teaching you have a lot more kids to deal with. At that time…it was more like juggling more than teaching. More than anything else the survival skills were most essential." Laidlaw termed those survival skills as understanding the non-teaching elements of the job as well. He explained, "It's not just simply teaching; it's handling people. It's being accommodating. It's being supportive.

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It's trying to maintain some sort of standard or accountability where the system sort of attempts to pull you away from that." After leaving San Martín, Laidlaw got a job in the Buena Vista School District, where he worked with many of the same kind of low-income recent immigrants. From his early teaching experience, Laidlaw "learned that most kids are really good, decent human beings. They may have academic challenges but those two things are separate." Laidlaw also learned with regard to his students that "with a lot of work and perseverance you can get a lot of people to succeed or a lot of people to take that next step in their academic career."

Mark Laidlaw's demeanor and style reflected a focus on "work and perseverance." Laidlaw stood at his door each day and shook hands with each student as they walked into his classroom. Laidlaw wore a shirt and tie every day to work, as did several other male members of his department. This was an anomaly on a campus where it is common for teachers and administrators to wear t-shirts or polo shirts. One of Laidlaw's colleagues in the department explained the tendency of social studies teachers to overdress compared to the rest of the campus. "For us it's a mark of respect. It communicates to our students that we respect them and take them and their education seriously." This "respect" was evident in the interactions I observed outside of class between most Truman social studies teachers and their students, including Mark Laidlaw. Discussions between teachers and students consisted of teachers listening to students and responding to students as individuals. Laidlaw was no exception. Even when a discussion with a student had little chance of changing Laidlaw's mind, such as telling a student she couldn't turn in an assignment late, this often came as the product of an

individual discussion rather than a flat declaration. While Laidlaw was clearly the authority figure in each of his interactions with students I observed, he wasn't authoritarian. Most of Laidlaw's discussions with students were explanations rather than simply answers and most that I observed ended with Laidlaw explaining to the student the next steps she or he needed to take to be successful.

At the time of my study Laidlaw was not only a teacher at Truman High School, but he was also a member of the Buena Vista School District's Curriculum Development Council (CDC), which, as I discussed in chapter 4, was responsible for creating the Curriculum Unit Planners (CUPs) that were to serve as a guide for BVSD teachers to implement the new CCSS-based curriculum in their classes.

How Mark Laidlaw came to understand the CCSS was not only a product of his background and his experience. Laidlaw's views of the CCSS were also influenced by the trainings he had attended both as a faculty member at Truman High School and through his role on the CDC for the BVSD. Mark Laidlaw's view of the Common Core was that it represented a change in instructional focus. Laidlaw explained the change from the previous focus on…

> Skills that are simply identification skills, no matter how they were packaged in the past, ultimately the test was always sort of identifying correct answers. Now the focus is shifting to thinking and coming up with an answer based on some sort of conceptualization, a thought process that [students] could formulate an answer as opposed to simply identifying an answer.

Laidlaw also saw the Common Core as including "things that are more having students investigate and look into instead of just being told." For Laidlaw the Common Core represented more than simply having students regurgitate facts. Instead, students not

only would take an active role in their own learning, but they would do so by thinking, conceptualizing, investigating, and formulating answers.

Mark Laidlaw approached the shift to the Common Core with a good deal of skepticism. In large part this was because Laidlaw perceived the Common Core and how administration presented it as an expectation of wholesale change. Laidlaw explained,

> I'd like to think I haven't turned on a dime. I'm sticking to a lot of old patterns and implementing [the Common Core] as a transitional thing. I've had a very hard time just thinking I'm gonna take how I used to do everything and throw it all away and just start by saying, "Okay kids, explore!"

In part Laidlaw's approach to implementation was because he perceived himself as a "buffer" and saw himself as the key person who was able to do what was best for his specific students in his classroom. Laidlaw explained,

> As teachers I always see ourselves as sort of the buffer. The buffer before the educational gurus, the powers that be, that insist that these theoretical ideas that they have will be carried out in the classroom and that will bring great success. Whether it was standards-based curriculum in the past, whether it's Common Core, there needs to be a realization by the powers that be – and they keep saying it but they don't do it – that there is no one size fits all. That no matter what sort of program or curriculum that you institute, it's not going to be successful for everyone.

The result of Laidlaw's understanding was a very methodical interpretation of how he should implement the CCSS in his classroom. He described his implementation of the CCSS in a way that suggested it was on his terms. To the degree implementation was not on Laidlaw's terms – where what he saw as the district's priorities interfered with Laidlaw's own in the classroom – implementation was carried out not for its presumed educative benefit for students, but for the purpose of compliance with administrative expectations. To Laidlaw the Common Core wasn't important – a meaningful curriculum

that students could access was important. To the degree that the CCSS supported that,

they were useful. Like other teachers in Laidlaw's department, his views on enactment of

the CCSS were not perfectly aligned with any of the three perspectives highlighted in the

professional development that I discussed earlier: literacy, inquiry, or rigor.

For Mark Laidlaw, rigor existed – or did not exist – in ways that were not entirely

captured by any of the three perspectives presented in professional development. Instead,

Laidlaw saw himself as ultimately responsible for rigor in his classroom. His way to

ensure that students had access to that rigor was to take seriously his role as a "buffer" to

deliver the parts of the curriculum in a way that was most appropriate for his students.

This took into account Laidlaw's concern for the students who didn't yet have the skill

set nor the building blocks to access what others termed as rigor. Evidence of this

distinction can be found in Laidlaw's difficulty identifying and explaining the new

"rigor" included in the units he helped to develop. To Laidlaw, rigor was embedded in

how students displayed knowledge of material rather than simply what needed to be

done. As he explained,

> A couple of things to be said about [the new push toward rigor]. Number one, it makes the assumption that rigor was not there before these CUPs were in place, and I would challenge that. I would say, hey, for you to assume that rigor wasn't occurring in the past is a mistake, and especially in our department. If you take a look at the scores - both for AP courses that are offered in our department and with even regular social studies courses - I believe we fared quite well. Especially with our student body, you would look at those numbers and I would always look at it as a point of pride that that's something that, you know, we got the most out of these kids. And how do you get the most out of these kids? Well, we must have been doing something rigorous. We must have been doing something that has some value if it could be measured as a success in both AP exams and on standards [based] state exams too. So number one, I question the idea that rigor wasn't occurring in the past.

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Laidlaw's statement about rigor not having occurred in the past was a response to statements that were made by district administrators and the district's curriculum consultant regarding the nature of what counted as learning. As I explained in chapter 4, the view of Buena Vista's curriculum consultant, Janice Conrad, was that the method of learning and assessment that had been in place in Buena Vista – preparing students to take multiple choice tests based on recall of facts – was to be abandoned and replaced with a newly "rigorous" curriculum. The implication to Laidlaw of the new push toward rigor was that there had not been rigor in the past. As a "buffer," however, Laidlaw had never fully bought in to the old way of doing things. In his mind he had been doing something rigorous all along and was intent on continuing to do so.

Just as Laidlaw took issue with the idea that rigor had not been occurring prior to the shift to Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) and the Common Core, he likewise took issue with the fact that the new curriculum provided a guarantee of rigor when followed as written. Because of the mismatch of his view of rigor with that of the district's consultant, Laidlaw had a difficult time framing how the new units of study might be rigorous.

> Number two, if you look at a lot of these CUPs, you can see the attempt at rigor is there or the increase of rigor is there if you want to word it that way. Or maybe that's not the best way to say it. Maybe the assurance that rigor should be built into the course, then I would be contradicting what I just said, but the assurance that some sort of rigor is in place. But yet, when we look at a lot of these CUPs, I think that they are unrealistic in some ways. I think that if you take the model and say, "listen, we're going to do a pre-assessment, a couple of tasks, a post-assessment, and an engaging scenario" that the students' learning will increase. That the rigor will increase. I get the idea of having sort of that, like we've talked about before, those "fenceposts" of common teaching that everyone will do. And I agree with that concept and I think it's a good idea. But to say that a pre-assessment, three tasks, and a post-assessment make rigor - I don't find that to be

so. I don't find that to be true. Especially in history and social sciences, that leaves you with a lot of disconnect. It leaves you with a lot of blanks that need to be filled in. A lot of answers or a lot of activities or connections that need to be made for the whole curriculum to make sense.

Again, this is where Laidlaw's view of himself as a "buffer" came into play. When he referred to "fenceposts," Laidlaw drew from an idea repeated at different professional development activities he had attended, including the one led by Andrew Miller. This idea was that just as a social studies curriculum needed to have opportunities to, as Miller put it, "drill down and get [students'] hands dirty with history," the curriculum also needed connections with the overall narrative. Miller referred to the in-depth learning as fenceposts. The rails connecting the fenceposts, he explained, were those parts of the curriculum to be covered in less depth yet that were still necessary to make connections. Laidlaw's view was that his curriculum needed both the fenceposts and the rails. Moreover, when he said "…that the students' learning will increase. That the rigor will increase," Laidlaw equated the concepts of rigor and learning. He had done the same in his first statement as well, where he used as a measure of "rigor" what students were able to demonstrate on exams. This was supported not only by Laidlaw's explanation, but also by the change – and absence of change – present in Laidlaw's curriculum before and after the adoption of the CCSS. Yet Laidlaw seemed to have difficulty finding any more rigor in the new Buena Vista curriculum than might have existed before. The trappings of rigor and the assurance of rigor did not guarantee rigor to Laidlaw. Instead it was both the ability to connect the pieces in a meaningful way and the results that would follow that Laidlaw associated with rigor. For Laidlaw, the suggestion of having "blanks" and "disconnect" in the curriculum suggests that he saw a

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rigorous curriculum as one that was complete and connected. Moreover, Laidlaw's references to external measures, such as AP test scores and standardized test scores, suggests that his view of rigor was also informed by student results on measures from outside the BVSD.

Noticeably absent from Laidlaw's descriptions of the Common Core were any type of literacy purpose to the implementation of the CCSS. When Laidlaw spoke of students being prepared to engage in Common Core activities involving literacy skills, he spoke as though the preparation would take place externally to his class. In one instance, referring to students who had not done well on an essay that responded to a document-based question (DBQ), Laidlaw explained the preparation he did with his class.

> I had the rubric all laid out, very specific. I showed them in advance what the rubric was going to be for the grading, what prep work they needed to complete, their chicken feet and bucketing and some of the other pre-questions they were going to do, and then how the essay was going to be graded. And that was all. I walked through that even before any of the work was collected to make sure that they had that stuff done. Right? And roughly a third of the kids got an F or did not complete the task.

When he talked of "chicken feet" and "bucketing" above, Laidlaw referred to organizational steps that were part of the writing process from the DBQ Project, a packaged writing curriculum for history on which all social studies teachers in the district were trained. The development of "chicken feet" was the process of identifying sub-theses (each called a "Baby Thesis") that would support the students' overall thesis. "Bucketing" was finding evidence from primary source documents that supported each baby thesis, and in turn the student's overall thesis. To Laidlaw, his role in the implementation of the literacy portion of the CCSS was to follow the writing formula laid

out by the DBQ Project curriculum. Even that brought its own difficulties, however. Laidlaw did not speak of activities he had done by way of literacy preparation or how he guided students through the processes in question – the completion of the process itself was all he discussed. Laidlaw wondered, "Now we're sort of looking at what do you do with that third of kids who are not ready? Who are not prepared? If I were to make the course all DBQ types of things, more rigorous demand, it would be hard for that bottom third of the pool to earn a passing grade." This was one situation in which Laidlaw's role as a buffer is particularly evident. His recognition that he couldn't simultaneously attend to the outside demand for "rigor" and to what he understood to be the expectation that students earn a passing grade had Laidlaw frustrated. This seeming contradiction in Laidlaw's understanding of rigor was explained by him thusly, "that (DBQ-type rigor) is a different kind of rigor." "They talk about reading and writing rigor, you know, literacy rigor. And I don't want to say that's not important, but the history is more important in a history class." This distinction in "types" of rigor is a further example of the distinction Laidlaw saw between "history" and "literacy" in his instruction. With regard to the DBQ Project, Laidlaw saw his role as making connections and implementing a writing program in service of building student understanding of social studies content, yet not necessarily teaching writing to his students. Thus, Laidlaw took ownership of "history rigor" as a teacher to a greater degree than he did "literacy rigor."

While Laidlaw followed the method called for in the DBQ Project writing process, Laidlaw's description of the activity he employed with his students appears to reject outright the literacy approach advocated by Hilton and others. Although Laidlaw

used literacy-based materials in his class, his primary goal for students was not "literacy." This literacy activity was valuable to Laidlaw for its product and the ability to display his use of a sanctioned Common Core activity. The components of the activity such as chicken foot and bucketing were pre-writing activities designed to help students classify information and arguments and build evidence in support of an argument. The lesson to Laidlaw wasn't so much about teaching of literacy skills as it was application of literacy skills in a HSS setting. Laidlaw's view is in line with the idea that the CCSS would serve as a support to the history curriculum and would be useful in terms of building student disciplinary capacity. Moreover, as I also describe with Jeannie Thompson below, the Common Core was compartmentalized in this instance from the "real" curriculum. Laidlaw implemented a "Common Core" lesson in his class, but the lesson was one in which reading and writing were tools for students to use in the lesson rather than skills to be developed. Rather than being viewed as standards in their own right, the CCSS had an impact in the method that they brought to instruction. The inclusion of the CCSS was compartmentalized and secondary to the "more important" goal of learning history.

In expressing his frustration with student work on the students' first writing exercise, which was also the first common assessment among all government teachers in the district, Laidlaw termed the exercise a "miserable failure." He explained, "over 50 percent did not do the homework part. Five students refused to speak for the speaking portion." Laidlaw explained with regard to this assignment, "if I don't dictate every element specifically students will shake their way around responsible work." He

explained his view of the students' perspective as "what little can I do and still receive credit?"

Mark Laidlaw saw the shift to the CCSS as one more way in which the district's pronouncements did not line up with its priorities. While Laidlaw explained the district's pronouncement of rigor as emblematic of a shift in focus, he truly believed that the priorities of the school were elsewhere. He described events that led him to believe that "Standards don't matter. Rigor doesn't matter. Graduation matters." Accordingly, while Laidlaw acknowledged increasing rigor as a goal that the district had expressed, he gave first priority to other goals. As Laidlaw explained, "Administration is someone to be feared. I have learned over time that other elements not related to academics will impact my job, placement, schedule." He told me of other teachers who had been punished for insisting on holding to standards rather than attending to other unwritten organizational goals. Laidlaw explained one incident while in a focus group during which members of Truman's social studies department including Mark Laidlaw, Darryn Yates, and Jeannie Thompson, were present. At the time, Laidlaw told me that he was cautious about holding students accountable because he didn't want to get "Yatesed." When I asked what he meant by that, Laidlaw handed the floor to Yates himself who explained that the year before he had a student who had finished the semester with 58% in his class when the minimum passing grade was 60%. "Bill York (the previous principal) came to me and told me that it was only my class that was keeping this student from graduating and that if I changed my grade she could graduate." Yates explained that he refused to change the grade, citing opportunities that the student had been given throughout the

semester that she had failed to take advantage of. "Bill wasn't very happy about that," Yates explained. The result was a drastic change in Yates's schedule for the next year, including being assigned two courses he had not taught in the recent past and being removed from teaching a senior class for which he was uniquely qualified and Thompson had no background. Jeannie Thompson stated that she had been surprised to receive the senior classes that presumably had been taken from Yates. When she asked the principal about the change, Thompson explained that "[York] told me that as long as I never failed someone who had 58% I could keep those classes as long as I wanted them."

Part of the issue with students' lack of motivation, Laidlaw explained, was an alternative path to credit that was available to students at Truman. Unlike in other departments on campus, students at Truman High School had the option of taking their required social studies classes (World History, United States History, Government, Economics) in an abbreviated summer school class or in an online format using a software program that was used in other departments solely for credit recovery. For a time, Mark Laidlaw was in charge of implementing the online program in Truman's social studies department. Regarding the online course Truman offered that made available the same credit as students might earn in a face-to-face course Laidlaw explained, "If you are truly wanting to prepare students for life and a career, I think simply completing a checklist of things to be done is not necessarily the path that we want to go down in terms of rigor." Laidlaw recounted instances, however, in which he felt his choices were limited. One such instance involved an administrator attempting to intervene to ensure a student could get credit for a course and thus graduate.

I had an administrator three years ago, after I had just given an F to a student for this [online class] approach me the Monday after senior sign out requesting me to enroll the same student in the same course that the student had done absolutely nothing with and giving that student the opportunity to complete the course in 24 hours. So there can be no bigger example of the school or administration saying "we offer a course that can be completed in 24 hours to serve as a semester's worth of work." At that point you're in sort of a sticky predicament because as a teacher with an administrator giving you a directive you need to follow that directive, but yet sort of your conscience begs the question that you have to stand up and say something. So I phrased it in a way like, "Let me get this clear. I just failed this student and you want me to enroll this student with the idea that the student can finish the course in one day? Are you sure you would like to do that?" At that point the administrator did back down and the student didn't get enrolled.

Teachers at Truman explained that the school facilitated the ability of students to avoid rigor by overlaying immediate demands for rigor – for which many students had not been prepared in regular classes. Then when students were not successful, the school substituted less rigorous programs for credit recovery or graduation purposes. As Laidlaw put it, "the good kids take to [greater reliance on student-driven learning] like a fish to water." Yet there was still a "bottom third" of students who were not ready and not prepared. While he expressed hope that "that bottom third of the pool will start shrinking" as students became more accustomed to self-directed learning, Laidlaw also recognized that there were paths to credit that allowed students to opt out of meaningful engagement.

Laidlaw took Yates's story, along with others, as a warning. He feared that by "maintaining standards and holding students accountable" the same thing might happen to him. The message, Laidlaw said, was "don't attempt to hold students accountable." He shared an example of how he put this maxim into practice as Laidlaw discussed the result of his first writing assignment. While Laidlaw described the student work resulting

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from that assignment as "horrific," and the assignment itself as a "miserable failure," he didn't feel like he had the support of the administration to hold students accountable for work they had not completed or had completed poorly. Speaking of his quandary, Laidlaw explained, "I get mad at myself for allowing [low-quality work] and not holding [students] accountable by giving them points for shitty work." Yet he went on to say, "at the end of the day, when push comes to shove, it's easier to give in." However, "giving in" for Laidlaw did not mean acceptance of the new standards as a wholesale shift in his practice. In fact, there were many pieces of Laidlaw's practice that remained the same. The same could be said of Jeannie Thompson, who likewise put priorities such as pass rates and test scores above curricular matters.

Making Adjustments

One unit of study that was illustrative of that changes faced by Laidlaw was his unit on the Constitution. Laidlaw had retained this unit from his instruction before the Common Core, and the unit included a variety of learning experiences for students. Some of these included answering questions from their textbook and completing worksheets provided by the textbook publisher, having students analyze the five basic concepts of democracy, and having students create a faux newspaper from the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Laidlaw explained that the initial steps in his unit were important for student learning because from one activity to the next learning experiences were scaffolded through a series of steps to ensure that students adequately understood concepts before they were asked to apply them.

The Initial Steps

The very first things called for in Laidlaw's unit on the Constitution was a foundation of the basic concepts of what a state is, what government is, and how states are governed. In this phase of instruction, Laidlaw's instruction revolved around introducing students to terms and concepts and ensuring that all students had a similar foundational understanding. Laidlaw's assignments for students at the beginning of the unit had them answering questions such as, "Define government and the basic powers every government holds," and "Identify four theories that attempt to explain the origin of the state," questions that Laidlaw explained could readily be answered by student use of the textbook. Laidlaw's lecture notes took each of the ideas a bit further. Each of the four theories of the origin of the state, for example, was laid out in further detail with an explanation of what each theory meant. Laidlaw also began during this period of instruction to make connections to the United States and the Constitution, delving more deeply into social contract theory and what that meant to the central beliefs on which the United States was founded. Laidlaw explained, "I personally believe [those activities] are essential."

By the time students were done with the first part of Laidlaw's Constitution unit, Laidlaw expected that students should have defined basic terms, understood what a state is and what government is, and understood social contract theory and its role in the development of the early American state. Furthermore, every student in Laidlaw's class should have had fundamentally the same foundation. Ideally, each student would be able to list the four characteristics that make up a state: population, territory, sovereignty, and

government. Students would be able to connect features of the United States to each of the four characteristics. Students would also be able to list and define four theories of the "origin of the state:" force theory, evolutionary theory, divine right theory, and social contract theory. They should then have been able to define and explain social contract theory within the context of the early United States government and Constitution, and understand tensions between majority rule and minority rights as well as government authority and the public good versus individual liberty.

Laidlaw saw the above foundation as essential to the ability of students to be successful. He explained, "If I skip over this stuff [the basic foundation], there is no way students will be able to get the other stuff [more advanced concepts]." Moreover, Laidlaw explained his explicit scaffolding of information is a result of several years of experience, both through trial and error and through coming to understand what his students do and do not understand as he teaches. As Laidlaw shared with his regard to his existing unit, "I've had a very hard time just thinking, 'I'm gonna take how I used to do everything and just throw it all away.'" The understandings of years past thus informed and shaped his subsequent teaching. Unlike what might be found in a packaged or scripted curriculum, Laidlaw's structuring of the textbook and his notes and ability to shape and modify his curriculum over time to ensure that his students were able to "get it" speaks to how Laidlaw saw his role as a teacher: the expert who bridges the gap between instructional materials and the student. Moreover, this also speaks to what Laidlaw understood standards to be. In this instance, as Laidlaw explained, he treated the

Common Core standards as secondary to his first priority of subject-matter standards in History-Social Studies.

Assessments

True to Laidlaw's stance of making a gradual change, his assessments on the Constitution unit showed very little change from before and after the implementation of Common Core standards (see Appendix B for full copies of the assessments). The format of each of the two assessments is similar. Each assessment contained several multiple-choice questions. Each assessment also contained an opportunity for student response, and this is where the old and new assessments began to differ. On Laidlaw's old assessment, students were presented with three multiple-choice questions that required an extended answer such as this one:

8. Today the United States practices this form of government.

a. federal   b. unitary   c. confederacy

Please explain and give reasoning why you selected your answer.

Students were also asked to read passages and respond, as with this question:

12. The uprising in **Massachusetts** began in the summer of 1786. The rebels tried to capture the federal arsenal at Springfield and harassed leading merchants, lawyers, and supporters of the state government. The state militia, commanded by Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, crushed the rebels in several engagements in the winter of 1787. Shays and the other principal figures of the rebellion fled first to **Rhode Island** and then to **Vermont**. Although it never seriously threatened the stability of the United States, Shays' Rebellion greatly alarmed politicians throughout the nation. Proponents of constitutional reform at the national level cited the rebellion as justification for revision or replacement of the **Articles of Confederation**, and Shays' Rebellion figured prominently in the debates over the framing and ratification of the Constitution.

You may use the above passage to explain the role that Shay's Rebellion had on American government.

Each of the two examples above called for students to explain why they answered as they did. In the first question, question 8, students were called on to "explain and give reasoning" for their answer choice. Laidlaw's question went beyond the simple recall called for in a standard multiple choice question and instead asked for reasoning. The same was true in the second question, question 12. Laidlaw shared that a student who could then articulate the story, that Shays and his fellow rebels ("Shaysites") sought to capture the federal armory in Springfield, Massachusetts, failed, and then fled to Rhode Island and Vermont who in turn refused to extradite the Shaysites, thus exposing weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation, could successfully answer that question. In the case of this question, the reading passage served as a cue for students to follow in order to successfully answer the question.

Laidlaw's assessment from after the implementation of the Common Core kept many of the same elements from his prior assessment. Multiple choice questions remained. One of the key differences is that the two reading passages that were in Laidlaw's original document were replaced by a document-based question and a series of images in which students were asked to "discuss" rather than "explain." In question number 1, for example, students were asked to "evaluate the writing prompt in a clear, concise paragraph based on the evidence presented in the documents." The writing prompt itself, "Considering the following documents, discuss the debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists in regards to the creation of the Constitution," called for students to do much the same thing as Laidlaw's original question 12. That is, students were to use prior knowledge, aided by cues in the reading, to write about a topic they

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learned in class. Thus, even with the new assessment in place, the difference between Laidlaw's assessments was not remarkable.

Although Laidlaw acknowledged there was little change in what he expected of students, this didn't mean that Laidlaw hadn't made changes in his practice. True to his stance as a "buffer," Laidlaw continued to make choices that he believed were in the best interests of his students – choices he believed were fully supported by administration. As he noted, "I think administration has been very clear with the idea that it's okay to play with this [new curriculum]." The result was that Laidlaw made adjustments that fit his classroom and his students. "There's been things that I've cut out," Laidlaw explained. "There's been things that are on that CUP that, I'm not saying I'm going to ignore, but maybe I replace it with something that can be done in 20 minutes instead of two days. I've made those adjustments." These defensive adjustments allowed Laidlaw to ensure that he complied with the requirements of the new curriculum on the surface and displayed compliance with teaching the CCSS while allowing him to enact the curriculum he saw as best for his students.

As Laidlaw implemented the Common Core, he made adjustments to the curriculum in ways that reflected both what he understood the CCSS to be as well as what he understood it meant to implement curriculum. The result of this was a curriculum that was not terribly different from his previous curriculum, save for some changes to allow for more student-driven learning – a change that reflected Laidlaw's understanding of what the Common Core meant to his history curriculum. Moreover, Laidlaw's adjustments to his curriculum also took into account his understanding of what

it meant to teach at Truman High School, and where the school's priorities lied. The result of this is that Laidlaw did not insist on the level of rigor he believed that he should lest he run afoul of the organization's other priorities: grades and graduation.

The literature on implementation points to the effects that outside priorities often have on questions of local implementation. Much as Datnow (2006) found that implementation was affected by loose connections among policy levels and that state and local priorities took precedence over the federally-funded program in her study, so too did state and local priorities take precedence in this instance. One distinction, however, was that Laidlaw's interpretation of priorities was not based on an immediate, high-stakes assessment as happened in Datnow's study. For teachers and administrators in Datnow's study, Florida's high stakes assessment took priority over other reform efforts. For Laidlaw, however, there was no high-stakes assessment at stake. Instead, his concerns about pass rates and graduation rates were based on what had been the norm at Truman and in the BVSD and had not yet been superseded by anything new. Yet Laidlaw's acquiescence to what he saw as the district's and school's priorities was largely limited to his attention to pass rates. The curriculum in Laidlaw's class, while it included some new activities that might be labeled "Common Core," was largely unchanged. What Laidlaw did implement included a display of the Common Core – a two-hour activity reduced to 20 minutes – that allowed him to demonstrate compliance. In their study of the implementation of Missouri's "show me" standards, Placier, et al. (2002) noted that in the instance they studied standards had been removed from the daily conditions of classroom teaching. In this instance, the CCSS to Laidlaw served a similar role. The CCSS were important to

Laidlaw as they served his ability to demonstrate he was fulfilling the school's requirements. In terms of his instruction, however, the CCSS did not hold the same priority as Laidlaw's own understanding of what was best for his students. He distanced himself from the pronouncements of the "educational gurus," and instead chose to implement the curriculum in his classroom in a way that best suited his perspective on education. In this instance Laidlaw's role as a buffer mitigated implementation of the CCSS in his classroom.

Laidlaw did not appear to meaningfully draw from any of the three areas of focus from professional development outlined in chapter 4 in developing his curriculum. Hilton's literacy activities were not present in his curriculum, and to the degree that Laidlaw did include literacy strategies they were as a step in an activity that was primarily history-based rather than a literacy-based activity as Hilton outlined. In the DBQ activity Laidlaw described, he recounted *including* literacy strategies – the bucketing and chicken foot – associated with argument writing. Laidlaw's account suggests that he did not *teach* those same strategies, however, leaving it to students to understand those strategies on their own. Laidlaw spoke of using "fenceposts," a term that was also used by Andrew Miller in his discussion of the inquiry perspective, but fenceposts did not mean the same thing to Miller and Laidlaw. For Miller, fenceposts were an anchor where students could study a particular topic in more depth. For Laidlaw, "fenceposts of common teaching" instead referred to teachers using common lessons or activities in teaching the same topic. Furthermore, Laidlaw eschewed that part of the inquiry perspective he saw as "Okay kids, explore!" Laidlaw likewise was not convinced

by the rigor perspective. To Laidlaw, he had been doing "something rigorous all along" and he did not see what Conrad advocated as an adequate replacement for his existing practice.

Laidlaw's view of himself and his description of how he chose to implement the CCSS closely fit Weatherley and Lipsky's (1977) description of the street-level bureaucrat. Laidlaw saw broader education reform efforts as "theoretical," and noted that there was no "one size fits all" that would work for all of his students. Laidlaw's reluctance to fully embrace reform did not stem from laziness on his part or a desire to take an easy path. Instead, as in Weatherly and Lipsky's study, in the face of uncertain guidance and competing priorities, Laidlaw prioritized interpreting and implementing policy directives in a way he believed was best for his students. It is clear from Laidlaw's interactions with administration relative to students' completion of computer-based work that not only was Laidlaw willing to take on more work by challenging the system, but he was also willing to risk his standing with administration in order to "maintain standards" and "hold students accountable." Given what had happened with Darryn Yates the year prior, there was a very present risk to Laidlaw in taking a stand. The result for Laidlaw was the somewhat ironic result that a measure such as graduation rate that had been promoted as ensuring accountability at the state and national level ended up frustrating his attempts to hold students accountable at the local level.

Jeannie Thompson: Not Reinventing the Wheel

The other teacher on whom my study focused, Jeannie Thompson, had taught social studies at Truman for over a decade. Her position at Truman High School was

Thompson's first teaching job. After she attended a small Christian college and earned bachelor degrees in Social Science and Political Science, Thompson student taught in West Park, an upper middle class suburban community in Southern California. She explained that the job market for history teachers in California was particularly thin when she completed her student teaching. "I couldn't get hired right away after I graduated. I turned down a few jobs in areas of California that I didn't want to teach or live in, so I waited. I went into advertising to pay the rent."

Unlike Mark Laidlaw, Jeannie Thompson's college experience was structured by her knowledge that she wanted to become a teacher. Thompson explained that while she enjoyed her history classes most, she went for a degree in social science instead. She explained, "If you had the social science degree you didn't have to qualify [for the teaching credential] with a test. So that's why I picked [the social studies degree] instead of a history degree. [My college] offered a history degree but I didn't go that route because I knew I wanted to be a high school teacher." To that end, Thompson began work as an undergraduate on her teacher preparation classes. "I had a differential learning class as an undergrad, I had introduction to teaching as an undergrad, I had psychology of learning as an undergrad." This led Thompson to have half of the required coursework for her credential done by the time she received her bachelor's degree. Further, as Thompson noted, she "had all of the steps down," meaning she had completed the remainder of her required coursework, before she began her student teaching.

Thompson explained that her student teaching experience was marked by "a lot of freedom." Because her two master teachers were responsible for writing West Park's

charter for the International Baccalaureate program, Thompson recalled that she rarely

saw them. "I watched them for two weeks; they watched me for a week. Then they said,

'you look like you know what you're doing, you look like a responsible young lady,

don't do anything stupid and if you run into trouble let us know – but you're pretty much

on your own. You will rarely see us day-to-day.'" Thompson credited this freedom with

allowing her to figure out how to think on her feet in the classroom. She credited the fact

that she had "all of the steps" already with the fact that she knew what to do. Thompson

also explained that since she team-taught with an English teacher at West Park, the

student teaching experience also taught Thompson "the importance of teamwork." The

result for Thompson, "when the school wants to change something I'm usually one of the

first people on board. I'll go to a training. I'll go do this, I'll go do that. I'm always

looking for new things, a new way of doing things." For Thompson this was important to

her because it kept her interested in what she was doing. "This is a long career,"

Thompson shared, "You've got to keep yourself in it or you're going to get bored or

burnt out and you're not going to want to [teach] any more."

The first thing I noticed when walking into Jeannie Thompson's classroom was

the myriad of student work that covered her classroom's walls. Many of the pieces were

various types of graphic organizers that reproduced and classified facts that students had

picked up through their reading or through instruction. Others tied visual representations

to vocabulary, historical events, or people students had covered in class. Thompson's

classroom appeared neat and organized with a daily learning objective and the date

written on an otherwise empty board, a teacher desk that was clear of clutter, and student

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desks in rows three deep facing a center aisle framed by a whiteboard at each end.

Thompson explained that she did much of her teaching from this "middle space" in her

classroom since it gave her much more direct access to her students. Thompson was

outgoing, lively, and in what looked like a perpetual good mood. Her good relationship

with students was evident as we walked across Truman's campus during the school's

lunch. Students called out to Thompson to greet her by name as she passed by, and she

smiled and greeted each one in turn without breaking stride, making personal responses

to many students and joking with others as we returned to her classroom. She explained

her popularity by saying, "I think a lot of teaching is just building human relationships.

We're not manufacturing anything and I'm not working with machines. I'm working

with humans every single day and…I do think that I do a decent job fostering that human

relationship between myself and my students." This was part of the balance that Jeannie

Thompson struck between her teaching and other demands of her job.

The Conduit

Jeannie Thompson's approach to the CCSS reflected her understandings of the

standards as a different route to get to the same end point. Like David Cohen's math

teacher Mrs. Oublier (Cohen, 1990), Thompson had made a transition from a teacher-

centered pedagogy to one that required a great deal more student involvement. In the

case of Mrs. Oublier, Cohen found that innovative teaching had been filtered through a

traditional approach to instruction. Cohen suggested that this mismatch was because

Mrs. Oublier, and teachers in general, never received any substantive professional

development related to both understanding and implementing new mathematics

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standards. In this case, however, Jeannie Thompson had received extensive professional

development related to the implementation of the CCSS. In addition to professional

development within her school district, Thompson had received extensive professional

development from outside sources, each with a somewhat different spin on the Common

Core. In each professional development opportunity Thompson had multiple

opportunities to engage with the curriculum and to construct the end products she would

then presumably expect of her students. How Thompson understood that professional

development and the meanings she ascribed to terms such as "literacy" were products of

how she understood the environment in which she taught.

The Common Core standards to Jeannie Thompson were what others said they

were – especially those in positions of authority, both administration and presenters at

professional development. Thus, as Thompson explained what the standards mean she

used the term "change" that had been ever-present at each workshop or conference she

attended. She said,

> The first word that I think of is change. Because that's what I'm doing, I'm
> changing. And I'm doing it in a very deliberate manner. I make a very conscious
> and concerted effort to change how I think as a teacher, how I deliver my
> instruction. Essentially I'm teaching the same terms, I'm teaching the same
> vocab, I'm teaching the same concepts, but when I sit down and think about the
> next day's lesson I go out of my way to break all of my old habits and make a
> very deliberate attempt to change the way I deliver that content.

Thompson's statement revealed several key points about what she believed that the CCSS

were. First and foremost, for Thompson the new CCSS were a change in the means of

delivery of the same information. The curriculum students got remained the same: the

same terms, same vocab, same concepts. Thompson's deliberate attempt at change

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instead came from the way she delivered her content rather than what was ultimately taught. Further, Thompson's comment about sitting down and thinking about the next day's lesson suggests that for Thompson the CCSS were not about systemic change; they were simply about delivering the same content to students using a different method. Her method of lesson planning remained relatively unchanged. Thompson explained her approach to planning by comparing it to her time in college, when she would "take big things and chunk them into small things." She went on to explain,

> So that's kind of what I brought to my teaching career. Let's not try to figure out a whole semester in one day. Let's break it up. Let's do unit 1, let's plan that in a couple of days. Then take a couple of days to do unit 2 and unit 3. I think a lot of beginning teachers struggle because instead of seeing smaller pieces they see the year all at once or they see the semester all at once. I try not to do that. I have a big plan in mind, but I really focused on small increments at a time and then I try to link those pieces together one unit into another unit. And I think that philosophy has worked well for me, I mean nobody has complained so far.

While Thompson believed that her methodology had changed, there remained some striking similarities between her old way and her new way. One of these could be seen in her practice of lesson planning from day to day. Under her old way, this consisted of picking up on the PowerPoint at the place she had left off before. Under the new way, her planning essentially remained the same. Even though she noted, "when I sit down and think about the next day's lesson I go out of my way to break all of my old habits and make a very deliberate attempt to change the way I deliver that content," her statement about changing the way she delivered content, as well as the statement about sitting down and planning the next day's lesson, spoke to a different method of doing the same thing: delivering content from day-to-day. This further reinforced the idea that Thompson approached implementation as a series of steps – and that so long as she

correctly followed the steps, she would have implemented Common Core successfully. Likewise, this reinforced that Thompson's view of the HSS curriculum was in "content" to be "delivered" to students.

This view of history curriculum as static would suggest that the inquiry and rigor perspectives would be less compatible with Thompson's understandings. The inquiry perspective relied on essential questions and an "inquiry arc" that would span one or more units of study. The rigor perspective likewise called for essential questions and "big ideas" that would develop over the course of a unit. Both perspectives relied on student investigation and students creating knowledge in one form or another. The literacy perspective, on the other hand, saw the HSS curriculum as static – a perspective that was compatible with Thompsons's view. It makes sense then that when Thompson discussed the CCSS, terms she often used included "literacy," "reading," and "writing."

Thompson's quote about her broader planning process was also illustrative of two points. First, the bottom-up method of planning in "small increments at a time" and the method she mentioned of sitting down and planning "the next day's lesson" suggests an approach that was geared toward teaching content that could be measured in the moment. Such an approach had been valued in the BVSD under NCLB, and given Thompson's background, this understanding of how to plan is not surprising. Such an approach suggests that her approach to history valued transmission of settled facts as knowledge of history. The second was Thompson's measure of the success of her philosophy, notably that "nobody has complained so far." Rather than framing the success of her method of planning in terms of student learning, she instead framed success as an absence of

complaints. This is consistent with her earlier statement about "keeping [her] bosses happy." Given the environment in the BVSD, this suggests that remaining free from complaints was a priority for Thompson and a means of ensuring her survival. Moreover, this suggests that Thompson implemented defensively by planning for outward compliance as her first priority – a priority that given her recommendation by Sheldon she seemed to have achieved.

Thompson's understanding of the CCSS was largely different from that of Laidlaw, a contrast Laidlaw pointed out during one focus group interview where he noted that although Thompson had "turned on a dime," he had not. This was in spite of the fact that both teachers had attended the same professional development opportunities and heard the same presenters' interpretations of the CCSS. This type of mismatch is represented in the literature and has been attributed to the lack of capacity of actors to understand the meanings intended by reformers (Cohen, 1990; Cohen, et al., 2014; Hill, 2001; Placier, et al., 2002; Spillane, 2004). In the case of Miller and Conrad's professional developments, however, there was little, if any, guidance on assumptions and methodologies behind the techniques teachers would need to use to properly implement an inquiry-based or rigorous curriculum. Thompson could be seen as an example of one of the teachers Rob Sheldon discussed who had been "handed every single thing" and had been "babied as to what teaching really is." While Laidlaw had the background to make informed choices about what to include and not include in his curriculum as he made the transition to the CCSS, Thompson did not. The fact that she

"turned on a dime" and embraced the CCSS wholeheartedly likewise did not mean that she did so in a way that aligned with deeper understandings of presenters.

The lack of change in Thompson's planning might be seen as an example of Miller's and Conrad's thinking failing to filter down to the classroom teacher – a key ingredient lost in Spillane's (1998) "telephone game." Where Miller called for the C3's inquiry arc and Conrad extolled a "thinking person's curriculum" based on an iterative process in which "all assessments are formative," Thompson had an approach that was piecemeal rather than holistic. That is, the unit was a product of its pieces for Thompson, rather than the pieces being a part of the "essential questions" and "big ideas" that Conrad had hoped teachers would understand. To be sure, there were pieces of the CCSS that held vastly different meanings to Thompson and those above her in the chain of communication, making the situation ripe for the type of "honest differences" in understanding that might affect implementation (Hill, 2001). These differences in interpretation were magnified because of unclear guidance from the district level. To attribute Thompson's method solely to her (mis)understandings would suggest that implementation took place in a vacuum. There were also competing organizational priorities that Thompson still had to navigate, along with uncertainty surrounding the state's high-stakes test. Moreover, Thompson still was charged with delivering instruction that she believed was best for her students. I detail further in chapter 6 the multiple, sometimes competing influences on what was implemented and how implementation was carried out muddy the picture of implementation and fidelity.

In contrast to Laidlaw's view of the Common Core as, "okay kids, explore," in which students would draw meaning themselves from curricular materials, Thompson's view maintained a structure students should follow by using particular facts in particular ways. For Thompson, learning how to do the Common Core was learning that new structure and series of steps, both for herself and her students. Early in the implementation of the CCSS at Truman, Thompson said, "I'm not used to teaching this way. I'm not used to doing so much reading in class, or structured reading, or structured discussions." Just as implementing the CCSS for Thompson was learning the new steps, it was also adjusting to the abilities of her students. She explained, "I just always assume they can do the things that I did in high school. Yeah, I could do this; they should be able to do that." Thompson thus had to adjust her expectations to fit her students' abilities.

Jeannie Thompson's experience at Truman HS gave her a similar perspective to Laidlaw's as to the real priorities of the school. Thompson explained, "Administrators [used to] put a lot of pressure on teachers to perform and to keep those test scores up." The way to please administrators and to make sure she was "left alone" was to "give [students] all of the information necessary" to "make sure [students] were ready for the CST." Thompson also explained the importance that passing grades had to administrators. She recalled one instance early in her career, in which a number of her students had received F grades. After grades had been posted to the school's student information system, Thompson said she received a printout of all of her students' grades that had been left by an administrator in her mailbox in the staff lounge. Thompson described the list as having "a frowny face and an 'ouch'" next to her list of students with

F grades. "I don't want to get another 'ouch,'" she explained. Jesus Avila, another

teacher in the department, shared another experience he had had with the same

administrator. "[The administrator] complained that [students'] grades were too low. I

said it was because they weren't doing their homework. She said, 'you might want to re-

think that.' I said, 'rethink what?' She said, 'rethink homework.'" "Rethink homework"

was an expression that most teachers in the department who had taught at Truman at that

time agreed meant "stop giving homework" or "stop holding students accountable for

homework." Paula Edwards explained that when the next principal was hired the

"rethink homework" outlook shifted. Edwards commented that the new principal had

said "every kid should have X amount of homework a night for all of their classes – and

if they are not doing their homework there needs to be some kind of consequence." In

spite of, or perhaps because of, these shifting expectations, Thompson made clear that she

learned early on that there were really only two things that would draw the attention of

administration and that she therefore needed to focus on: grades and standardized test

scores.

　　　The attempt to reconcile old and new ways with the advent of the CCSS posed a

quandary for Thompson. While the CCSS and a "new way" of teaching had been

legitimized by district and site administration, no such official pronouncement was made

of anything other than factual knowledge being a marker for proficiency. That is, while

there was ample discussion of how to teach and what the standards meant, there was little

that discussed what students should learn or be able to do as a result of their instruction.

For Laidlaw, this had not been an issue because of his incremental approach to

implementation. For Thompson, however, this lack of clear guidance was a challenge.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the state's adopted standards in history were at

best tangential to the call for change in Buena Vista. Thus, Thompson chose to continue

to value what had been valued before: the potential for student proficiency at recognition

and recall of historical facts.

When I talked with Jeannie Thompson about what the shift to the Common Core

meant to what she was expected to do, both in the focus group and individually, she

focused on her desire to remain in the good graces of the school's administration. While

in the past Thompson had been concerned about getting another "ouch" from

administration, her fear of repercussions for not implementing the CCSS in her classroom

had not changed. She explained how in order to be "left alone" she focused on test scores

in her classes almost to the exclusion of everything else.

> In the past so much emphasis…was placed on your scores on the CSTs need to be
> high. And because I trusted my students so very little and I trusted myself so
> much more I had a tendency to lecture, direct instruction, spoon-feed this is what
> you need to know so that your scores will be good on this test so that I look good,
> so that I get complimented, and so I get left alone. So I get schedule
> consideration and I am liked by my supervisors and my bosses. Because
> everybody wants that as an employee, right?

Jeannie Thompson also expressed her concern over keeping her supervisors happy with

other teachers in a focus group that included most of Truman's social studies department.

She and Joy Papathakis, Truman's social studies department chair, explained that within

the current context at Truman the new way to please administration was student-directed

learning.

> Interviewer: You seem to say that [student-directed learning] is the new way to
> please everyone.

Papathakis: Yes. I'm sure it is, right?   If you refuse to do it or still do it the old way you're not going to be pleasing the people above you. And all of those same considerations that were mentioned (schedule changes, job security, etc.) might come back into play. So, whether you agree with it or not, right, that's the reality that we as teachers exist in.

Thompson: I don't think that we can escape that.

Papathakis: No.

Thompson: When it comes down to it this[[18] is a job.

Papathakis:]we're employees

Thompson: People are paying us[and it's just human nature to want to protect that.[And I don't want to lose my job.

Papathakis:]I agree
          ]do what you've gotta do.

One common theme in this focus group, and a point of agreement for most teachers in Truman's social studies department, was that the desires of administration ultimately took precedence over the curricular content in their classrooms. A point of concern for teachers, however, was not knowing what ultimately would be expected from them under the new CCSS. Joy Papathakis spoke for many teachers in the group when she said she thought that the implementation of the Common Core would eventually be driven by the requirements of the test and ultimately force teachers to conform to a model that yields the best test scores. Papathakis said, "I have no problem working with cross-curriculum with English teachers and all that, but I'm afraid [the curriculum is] not going to be driven by my professional opinion or my colleagues. Instead [the curriculum will be driven by] the consortium of test makers."

[18] Brackets mark overlapping speech. The opening bracket on one speaker's line matches the closing bracket on the next speaker's line. Utterances are also spaced horizontally to match timing of speech.

For Thompson, this uncertainty meant that things that had previously been important, such as grades and test scores, would continue to be important until she was told otherwise. Thompson's implementation was consequently marked by her willingness to enact the new curriculum faithfully while maintaining a view of history knowledge that aligned with the old test. In this way Thompson was able to implement the Common Core in her classroom, as was administration's wish, yet also attend to a measure that was recently valued and not yet replaced – "knowledge" as facts to drive performance on a test.

The Common Core Standards

Just as the BVSD saw itself as being on the forefront of the CCSS movement, so too was Truman High School on the forefront of the CCSS movement – especially in HSS, where Truman's prior principal, Bill York, had made a point of trying to integrate the CCSS in HSS. Teachers in Truman's history department had several professional development opportunities, and teachers took part in trainings at the site, district, county, and state levels that were supposed to help teachers better understand the CCSS and what they needed to do in their classrooms to transition. Despite attending most of the same trainings, however, Laidlaw and Thompson had different ideas of what the CCSS meant in his or her classroom. For Laidlaw, the CCSS reflected a move to student-directed learning. For Thompson, it represented a move to more literacy activities using HSS content.

While Thompson positioned herself as having changed, what she described was that her pedagogy had changed, but her expectations of what students should know as a result of her instruction had not. Her instruction called for the same end result – knowledge of "the same terms…vocab…concepts." An example is an activity Thompson described as student-directed, but that she structured to point students to the same list of facts she would have taught previously.

> Instead of me telling them what they need to know, I try to design activities that they access the information themselves, and then we talk about [the activity]. 'You just read something that gave you information about the causes of the American Revolution, and I structured this activity for you to have an opportunity to find those causes yourselves, and I had you fill out this graphic organizer yourself. Now let's come together as a class and make sure we all have a very good understanding of the causes of the American Revolution. Whereas in the past I would throw up a slide and say, "these are the causes of the American Revolution" and they simply copied it down.

Thompson's lesson for this activity relied on a graphic organizer that she received from one of her professional development workshops. The workshop in question was a three-day conference that took an existing guide for teaching reading and writing strategies in social studies classrooms and repackaged it as "Common Core" without significant modifications to its contents. The product Thompson expected was a completed graphic organizer that was designed to help students organize facts yet did not ask any more of students. Boxes on the graphic organizer asked students to list facts related to topics such as advantages and disadvantages of the "United States" and British armies. These were fundamentally the same topics that had been covered in the PowerPoint presentation

Thompson had previously used, yet as Thompson noted students were accessing the information themselves rather than having it "spoon fed."

Example: The Civil War and Reconstruction

Another example Thompson shared of how she had changed her instruction was a unit she had done in her eleventh grade US History class on the Civil War and Reconstruction. While in California the Civil War and Reconstruction are included in the eighth grade US History standards rather than eleventh grade, Thompson explained that her classes do a "quick review" at the beginning of the year. She shared differences between the "old way" she taught and the "new way."

Thompson's old way involved lecture from a PowerPoint presentation of nearly 150 slides. The presentation was one from among a set that Truman's social studies department had purchased for the use of teachers in the department. Thompson's method of teaching had been a "really intense lecture style" using one of those PowerPoint presentations "almost slide by slide, day by day, until we were done." She explained, "My old lesson planning technique was simply to start the day, pull out the PowerPoint file that we were learning about, find the last slide of the previous day, and start there. Thompson would "teach, and tell stories, and explain things, and really teach the PowerPoint to them, explaining all of the stories. Telling [students] all of the really cool stuff the PowerPoint doesn't have." The PowerPoint itself was arranged thematically, with themes such as "The Freedmen's Bureau," "Presidential Reconstruction," and "Radical Republicans" being presented quasi-chronologically with some overlap. Some slides in the PowerPoint were text-dense, many with over 100 words, and listed key facts

or provided background or explanation for a key event that Thompson expected students to copy into their notebooks. Other slides were exclusively visual in nature, including political cartoons, drawings, photos of key individuals, and maps. Occasionally, besides the PowerPoint, Thompson explained she would include a video or an activity "to break up the monotony." After the PowerPoint was finished, Thompson would give a multiple-choice test that was based on facts students had learned and start again on the next unit.

For Thompson, her new unit on Reconstruction was a break from her old methodology and a "prime example" of the new way she was teaching. Thompson's changes in the Reconstruction unit revolved around much of what she learned at yet another of the professional development activities she had attended, training on implementing the DBQ Project. The result was an 8-day unit centered around a document-based question from the DBQ Project, "North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?" (DBQ Project, 2009). When I asked Thompson for her plans for this unit, she sent me the following:

> Prior to Day 1 assigned the chapter section with Reconstruction to be read prior to day 1.
>
> Day 1 Vocab assignment: Reconstruction, Freedman's Bureau, Andrew Johnson, 13th, 14th, 15th Amendments, KKK, and de jure segregation. Using AVID strategy TPR (Total Physical Response Vocabulary). Groups are assigned word, students discuss and define the word, groups decide how they will physically demonstrate the meaning of the word and presents to class.
>
> Day 2 Structured Academic Discussion going over the reading and addressing any questions. Students must ask and answer at least 2 questions each. I keep track of participation, and clear up any misunderstandings if there are any and gently nudge conversation if they get stuck.

Day 3-8 Used DBQ Project mini-Q on Reconstruction.

Assessment was completing intro Paragraph for DBQ Essay.

Most notable in Thompson's description of her plans for this unit was her reliance on outside "experts" for her planning. Her activities for days 1 and 2 were pulled from a workshop she had attended on AVID strategies in the social studies classroom. Her brief note for days 3-8, "Used DBQ Project mini-Q on reconstruction," was telling for both its brevity and its assumption of the mini-Q being a lesson outline with a uniform set of procedures to follow such that her statement might demonstrate to anyone familiar with the curriculum materials exactly what she did. While I had attended the DBQ Project training with Thompson and others as a participant-observer and thus she might believe me to be more knowledgeable without need for additional detail, her lack of elaboration or additional context suggests that she believed that our interpretation of what the lesson entailed and how it was to be implemented would be fundamentally the same. Furthermore, Thompson believed that she had license to deviate from the assurance that students would still get the same content. She explained, "This (unit on Reconstruction) is just review; [students] don't need this."

Rigor Under CCSS

Thompson understood the CCSS as distinct standards that were outside the curriculum and were enacted through a specific type of activities or assignments from class. Thus, when Jeannie Thompson talked about the CCSS, she didn't explain what the CCSS were, so much as what she did in her classroom to implement the CCSS. Moreover, implementing defensively, her interpretation of the CCSS was based almost

exclusively on her interpretation of others' interpretations of the Common Core. The

Common Core's relevance to Thompson was in how it shaped her existing curriculum.

Yet even as she believed that she faithfully implemented the Common Core, Thompson

still had misgivings about her ability to translate many of the activities she was doing into

meaningful grades. Reflecting back to her teacher-training program, Thompson stated,

"For me personally [evaluating student writing] is hard, because in my teacher training I

never really had a lot of direct instruction myself on how to analyze, grade, and judge

student writing." This desire for "direct instruction" on how to evaluate writing is

perhaps no surprise, given that Thompson's background in teacher education and

induction valued "steps" and a measurable, positivist approach to assessing student

learning. While Thompson explained, "I do use rubrics," she was not entirely

comfortable with them. "I always struggle when I decide a grade," Thompson explained,

"there's a lot of second guessing. Am I really sure it's a 3? Could it be a 4? Is it a 2?"

Also notable is that Thompson did not see most of the new Common Core activities she

was doing as assessment of student learning. Thompson explained that she was

concerned about her United States History classes because "the new struggle is how do I

assess their knowledge?" For Thompson that knowledge she sought was displayed in a

"pen and paper" test. Indeed, from before she implemented the Common Core to after

Thompson's tests did not change significantly in terms of what counted as knowledge.

Questions with multiple choice options were replaced with blanks to be filled, but aside

from the shift from recognition to recall the questions were fundamentally the same –

student knowledge of a correct set of history facts. A second part of Thompson's test

called for students to circle the correct word from two choices to complete a sentence, such as "The second amendment maintains that states have the right to have (armed militias/legislatures)." Absent from her tests were the types of reading and writing activities Thompson had implemented in her classroom. Instead, driven by her understanding of what counted as history knowledge, Thompson attempted to reconcile her new means of instruction with an old understanding of how it meant to demonstrate proficiency in history. This was especially challenging because although there was a great deal of talk of change, and Thompson had committed wholeheartedly to that change, many of the structures from before the CCSS were still in place in the BVSD. State HSS standards had not changed and district administrators still required benchmarks that assessed the same history knowledge that had been valued under NCLB. Thompson's response was to seek help from outside experts and to follow faithfully the experts introduced by the district. In this way, she could "keep [her] bosses happy" by demonstrating compliance with the CCSS while at the same time maintaining compliance with what had been expected previously.

Interestingly, for Thompson's talk about not being sure what to do to assess the knowledge of students who hadn't tested as often as before, her understanding of rigor as it related to student capability was bound up in a reading and writing activity in her classes. When I asked her to explain rigor in her classes she described,

I would feel very successful if 80 percent of my students…if I could give them a reading with a written product due at the end and have them self-start, do it all themselves, do the product [themselves]. And have it be good, of good quality, of high quality. Proper

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grammar, proper punctuation, indentions, the historiography is good, the historical

information is accurate, and good, you know, everything good about it. Yet even with

the turn by Thompson toward written work in her class, there remained a checklist of

criteria she used to judge what work was "good." While grammar played a small role in

her grading scheme Thompson explained,

> [The grade is] mostly content. Are [students] able to show their knowledge of US history in their writing? Are they using the right names like they should? Are they sourcing the documents that they're using to do their writing? Are they using the right document to support their argument? Because in the documents that we have, like in the SHEG [Stanford History Education Group] activities or in the DBQ Project, certain documents support one side of the argument. So we want to make sure they are using the right documents to support the right side of the argument.

Unlike Laidlaw, who explained that a checklist was antithetical to rigor, for Jeannie

Thompson the checklist was a tool to ensure that there was rigor in her classes. So long

as students could pick a side and make the "right" choices from her checklist of criteria,

students could successfully produce a written document that demonstrated rigor. Unlike

the heuristic of a rubric that gave Thompson pause when assessing student work, a

checklist had no such ambiguity.

Even as Thompson described rigor as a checklist, however, some of the activities

she described doing with documents broke from that checklist and pointed to an approach

that allowed for more flexibility. Thompson explained that much of her class was now

focused on students using "social studies skills" and writing.

> Now that's the majority of what we do. Analyzing political cartoons, reading maps, reading charts, reading graphs, reading primary sources. Then we talk about this issues that are in those documents, coming up with some really basic kinds of theses that we can prove using the documents. The inevitable question I get from there is always, "Mrs. Thompson, what's the right answer?" I keep

telling them not necessarily is there going to be just a black and white right answer. You can choose this side of the argument or you can choose this side of the argument as long as you can prove using the documents and things that I give to you. As long as you can prove what it is that you are saying, you can still get full credit.

Her different approaches point to Thompson experimenting with different ways of implementing the Common Core. Using the foundation of outside experts as guides, Thompson mixed and matched different instructional methods and methods of assessment, each of which she has learned from a different conference or workshop, all the while ensuring that she maintained a safety net under students so that they were able to continue to meet what she understood to be the school's organizational goal: passing her class.

The impact of the CCSS on HSS instruction at Truman HS varied based on who was teaching. At minimum, teachers introduced "common core" activities into their classes, although the nature of those activities was not necessarily uniform. Moreover, for both Mark Laidlaw and Jeannie Thompson the changes seemed to be limited to a different way of getting to the same end result. For Laidlaw, this meant a bit more reading and writing and a display of the CCSS – taking 20 minutes rather than 2 days to drop in a "common core" activity. For Thompson, this meant students learning and reproducing the same fact-based knowledge of history, only in a different format. Even in activities designed to have students gather evidence and support and defend a thesis, there were "right documents" that provided the "right facts" to support a student's given side of the argument. As can be seen, the implementation of the CCSS in the BVSD was complex, and encompassed a number of factors both with regards to implementation and

the nature of HSS education. In the next chapter I discuss that complexity and examine

how this study fits with existing knowledge about implementation and HSS education.

Chapter 6

Discussion, Implications, and Call for Future Research

The implementation of the CCSS in HSS in the BVSD reflected the complexity that the literature on implementation associates with a new policy or program. In this study I found that teachers in the BVSD were introduced to three different perspectives on the CCSS and their role for HSS. Consistent with the literature, teachers imputed their own understandings to the CCSS, yet there was "cover" for teachers to do so in that enough points of view were represented in professional development that existing practice could be repackaged to be "common core."

Understandings of the CCSS

Those implementing the CCSS drew from their reservoirs of understanding to make meaning of the CCSS in a way that was appropriate given their understandings and the circumstances in the BVSD. Actors in the BVSD understood the CCSS to be a wholesale change in not just curriculum, but the way instruction was to happen. The nature of the change itself, however, was less specific and open to interpretation. Spillane, et al. (2006) captured this phenomenon and suggested that actors' own differing understandings of subject matter, teaching, learning and students was more important than their views toward a reform at accounting for implementation. Combined with teachers imputing their existing understandings to new ideas and teachers focusing on superficial features of a reform, it would be entirely possible for teachers to be fully supportive of a reform, make an honest attempt to faithfully implement a reform, and still fall short of reformers' goals. For instance, Cohen, et al. (2014) found that when teachers

interpreted external support for a reform as "technocratic, warranted, and welcome," it resulted in "rote, mechanistic" implementation of the reform they studied rather than the "expert, adaptive" implementation that creators of the reform had hoped for (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 66).

In order to understand what the CCSS meant to actors as it related to HSS instruction in the BVSD, we must consider ideas actors in the BVSD held surrounding the nature of the HSS curriculum. For years in the BVSD, the HSS curriculum had been focused on maximizing student test scores. The result was a HSS curriculum that was targeted toward the state exam. The curriculum itself, as the experiences of Kati Song and Joy Papathakis illustrated, saw nominal - though not necessarily substantive - teacher input. Once essential standards were established each year, there was little room for teacher autonomy. HSS instruction was focused on preparing students to recognize a correct answer on the BVSD's multiple choice benchmark exams and California's STAR test. A similar instructional focus in a school district in Inland Southern California bred "lower expectations" for students by teachers and resulted in "uninspired teaching" (Sandholtz, et al., 2004, p. 1200). McNeil (2000) likewise found the relatively limited, test-focused curriculum of the Texas magnet school she studied to be a "barrier to substantive teaching" (McNeil, 2000, p. 205). Teachers in the BVSD, like those in McNeil's district whose curriculum was reduced to "lists and facts" (McNeil, 2000, p. 212), had worked with a history curriculum in which what had been valued was student test scores. In the BVSD, pressure was on both teachers and administrators to attend to student test scores, pass rates, and graduation rates. A premium on learning that could be

"measured in the moment," as one of the district's curriculum guides stated, meant that teachers delivered the history curriculum as a set of teachable, testable facts.

The Cognitive Perspective on Implementation

When it came time to shift to new expectations under the CCSS, teachers and administrators had as their reference point for HSS instruction 10 years in which the HSS curriculum was valuable to the degree it prepared students to be successful on a multiple choice test. Analysis skills were not valued – in large part because they weren't needed. Pronouncements in the BVSD suggested that this was to change under the CCSS. Spillane (2004), in discussing his cognitive perspective on implementation, identified three factors that he found to be necessary for successful implementation of policy: sense-making and human resources; social resources; and staffing, time, and materials. Spillane defined the first factor, sense-making and human resources, in terms of the *human capital* of individuals, which he defined as "the development of skills and capabilities that enable people to perform in new ways" (Spillane, 2004, p. 94). This depends on both the individual capacity to understand a change or reform and the ability to spread that understanding to others who may lack the same degree of human capital. In the BVSD this type of human capital was lacking in many of the individuals responsible for enacting reform.

For Nadine Hilton, the question was one of understanding the change or reform itself as something new rather than a repackaging of old ideas. Rather than recognizing that current understandings and practice were inadequate, as Spillane suggests is necessary for change, Hilton had made sense of the new reform in terms of the old

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framework that she had been trained on and that she knew the district valued. Reform to her wasn't about understanding deeper structural differences in the way that Spillane associated with human capital. Instead reform to Hilton was taking existing practices and employing them in a new way – and thus not reforming practice, but repackaging it. Literacy remained something that could be taught by formula – and the formula used for teaching literacy, *Step Up to Writing*, did not change. The change was in the context of who would be doing the teaching (social studies teachers) and what the subject of the writing would be (history facts). This was not a result of a lack of desire to change, but rather a lack of capacity to understand what change entailed and a misunderstanding of reform that was intended to be transformative as something that was instead procedural. Moreover, the end goal of the teaching process remained the same as it had been previously in the BVSD: performance on the state test.

For Miller and Conrad, on the other hand, the question of human capital was not one of understanding the reform, but instead one of spreading the understanding of that reform to others who lacked the type of human capital Spillane suggests they would have needed to make sense of that reform. Yet making sense of reform does not simply include interpreting reform in a manner consistent with the intent of those who created it. Sense-making must necessarily include the implementation of reform within the context in which the reform is enacted. In this case both Miller and Conrad articulated a vision for what implementation of the CCSS should look like. For Conrad especially, these visions did not take into account contextual factors for which actors needed to account in making sense of the reform. That is, when Conrad called the new curriculum units a

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"thinking person's curriculum" and called for students to reach higher levels on Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge, those expectations did not factor in the expectations teachers faced to maintain grades, graduation rates, and to continue to perform on benchmark assessments that valued student recall of facts.

Complicating the implementation picture in California was state law that left the ultimate decisions on curriculum in the hands of the LEA. California's standards specifically noted that it was not mandatory that standards be implemented by any LEA (California Department of Education, 2000, 2013). Moreover, interpretations over what standards meant to instruction were also left in the hands of the LEA. Thus, there were several different perspectives on what the CCSS meant, examples of which I examined in chapter 4, and no uniform guidance from the state. Weintraub (2000) found that in the face of the then-new California HSS standards, the Oakland Unified School District elected to build its own curriculum in the face of standards it deemed were not sufficiently inclusive. In the case of Oakland, while initial attempts to build teacher capacity in implementing the district's new HSS curriculum were somewhat successful, ongoing issues with funding and lack of capacity from new teachers in the district who did not understand Oakland's unique program meant that the program was not ultimately successful. All of this added up to a picture of state "standards" that while uniform across the state intentionally allowed for local interpretation and variation.

Social Resources

In describing the role of social resources in implementation, Spillane drew from Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) to explain how social resources could "facilitate

the transfer and development of knowledge." Spillane went on to state, "Developing social capital involves changing the way people relate with each other in order to facilitate the attainment of goals that would not be possible without those relations" (Spillane, 2004, p. 98).

In the BVSD social networks were closed groups of people who held similar limited views. Communication among levels at the district level, to the degree that it existed, was predominantly limited to communication through channels and proxies rather than open communication between teachers and administrators. Teachers primarily communicated with other teachers, and as they had no evidence to the contrary teachers assumed that everything else in the district remained status quo – and that any change was limited to a piece of curriculum. Teachers relied on cues such as the maintenance of multiple choice benchmark exams, along with their understandings of past practice, to support their understanding that the "big change" wasn't. Trust was lacking in the BVSD. Missteps or attempts to "maintain accountability" were punished by administration. Honest, open communication was rare between levels and information was tightly guarded. There was no clear sense of direction and no sense of obligation between levels.

The result of unclear guidance, lack of trust, and teacher reliance on environmental cues was defensive implementation by teachers in the BVSD. What is interesting is that while teachers seemed to have the same understandings of what held value to the school district, even among teachers there was very little coordination. Teachers had no issue with providing candid assessments of the school and district when

we met together in focus groups. In more than one instance, teachers shared sensitive

information with the group that could potentially be used by administration against that

teacher if it were to become public. Teachers clearly trusted one another – and me as a

researcher – in a way that would suggest that they were comfortable with one another and

with me. Although there was discussion of the CCSS, and although I was asked my

opinions on the CCSS more than once, I did not see teachers' attitudes or perspectives

toward the CCSS change appreciably over the course of my study. As I discussed in the

methods section above, I was afraid that my input might alter participants' interpretations

of the CCSS. To the contrary, however, neither Jeannie Thompson nor Mark Laidlaw

expressed a different view of the CCSS as a result of our discussions – and in more than

one instance continued to maintain an interpretation of the CCSS that ran counter to that I

had shared. This suggests that social resources played little role in either Thompson's or

Laidlaw's implementation. Instead, each teacher drew from her or his existing

understanding of teaching to drop "common core" activities into their existing

curriculum.

Staffing, Time, and Materials

The third factor that Spillane cites that can affect faithful implementation is

staffing, time, and materials – something that it would appear that the BVSD had a great

deal of. Hundreds of teachers developing curriculum units met regularly over parts of

two school years and put literally tens of thousands of work hours into learning about the

CCSS and developing curriculum units. By any measure, this was a massive scale

operation. However, even with this time commitment, the BVSD more closely

resembled districts Spillane studied that had low support for standards than high-support districts (Spillane, 2004). Specifically, although there was a great deal of noise around the transition to the CCSS, much of the reform was simply repackaging existing practices. In this instance, the factor was not about the amount of time spent, but rather how the units were built. Rather than spending time creating units that would be transformational in nature, BVSD teachers defensively built units in a procedural way – sometimes paying more attention to filling boxes than to the content of those boxes. Much as there were multiple interpretations of the CCSS that came into play as teachers in the BVSD were introduced to the CCSS in HSS, so too were there multiple standards within the CCSS that could support those interpretations. For purposes of HSS, writing standards WH 11-12.1 and WH 11-12.2 facilitated differing perspectives on history. Standard WH 11-12.1 called for students to write arguments based on discipline-specific content. This standard provided a foundation for Andrew Miller's inquiry perspective and its focus on the C3 standards. This also provided a foundation for Janice Conrad's call for rigor and students' creating knowledge as part of reaching the highest levels of Bloom's and Webb's. Standard WH 11-12.2, on the other hand, called for students to write informative/explanatory texts in order to "examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately." The text of this standard points to students not as constructors of knowledge, but to students as taking established ideas and conveying them in a way that valued clarity and accuracy. It is not a leap to view the wording of this standard as privileging a view of history as static.

Equal Priority for the CCSS and HSS

Of note is that for the BVSD HSS standards and CCSS anchor standards held equal

priority in terms of expected student mastery. As an example, in the eleventh grade

United States history unit on the Constitution, on par with describing the Enlightenment

and analyzing the ideological origins of the American Revolution as called for in HSS

standards was writing "informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical

events" (see Writing Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and

Technical Subjects, standard 11-12.2 in Figure 4.2). The CCSS standard in this case

points to a specific way of approaching history, as a static set of events that can be

explained in a narrative. Such an approach is consistent with a collective memory

approach that privileges a general narrative with specific events and people that has been

the standard for determining if students know history for nearly 100 years.

(VanSledright, 2008).

The Importance of Context

Change was not dependent only on the language and reform and implementation

and mis/understandings of different concepts or ideas, but it was also dependent on

teacher understandings of broader concepts such as what it meant to teach. Teacher

understanding of the CCSS was not limited to the text of the standards themselves. In

this instance, teachers weighed what they understood the CC to be, what they understood

teaching to be, and what they understood the organization's expectations to be. None of

these understandings had explanatory value on its own. Nor was the ratio the same for

Laidlaw or Thompson. Laidlaw was the consummate street level bureaucrat, working the

system to maximize his ability to deliver what he believed students needed. His

understanding of the CCSS was that it was one more pronouncement by the "educational

gurus" that he needed to buffer, adapt, and at minimum display. Thompson was a good

soldier, working to attempt to implement the CCSS in a way that she believed would

please administration and be faithful to the reform.

Defensive Implementation of the CCSS

Standards themselves are a political document. Factors outside of education often

limit what is or isn't included in standards – and how those standards end up being taught

(Hill, 2001; McNeil, 2000; Nash, et al., 1997; Placier, et al., 2002; Van Sledright, 2008;

Weintraub, 2000). That heightens the potential for standards to be denatured (Hill, 2001;

McNeil, 2000; Placier, et al., 2002). The CCSS was a 50-state initiative. Views on what

HSS instruction is and what it should be are not uniform across the 50 states. While the

push for national standards in history had stalled, seemingly permanently (Nash, et al.,

1997), the CCSS subject area standards provided a set of standards that were

simultaneously history standards and not history standards. Because they were intended

to be implemented in history classes, the CCSS anchor standards for HSS can be viewed

as history standards. On the other hand, the fact that the anchor standards were written as

ELA standards without meaningful input from those in HSS makes the CCSS *not* history

standards at the same time. This could make political sense to ensure adoption in states

with legislation like Florida's which requires a factual approach to American history.

Florida law reads,

> American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed
> as knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new

nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence (Florida Statutes, Title XLVIII, Chapter 1003.42).

It would not take a large leap to see the logic behind editing WH standard 2 to be a "least common denominator" that would allow for that standard to be palatable to legislators in Florida and Texas while also being acceptable to legislators in California. In this case, however, the replication of facts/narrative as a means of displaying history knowledge effectively telegraph an interpretation of history instruction in the process. Those who see standards as a destination rather than as a foundation would be more likely to privilege that definition. "Deconstructing" standards only has the potential to fuel that fire, as narration without analysis would privilege a collective memory approach – especially if HSS were to be subordinate to ELA.

While the actions of teachers in the BVSD point to *defensive implementation*, that was facilitated in part by a set of defensive standards. That is, the CCSS themselves were designed so that they could be politically palatable to multiple, often competing, constituencies. The question of whether to treat history as an argument about the past or as a series of events told as a narrative was neatly sidestepped by the inclusion of a writing standard that would support each. When the CCSS were adopted by California, they simultaneously were not binding on school districts and vitally important to school districts. State law in California gave ultimate authority for standards and curriculum to local school boards. At the same time, state and federal measures of academic performance were based on the CCSS. For a school district like the BVSD that had to attend to both state and federal measures, the standards were important for what they represented in terms of larger accountability measures. Nadine Hilton's literacy

perspective on the standards was evidence of a defensive posture on the part of her and the school district. The test was used as the driver of instruction, and the literacy perspective was designed to maximize student performance on the SBAC. In a place where attention to pass rates and test scores had been valued, it makes sense that in the absence of communication Hilton and others would default ot what had been valued in the past.

Beyond that, the CCSS standards for HSS were effectively off the radar of the teachers I studied until after they had already been adopted. As I noted earlier, they are both history standards and not history standards. As at every level of implementation I examined in this study, that flexibility and ambiguity both facilitates and frustrates the implementation of the CCSS. Because everyone can see what they want, implementation is facilitated as adoption and integration becomes easier politically. At the same time, uniform implementation is lost as reform becomes relabeling of existing practice. Moreover, the case of the BVSD shows us that even in the face of the same standards, the same trainings, and the same school site Mark Laidlaw and Jeannie Thompson understood and implemented the CCSS in HSS in vastly different ways. This is because the core concept of what it meant to teach and learn history remained the same.

Unlike the CCSS in ELA, the CCSS in HSS did not replace a set of existing standards. Instead, the CCSS anchor standards supplemented an existing set of HSS content standards that had been created 15 years prior to the CCSS. HSS teachers had already built their instruction around the HSS standards and particularly a certain way of implementing the HSS standards under the BVSD's system of essential standards. No

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changes in expectations relative to coverage of the HSS standards was announced, except for the fact that the district no longer had essential standards. HSS teachers in the BVSD dropped the CCSS into their curriculum as distinct activities and lessons. Standards could thus be completed within a circumscribed space and did not need to spill over into the "real" curriculum. In this way, teachers could demonstrate the implementation of the CCSS in their classrooms without making changes that could potentially have ramifications in terms of district benchmarks and student grades. This was important because old priorities were not reevaluated in light of new priorities. This is not a surprise when considered in light of other implementation research that shows that priorities of one stakeholder in the system are not necessarily the same as – and sometimes run counter to – the priorities of other stakeholders in the system.

In this case the standard became a secondary concern – effectively the standards became what was tested/valued. In the absence of clear direction, actors fell back on what had been tested/valued in the past as a framework for understanding the new reform. Conspicuous display of the standard was a marker of implementation of the standard and of teachers playing by the rules while teachers at the same time engaged in practices they believed were necessary in order to remain in administration's good graces.

Limitations of This Study

This study captures a specific moment in time in the BVSD through the perspective of BVSD HSS teachers. While the teachers I spoke with were particularly candid in their views, explanations, and descriptions, it remains that the sample of teachers I spoke with was partial. Two teachers in Truman's social studies department

elected not to participate in my study. Thus, their perspectives were not represented in the focus group, nor were their perspectives considered for deeper focus. Whereas teachers were often cooperative (and sometimes too cooperative – one offered to say whatever I needed him to in order to "make [my] study work," an offer I politely declined), administrators were often more reticent and guarded. Some offered candid comments on the condition I would not include them in my work. It would have been advantageous to have been able to collect more data from administrators, yet I also can't help but think that the data I wish for may not have been there to be had.

As with any qualitative study, the findings in this study are relevant to this specific case and are not necessarily generalizable across contexts. I suggest that enough variability exists even within the study that I would caution readers not to generalize within Truman High School or the BVSD based on the perspective of solely one teacher.

Implications of This Study and a Call for Further Research

The data from this study, especially when viewed with the data from other implementation research, suggests that the multiple factors that influence actors enacting policy virtually ensure a lack of consistency and uniformity in the enactment of policy. While much of the literature on implementation has concerned itself with seeking ways to ensure more consistent, faithful implementation (Cohen, et al., 2014; Hill, 2001; Spillane, 2004), the history of reform suggests that goal may very well be illusory. The system of education governance in California is such that local school boards have a large amount of power over what is taught and how. This tradition of local control has been tightly guarded over time, and there is no suggestion that local school boards will willingly give

up control anytime soon. At the same time, however, the State of California spends millions annually to test and evaluate how well students, schools, and districts perform on an exam based on a uniform set of state standards. To further complicate this picture, the history of reform over time has shown that what is initially valued in one reform is often excoriated in the next (Evans, 2011). So what of reform?

Attention has been paid to the idea of implementing reform, but little attention in the literature on reform has been paid to developing teacher capacity to enable better instruction that would obviate the need for the type of upheaval that the term "reform" calls for. Those works that call for a patient, iterative approach to building teacher capacity are decades old (Chrispeels, 1997; McLaughlin, 1987). Yet teacher capacity seems to be ever more what is needed. Training teachers received under NCLB – and the methods associated with that training – run counter to expectations under the CCSS. As weaknesses of one "reform" become clear, new reforms call for wholesale replacements rather than simple adjustments. Moreover, "training" teachers on reforms rather than building teacher capacity means that teachers lack the capacity to adapt to new reforms and, as was the case with Jeannie Thompson, translate past practice into new expectations.

The conceptual framework I introduced in this study, *defensive implementation*, also stands to provide a new way of seeing data for myself and other researchers. The framework evolved in my study as I saw gaps that existing frameworks did not account for. My framework, inspired by McNeil (1986, 2000), shares many features with *defensive teaching*, but also accounts for pressures on districts and schools rather than

simply focusing on teachers. For example, both administrators and teachers in my study reacted in ways that compartmentalized the CCSS, divorcing history from English and activities that called for student inquiry from the "real" history curriculum. More importantly, I believe, the framework accounts for the post-NCLB environment in which education policy has been implemented for nearly fifteen years. Thus, defensive implementation offers explanatory power because the context of education – and the locus of power – has been shifted as a result of high-stakes tests and a desire by school districts to avoid sanctions.

Given the variability this study found between two teachers at the same school site, within the same context, who had received the same professional development, it would be interesting to see if other studies would have similar findings. I call on researchers to conduct further research on the role of front-line implementers in enacting educational standards. I further call for research on the role of social studies education as it relates to the CCSS in other districts – especially considering the variety of perspectives and ways of implementation in the BVSD.

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