2021

Perspectives on Professional Development on Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MA, California State University, Northridge, 2003

BA, Youngstown State University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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January 2021

Abstract

Middle school teachers at a rural site in a western state have faced problems in implementing Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA), as well as in resolving achievement gaps in ELA between regular education students, special education (SPED) students, English language learners (ELL), and at-risk students. The purpose of this case study was to obtain teachers' and school leaders' perspectives on how CCSS for ELA can be used to enhance learning for all populations of students using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The CCSS for ELA and UDL comprised the frameworks employed in this study. In addition, the learning areas of engagement, representation, action and expression as well as the UDL guidelines were used to guide research questions, data collection and analysis. Nine teachers, the program improvement specialist, and the principal participated in the study. Their perspectives on teachers' use of instructional training from professional development were collected using face-to-face interviews, document analysis, and observations of professional development and classroom teaching. All data were coded and analyzed for common themes. The results included triangulated findings from seven overarching themes that could be used to guide administration and professional development leaders on making changes within the program. This study may contribute to change as results indicated the need for creation of a platform for teachers to share effective instructional strategies and techniques for improving practice to enhance learning for all groups of students. This sharing practice might help close the achievement gap as well as promote leadership among teachers that may improve larger views of community-centered education.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Bill and Anna Jones. Thank you for always being there for me through thick and thin. I stand at this point in my life because of the upbringing, love, and support you gave me all of these years. You are truly wonderful parents to have, and I am appreciative of all the times you encouraged me to move onward and to do better. Your words and actions reside with me and enable me to persevere whenever I am struck by doubt and hardship. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for you being my parents. This work is also dedicated to my fiancé, Yasuna Morita. Thank you for being patient with me whenever I had to spend time studying and working. I realize that the amount of work and time put into this journey was not always easy for either of us. Moreover, I appreciate the love and encouragement you provided to help me complete this work. It certainly worked. Furthermore, I thank my brother, Sam Jones; my sisters, Angela Lewis and Cherie Syracuse; and my in-laws, Jolynn Jones, Terry Lewis, and Phil Syracuse, for being a part of my life and for always wishing the best for me. Finally, I thank my lifelong best friend, Tristan Liptak, for all the laughter, conversations, and good times we shared growing up together. Thank you, Tristan, for helping me feel like family whenever I was in the company of you and your family! I am truly blessed for having all of you in my life and believing in me.

Acknowledgments

I thank God for helping me reach this point in my academic career and for hearing my prayers, for it is only God who knows the work, worries, and doubts that I needed to overcome to reach this point in my life. Thank you, God, for surrounding me with good people who helped me to learn and grow as a person, and to pursue meaningful and challenging endeavors. I could accomplish none of this without You being in my life.

I thank my family, participants, and friends for all of their support and encouragement in helping me reach this point in the doctorate program. I also thank Doug Walters for helping me with some computer formatting issues. However, I need to pay my respects to Dr. Saul S. Friedman. While you are gone, you are not forgotten. I was so lucky to have a professor like you in my undergraduate years when I was so uncertain about my future. You were the reason I went the distance in learning, desired to make changes, and strove to leave the world a better place. You made my best adventures possible, such as visiting the Holy Land. Thank you for your encouragement and vision.

I extend a huge thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Marcia Griffiths-Prince. I am very grateful to have found a professor like you who was always supportive and willing to help me out. I would not be at this point were it not for you. I also extend thanks to my committee member, Dr. Barbara Hunter, for offering critical feedback to enrich my knowledge and insight about my area of study. I also want to thank Dr. Karen Hunt, my URR member, who helped me realize where my work needed an added push to keep it moving along. I am truly appreciative of all of you. Finally, I acknowledge the support provided by my advisor, Joshua Bass. Thank you, Joshua!

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in a rural community of Southern California at the start of the 2014–2015 school year prompted numerous educational leaders to provide professional development to improve teacher instructional practices to meet the challenges and expectations of the new curriculum standards (Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwind, 2015; Illingworth, 2016). At Mojave Springs Junior High School (MSJHS), pseudonym for a school serving students in Grades 7 and 8 in a rural school district of Southern California, educational leaders turned to professional development to improve instructional practices and close the achievement gap between regular education students and the subgroups of special education students (SPED), English language learners (ELL), and at-risk students (i.e., students whose families meet the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price meals). This professional development was intended to help MSJHS teachers learn the new CCSS for English language arts (ELA) and improve their ability to modify their teaching to successfully align with the new standards, all with a goal of increasing learning for all students.

Although the 2010–2016 standardized test scores demonstrated an overall increase in the Academic Performance Index of the California Department of Education (CDE, 2017a) and the School Accountability Report Card (CDE, 2017b), an achievement gap remained between the three subgroups and regular education students. To address concerns about these achievement gaps, professional development in the form of training was provided to MSJHS teachers to address the new expectations of the CCSS for ELA

with the assumption that this would improve instruction and enhance learning for these subgroups. Nevertheless, the achievement gaps continue to exist. The problem could be that teachers were not designing instructions appropriately to support the diverse needs of all their students, or they may not particularly know how or where they can readily access information that can help them produce purposeful, resourceful, and strategic lessons to maximize learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to conduct a case study examining teachers' perspectives concerning how they were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations through the three learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression (see Appendices B, C, and D, respectively), as well as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines (see Appendices E and G).

The CCSS are meant to provide teachers with a set of guidelines for creating curriculum and instruction to prepare students for college and careers. However, many teachers across California, including several teachers at MSJHS, believe the challenge of incorporating the CCSS new guidelines and expectations for ELA to be greater than expected (Illingworth, 2016). Some of these MSJHS teachers' comments regarding the challenges of implementing CCSS for ELA focused on the lack of

- curriculum materials to support CCSS integration in classroom instruction,
- funding,
- parent involvement,
- state guidance to create local assessments,

- curriculum alignment, and
- support from other teachers and students.

Consequently, professional development is expected to compensate for some of the recognized insufficiency challenges of implementing the CCSS for ELA (though not funding, parent involvement, etc.) by providing relevant knowledge, processes, and content pertaining to CCSS for ELA to help enhance learning for the subgroups of SPED, ELL, and at-risk students (Illingworth, 2016; MSJHS, 2016).

As discussed above, and as Figure 1 presents, regular education students obtain higher scores than those in the SPED, ELL, and at-risk subgroups, indicating that these subgroups were not achieving at the same proficiency level on the state literacy test, which is aligned with (or based on) the CCSS for ELA. This means that said students were not mastering the CCSS objectives for ELA (CDE, 2016a).

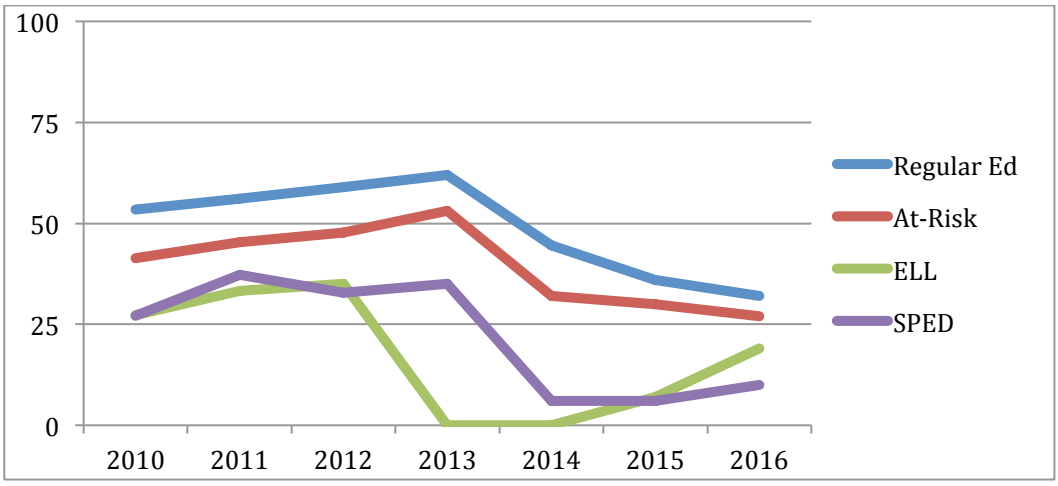

Figure 1. Student percentage of standards met and standards exceeded on ELA assessments between 2010 and 2016.

The ELL scores appear to drop to 0 in 2013–2014, as the number of students in that subgroup equaled 10 or less (the only subgroup and year affected in the comparison table). All students' scores for 2010–2013 reflect California Standards Test (CST)-ELA results, and scores for 2014–2016 reflect the first years of CCSS implementation for ELA and the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)-ELA results. However, this still indicated that regular education students performed better than SPED, ELL, and at-risk students (CDE, 2017a).

The UDL, which provides research based on the learning sciences, together with cognitive neuroscience, helps direct the development of flexible learning environments to suitably assist individual learning differences via its principles of learning (engagement, representation, and action and expression). As such, the UDL is recognized as being capable of helping teachers implement inclusionary practices in the classroom (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression (the third principle features two parts that should not be separated because they share attributes of ascribed guidelines that contribute to one recognized area of learning), and the UDL Guidelines can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). Moreover, these three principles of learning (see Appendices B, C, and D) are considered by Rose and Meyer (2002) to increase access to learning by reducing physical, cognitive, intellectual, and organizational barriers to learning.

Therefore, in this study, I examined teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were using the instructional training from the professional development on

CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations (see Appendix G). Furthermore, this study includes teachers' perspectives regarding the challenges of implementing standards-based practices. The results may help determine whether teachers were designing instructions appropriately to support the diverse needs of all their students and if they particularly knew how or where they can readily access information to help them produce purposeful, resourceful, and strategic lessons (stemming from the noted UDL areas of learning) to maximize learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Rationale

In this study, I examined teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations (see Appendix G). This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). These examinations were performed to help determine whether teachers were designing instructions appropriately to support the diverse needs of all their students despite teachers not being specifically trained in UDL, and if they particularly know how or where they can readily access information to help them produce purposeful, resourceful, and strategic lessons for enhancing learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Because UDL Guidelines include numerous elements commonly used and accepted for designing lessons that affect areas of learning and individual learning differences, the intention was for this study to

help identify and explain where many SPED, ELL, and at-risk students were not mastering the CCSS objectives for ELA, including pertinent areas of the ELA state literacy tests.

The gap in state literacy tests represents a problem for some MSJHS teachers, as acknowledged by their personal communications, as well as for other teachers dealing with similar problems identified in current literature. Additionally, the data from current literature (Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013; Sun, Penuel, Frank, & Youngs, 2013) concerning teachers' responses to how much professional development contributes to meeting the CCSS may help establish a consensus regarding how effective teachers' perspectives of professional development can be for helping them achieve their instructional goals, sustain rigor in their programs, and identify areas where instructional delivery can enhance learning for subgroups.

Definition of Terms

This study employs the following terms to help explain their use within the context of the problem, purpose, and research questions: *at-risk*, *Common Core State Standards*, *English language learner*, *inclusive education*, *professional development*, and *special education*. The terms *accessibility*, *curriculum planning*, *individual differences*, *universal design*, *engagement*, *representation*, *action and expression*, and *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines are* included to explain the Universal Design for Learning, including its three principles (see Appendices B, C, and D) and nine guidelines (see Appendix E; Meyer & Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002). The conceptual framework aligns with this study's problem, purpose, and research questions to help

guide teachers' perspectives and observations of professional development on CCSS for ELA.

These terms are defined as follows:

At-risk: An at-risk student is one who is more likely to fail at school and faces a risk of dropping out of school before high school graduation. Students who fail to achieve basic levels of proficiency in key subjects such as mathematics or reading before completing Grade 8, or if they drop out of school altogether, are labeled at-risk. According to the United States Department of Education (1992), students' socioeconomic status (SES) represents an important element of at-risk status, measured by parents' occupation, educational achievement, or income, or by a more complex indicator. Students possessing lower SES face higher failure rates than those with higher SES.

Common Core State Standards: These standards identify quantifiable benchmarks in ELA and math at each grade level from kindergarten through high school (Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Witmer, 2016).

English language learner (ELL): ELLs are students learning English as a second language and who, based on the state-approved k–12 oral language instruction and literacy instruction for the Grades 3–6 program, have been determined to lack basic "English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the schools' regular instructional programs" (CDE, 2016c).

Inclusive education: In inclusive educational approaches, all students learn in one environment, including those with and without special needs (Salvia et al., 2016).

Professional development: Professional development programs are those aimed at enhancing and expanding educators' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes with the aim of improving student outcomes. In some cases, professional development involves redesigning educational structures to redefine the professional development characteristics to better align it with both current educational standards and teachers' needs (Guskey, 2000).

Special education: Special education provides services and support to students with disabilities or special needs, as determined by the school system's specific criteria. Special education services can comprise learning tools in a specialized classroom, one-on-one intervention within the general population, or services from third parties as deemed necessary based on the individual education plan (Salvia et al., 2016).

Accessibility: Accessibility typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies guarantee—or at least strive to guarantee—that students face "equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Increasing access generally requires schools to provide additional services or remove any actual or potential barriers that might prevent some students from equitable participation in certain courses or academic programs" (Great Schools Partnership, 2015).

Curriculum planning: Curriculum planning involves integrating UDL from the outset for systematic variability among learners along key dimensions, including how they perceive information, how they act on it, and how they are motivated by a task. Whether teachers are explicitly designing curriculum or choosing and assembling curricular elements, the UDL practice rests on addressing learner variability through its

three principles (see Appendices B, C, and D), including engagement, representation, and action and expression (Meyer et al., 2014).

Individual differences: Individual differences may be defined as cognitive styles where preferred methods of organizing, processing, and representing information are partly fixed, relatively stable, and possibly inherent to the person's character (Peterson, Peterson, Rayner, & Armstrong, 2009).

Universal design for learning (UDL): The UDL describes an instruction framework organized around three principles (see Appendices B, C, and D) based on the learning sciences. These principles guide the design and development of curriculum that is effective and inclusive for all learners (Rose & Gravel, 2010, pp. 119-124). Formulated by Ron Mace (1998), universal design (UD) supports the development of buildings, outdoor spaces, products, and communications that meet the needs of individuals with disabilities at the design stage. From the start, these designs increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities to yield benefits that make everyone's experiences better. UDL shares the same goal with UD that considers as many individuals as possible with designs that work from the outset and do not require retrofitting (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012).

Engagement: Comprising one of the principles of UDL, engagement is referred to as the affective domain of learning. Meyer et al. (2014, p. 111) described this as the *why* of learning (see Appendix B):

> Expertise involves developing interest, purpose, motivation, and most importantly, strong self-regulation as a learner. What researchers call "self-

> regulation" is the ability to set motivating goals; to sustain effort toward meeting those goals; and to monitor the balance between internal resources and external demands, seeking help or adjusting one's own expectations and strategies as needed. Within the UDL framework, it is important that learning environments support the development of affective expertise for all. (p. 90)

Representation: Another of the principles of UDL, representation is referred to as the recognition domain of learning. Meyer et al. (2014, p. 111) described this as what of learning (see Appendix C):

> Expertise requires much more than just engagement. It requires constructing knowledge by perceiving information in the environment, recognizing predictive patterns in that information, understanding and integrating new information; interpreting and manipulating a wide variety of symbolic representations of information; and developing fluency in the skills for assimilating and remembering that information. Learners' ability to perceive, interpret, and understand information is dependent upon the media and methods through which it is presented. (pp. 98-99)

Action and expression: Still another of the principles of UDL, this is referred to as the strategic domain of learning. Meyer et al. (2014, p. 111) described this as the *how* of learning (see Appendix D):

> Expertise in executive functions such as goal setting, monitoring one's progress and adjusting approaches as needed, strategy development, and managing information and resources. Also important for strategic expertise is providing

> options for expression and communication including multiple media, multiple tools for construction and composition, and support for the development of fluency through graduated support in practice and performance. Finally, in keeping with this principle, it is important to provide options for physical action such as varied response methods and access to a variety of tools and assistive technologies (pp. 102-103).

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: This represents the practical application of the three UDL principles of learning. Meyer et al. (2014) described them as follows:

> Each of the nine Guidelines emphasizes areas of learner variability that could present barriers, or, in a well-designed learning experience, present leverage points and opportunities for optimized engagement with learning. Under the Guidelines we suggest specific practices for implementation—multiple checkpoints. These checkpoints are not meant to be exhaustive . . . This collection will provide ever more powerful models for educators at all levels of the system. An alternate way to consider the Guidelines is to look at some key questions that each one answers (pp. 111-112).

Significance of the Study

In this study, I examine teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations (see Appendix G). This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and

action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E).

Additionally, this study may contribute to research on the local education setting to assess whether MSJHS teachers were facing significant problems in designing CCSS for ELA instructions that support the diverse needs of all their students. Furthermore, this work may identify shortcomings that MSJHS teachers face in knowing how or where they can readily access information to help them produce lessons that apply to the entire curriculum through recognized areas of learning, as noted by the UDL. Additional identified shortcomings include areas where instructional lessons successfully relate to clearly defined goals as well as formative and summative assessments associated with CCSS for ELA, including flexible and varied instructional designs.

This study may also contribute to positive social change by encouraging and creating a platform for teachers to share effective instructional strategies and techniques for improving practices that enhance learning and help close the achievement gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Further contributions of this study may impel a positive social change among teachers once they have achieved success from their understanding and implementation of the CCSS for ELA that promotes a desire for extended leadership in this area, which can in turn help improve larger views of community-centered education.

Research Questions

In this study, I examined teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were employing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS

for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). Considering this aim, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are teachers utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?
2. How do educators employ the three UDL learning area principles (namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?

Review of the Literature

The goal of this literature review was to provide a comprehensive examination of the available literature that was pertinent to professional development on CCSS for ELA. Moreover, this literature review focuses on teachers' perspectives of professional development on CCSS for ELA, including how the collected information emphasizes the role it may play in enhancing learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This also includes how the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E).

To this end, I reviewed literature that analyzed standpoints of CCSS for ELA, improving teaching practice through professional development, instructional planning,

and instructional rigor. In addition, literature was reviewed to examine teacher expectations and various ways teachers may enhance learning by supporting SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The content in this literature review focuses on past studies, books, and journal articles.

The Walden University Library offers numerous resources for finding online professional journal articles, including the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, and ProQuest, all of which were utilized for this literature review. I searched these resources using the following keywords: *at-risk, Common Core State Standards, English language arts, English language learners, instructional planning, instructional rigor, literacy-related professional development, professional development, special education, student achievement, staff development, student learning outcomes, teacher expectations,* and *teacher perspectives.*

Conceptual Framework

This study's chosen conceptual framework for this study features the UDL, which contains three learning area principles (Meyer & Rose, 2000; Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2002). The UDL instruction framework is organized around three principle areas in the learning sciences—namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression. These three learning area principles guide the design and development of curriculum to be effective and inclusive for all learners (Rose & Gravel, 2010). These three UDL learning area principles (see Appendices B, C, and D) also help explain research that went into designing supportive learning environments, as well as the nature

of learning differences that transfer onto three groups of brain networks—affective, recognition, and strategic.

These three brain network groups are intended to assist in answering pertinent *why*, *what*, and *how* questions regarding the framework (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Support for affective learning enables engagement with flexible options to generate and sustain motivation, guiding *why* learning needs to take place (see Appendix B). Support for recognition learning enables representation with flexible procedures to present *what* needs to be taught and learned (see Appendix C). Support for strategic learning enables action and expression with flexible options to indicate *how* learning and knowing take place (see Appendix D).

Based on the understanding of the UDL principles, and according to the Higher Education Opportunity ACT (August 14, 2008), Congress recognized the UDL as "a scientific valid framework for guiding educational practice" (Hall et al., 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, Congress acknowledged that this provides flexibility in how information is presented, how students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and how students are engaged (Hall et al., 2012). According to Hall et al. (2012), Congress also recognizes the UDL as reducing barriers in instruction; providing suitable accommodations, support, and challenges; and maintaining high achievement expectations for all students, especially those with disabilities or who speak English as a second language.

From the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), Rose initially described the UDL framework in the 1990s as needing to develop curriculum from the outset that recognizes the fact that the way in which individuals learn can be unique

(Meyer et al., 2014). By providing a seminal work on the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression (see Appendices B, C, and D), along with the four curriculum aspects of instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments, the UDL aims to increase access to learning while reducing physical, cognitive, intellectual, and organizational barriers to learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, these UDL principles provide a means for enacting inclusionary practices within the classroom so that all learners requiring accommodation can receive it (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

In a review of numerous studies, Al-Azawei, Serenelli, and Lundqvist (2016) considered the UDL framework to be designed with flexibility and accessibility to different educational settings, without adaptions, to help overcome a failing, standardized traditional teaching approach for diverse, contemporary learners. The UDL educational framework is grounded in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, and so helps guide the progress of flexible learning environments in a manner that can assist individual learning differences (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

According to Meyer and Rose (2000), educators who design their learning methods for the "divergent needs of 'special' populations increase usability for everyone" (p. 39). Thus, embedding UDL within curricula and materials is expected to improve results for all learners. Nevertheless, this leads one to question if, and how much, SPED students are able to take advantage of an UDL-embedded curriculum. Hence, the focus now turns to the importance of UDL Guidelines, as well as how this can help provide instructional direction for educators when designing their lessons.

Accompanying the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression; see Appendices B, C, and D) are nine guidelines (three guidelines for each of the UDL learning area principles; see Appendix E) described by Meyer et al. (2014) as being used like common kinds of scaffolds for adhering to instructive implementation strategies (see Appendix B):

> The Guidelines offer structure and specific, practical examples for how to provide options to meet learner variability. They guide educators in what to attend to and what is important to vary in order to provide an engaging experience for all learners. By highlighting predictable variability and suggesting ways to address, the Guidelines enable us to see things differently—to see variability instead of disability, to see curriculum as the problem, not learners. (p. 113)

Furthermore, Meyer et al. described the UDL Guidelines as helping educators (see Appendix C) to "design learning experiences that will be flexible enough to reach varied learners" (p. 115). Additionally, Meyer et al. asked educators to visualize each strategic guideline (see Appendix D) as addressing specific kinds of variability connected to motor cortex areas within the brain, where specific individual variation occurs. Additionally, they recommended seeing that "students differ in their ability to develop competent executive functions for executing certain skills and movements" and "their abilities to learn to coordinate simple movements into fluent skills and abilities" (p. 123).

Therefore, Meyer et al. (2014) considered the UDL Guidelines to support instructional designers who create curriculum and to help guide educators in being purposeful when accounting for the systematic variability of the students for whom

curricula is being designed. This includes available options and alternatives that help ensure instructions include appropriate amounts of flexibility, effectiveness, and differentiation. Additionally, "The Guidelines also inform professional development and communities of practice in school districts," but "most importantly, the Guidelines are a learning instrument: a guide for self-reflection and the revision of teaching practices" (Meyer et al., p. 126). The results from this case study could contribute to the body of knowledge concerning how educators utilize the three UDL learning area principles and the UDL Guidelines needed to help enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students through professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Standpoints of Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

For some new and veteran teachers, CCSS for ELA represent a surprising and welcoming change that can enable students to move beyond routine learning expectations; however, still other teachers consider CCSS for ELA to be a frightening endeavor to perform, especially for tasks such as assigning writing activities to their students (Lanin et. al, 2014). The CCSS for ELA offer considerable promise for numerous teachers across the United States; nevertheless, many educators and researchers may still need to better understand how they can use this to enhance student learning. To help expand on this concern, I analyze some important articles concerning CCSS for ELA below.

According to Woodard and Kline (2015), CCSS for ELA is described as featuring some problem areas where teaching content does not always agree with what research indicates concerning grade-level progression and text complexity, and so on. Moreover,

Woodward and Kline described this and similar issues as possibly resulting from gaps between instructional policies and teachers' actions in the classroom. Furthermore, Woodward and Kline revealed some concerns with bringing together CCSS for ELA assessments and high-stakes testing, which they believed to reflect the narrow understandings of reading and writing on the part of the standardized tests' authors. This matter raised the issue of whether or not teachers are being delimited in exercising their professional judgment in the classroom. A deeper examination of this topic may help support the validity and reliability of this matter, especially where teachers' perspectives are concerned. Nevertheless, ever since the adoption of CCSS, some teachers have expressed uncertainty regarding how their professional development programs can successfully integrate it (Stair et al., 2016).

Research from Stair et al. (2016) collected electronic surveys from career and technical education teachers who agreed to take part in a CORE community-training program, which revealed that 34% of respondents used CCSS in their teaching, while 65% of respondents indicated they had not received any training on how to integrate the CCSS. These findings indicated that the participants were mostly interested in learning how other teachers were using the CCSS in their classrooms, as well as what other resources were available for teaching. This study further determined that the ability for all teachers to understand and reason through the processes for Common Core instructions by utilizing resources in professional development reveals opposing viewpoints among some educators (Stair et al., 2016). These opposing viewpoints between Common Core authors and the voices of some ELA educators indicated some tense points regarding

interpretations of current instructional practices and how they needed to be changed, particularly where pertinent works of literature are concerned with teacher autonomy in educational reform (Hodge & Benko, 2014).

Differences between Common Core authors and the voices of some ELA educators led Hodge and Benko (2014) to urge those designing CCSS professional development resources to connect with the recommendations of a full range of existing research so that research could provide clear explanations to guide recommendations. Hodge and Benko reasoned that if instructors can better understand the types of CCSS messages being sent, and by whom, then the English educators can be better prepared to "effect change at the policy level, and to support teachers, schools, and districts in making informed decisions about their professional development, curriculum, and instruction" (p. 192). According to this reasoning, collaboration among ELA content-area teachers could continually grow across school districts as educators strive to meet the new expectations of the CCSS.

However, Lannin et al. (2014) asserted that the CCSS for ELA provides unique and engaging opportunities for educators to think creatively about content that they can share with similar-thinking colleagues, who in return can help produce “literacy experts” at their schools. The emergence of “literacy experts” and their ideas can presumably spread beyond their sites and assist other educational leaders and school districts in successfully implementing the new CCSS expectations.

The Missouri Writing Projects Network study (Lannin et al., 2014) revealed that examined schools created professional learning programs focused on literacy learning in

content areas and produced classrooms centered on career and technical education. Consequently, sharing experiences across the network helped to identify common themes and develop a framework of beliefs that would continue to guide their work. This study revealed that a framework with strategies and activities existed that successfully helped guide schools in implementing the CCSS for ELA, which can be used to enhance learning through professional development (Lannin et al., 2014).

Studies such as this can be indicative of schools' professional development programs and educational leadership, which could in turn be examined and improved in similar ways for enhancing overall learning for students. Some of the key points in this study—building a literacy-aware community, recognizing the literacy expertise of non-ELA teachers, creating authentic writing situations, focusing on disciplinary vocabulary, and promoting reflection—revealed that challenges increased when attempting to implement the CCSS for ELA for teachers. Hence, Wolf, Wang, Blood and Huang (2014) contended that a critical review of the language demands in CCSS for ELA seeks to acquire important implications for instructing ELLs.

In a study by Wolf et al. (2014) an examination of the present ELA and English language proficiency standards to the CCSS language expectations for ELA for Grade 8 in three states found commonalities and disparities in languages skills with depicted undertakings in numerous standards reports. Additionally, this study interviewed a small group of middle school teachers to analyze their interpretations of the CCSS for ELA, as well as to gather their perspectives of the rigor of the standards for ELL students. This study determined that some mainstream ELA teachers were unaware of the English

Language Proficiency standards in their states and identified a low-to-moderate percentage of overlap between the skills and tasks derived from the CCSS and those found in the states' standards documents. These findings emphasized the importance for content-area teachers and language teachers to collaborate, particularly when considering the challenging language demands of the CCSS.

Improving Teaching Practice through Professional Development

When teachers receive opportunities to learn, and are supported in doing so, they can take on both formal and informal leadership positions to help improve schools (Lieberman, 2015). The question of what professional development should focus on and how it should be implemented to improve student outcomes has represented a point of concern since the CCSS' introduction. Educational research by Evans (2014) indicated that the community has made significant strides in designing professional development programs to meet new expectations for both teachers and students, but issues remain that must be addressed, such as possible misunderstandings regarding the scope of a program's components.

Research by Polikoff and Struthers (2013) surveyed 2,064 ELA teachers in grades K–12 that found cognitive demand to have changed in recent years, moving from higher and lower levels toward somewhere in the middle, leaving many students behind. This offers an example of how data collected by schools serving different student populations can be overlooked, which may hinder the efforts of professional development programs to enhance student learning.

Research by Hakuta, Santos, and Fang (2013) substantiated a variety of perspectives regarding teachers' expertise, understanding, and school practices that can present obstacles for implementing instructions to enhance student learning. This viewpoint emphasized that educational leaders possess numerous responsibilities to ensure that miscalculations are avoided, since they can be made easily. This viewpoint also emphasized that relevant instruction exists within their professional development programs and that core teachers are responsible for putting this into effect in order to properly facilitate their students' development of English language skills.

By utilizing an aggressive and strategic approach for implementing CCSS for ELA instructions in professional development, Jenkins and Agamba (2013) asserted that it could be possible to deconstruct the meaning of the CCSS and then focus on illustrating the differences between former and new standards for teachers, which can subsequently highlight where teaching practices could be improved through professional development by the CCSS for ELA. Thus, accurate data collection from teacher interviews, observations, and documents about professional development of CCSS for ELA could enable triangulating findings to help educational leaders make better informed decisions regarding their professional development program, as well as improve the teachers' capabilities in designing instructions appropriately to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Instructional Planning

Many ways that teachers consider and design instructional planning for CCSS for ELA are based upon the understandings of a site's professional development and how

they prepare the presentation to be delivered to teachers to enhance student learning. In an attempt to determine the importance of data utilization by teachers to help inform instructional planning for ELA and math classes, Hubbard, Datnow, and Pruyn (2014) interviewed educators and observed teacher team meetings. This study further required teachers to implement multiple initiatives, revealing existing tensions that further decreased teachers' ability and motivation to utilize data. Hubbard et al. concluded that, because teachers felt an obligation to intensify basic skill development and follow benchmark data for ELA and math more than social studies and science, there was little to no state accountability to help with making data-driven decisions.

Their study also found that breaking up and classifying specific data-driven decisions possessed repercussions for teaching and learning. Subsequently, many teachers were determined to not know how to implement multiple initiatives or integrate them accordingly, especially when expected to manage other reform demands. Thus, Hubbard et al. (2014) concluded that school districts needed to help teachers gain the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate CCSS instructional plans.

Research by Javius (2014) recognized that quality forms of instructional planning depend on the site leaders' leadership skills and actions to become transformers of school culture, instructional guides, data users, reflective questioners of teacher practice, and to possess uncanny abilities to accomplish matters by holding others accountable. As such, instructional planning for CCSS for ELA needs to include extra support for students struggling with reading complex texts at every grade level if they are going to be able to

read at their grade-appropriate level of complexity (Robertson, Dougherty, Ford-Connors, & Paratore, 2014).

Research by Robertson et al. (2014) emphasized that students' ability to acquire knowledge and successfully take part in academic activities depends on the progressive development of skilled and strategic reading for achieving CCSS for ELA goals. Hence, increased understanding and inclusion of these elements in the scope of teachers' instructional planning and implementation was viewed as possibly being able to support enhanced learning in all students.

Further examination by Patton (1987) considered aspects of instructional planning, such as the literature sources mentioned in this section, as being fundamental for making judgments about a program, as its training activities may be able to provide accurate information through data collection and analysis that can help improve the overall effectiveness and programming decisions.

Instructional Rigor

Providing a sufficient amount of instructional rigor into a curriculum can be especially challenging when implementing CCSS for ELA since there are some disparate perspectives by teachers on what rigor should include and how it should be carried out to yield satisfactory results based on student performance. According to the research by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Garner (2017), some educational researchers have insisted that interviewing teachers offers the best way to identify what professional development needs to include in its instructions to help teachers create a learning environment where each student learns at high levels and receives adequate support to do so. Research by

Marrongelle et al. (2013) scaled up professional development through interviews with teachers to promote timesaving efforts and enhanced learning for all students by reliably identifying where program efforts should be focused with literacy training, as well as the techniques it bestows on educational groups. Tasks such as these may be accomplished by improving professional development for teacher instruction, because they emphasized that results from field experts should be utilized to generate a set of design recommendations that can be used to create, sustain, and assess professional development of CCSS.

Directorial efforts to support effective CCSS implementation for ELA can be identified by analyzing additional views of professional development, such as how Porter, Fusarelli, and Fusarelli (2015) examined causes that educators related to the processes of including rigor in their curriculum as they underwent CCSS at the school level. Instructional rigor represents an important area of concern that some teachers have identified as impeding implementation of the CCSS for ELA to meet expectations for improving student achievement (Jaeger, 2014).

Research by Jaeger (2014) stressed that the best way to yield positive results for employing instructional rigor is by having students conduct research projects based on inquiry learning. Jaeger contended that inquiry-learning-based projects could permit research to expand and enable students to answer relevant questions by using their content learning as a backdrop to answer or provide solutions to a problem.

According to Evans and Clark (2015), the problem for middle school teachers was that some teachers in their study reported lacking a sufficient background for teaching

literacy strategies in their curriculum. As such, they concluded that some teachers may view professional development training of CCSS for ELA as being fully incapable of helping them comprehend some new expected tasks involving rigor, especially for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Efforts to determine "what works" in advancing teenagers' reading development have increased in recent years, since the CCSS expects students to deal with a range of complex texts. Research by Francois (2013) demonstrated that much has been learned regarding auspicious reading programs and interventions for teenage students in schools; however, few programs have demonstrated a strong impact on middle and high school students' reading achievement. Thus, categorical reading that performs less than well among teens persists in schools nationwide (Francois, 2013). Moreover, it appears to be worse in urban schools.

Teacher Expectations

Adequate and proper training for implementing CCSS for ELA, particularly for non-ELA teachers, call into question how much professional development training needs to be provided to teachers, as well as how much time and support should be administered to assist teachers with implementing it, especially those who instruct SPED and ELL. Research by Burks et al. (2015) conducted a survey study of secondary teachers' perceptions on their preparedness for implementing the CCSS for Grades 6–12, identifying numerous conflicting views among teachers, parents, and others interested in the CCSS. Their study also revealed that teachers varied in whether they did or did not expect to receive certain practices from their training. In an online survey of 35 teachers,

participants responded to questions concerning their comfort levels for teaching the Common Core, the amount of training they received, and their perceptions of training adequacy. The results indicated that 57% of respondents were either "comfortable" or "extremely comfortable" with implementing the standards (Burks et al., 2015). However, slightly more than half indicated that they received insufficient training

To understand the numerous aspects of educational changes associated with CCSS for ELA, it was vital to learn the perspective of teachers experiencing the changes directly. As such, Matlock et al. (2016) used existing surveys of teachers' perceptions regarding the CCSS to focus on areas concerning teacher awareness, preparedness, and opinions of the quality of the CCSS, as well as how curricular alignment can further help teacher instruction to enhance student learning. Examining and comparing the teachers' expectations revealed that numerous teachers generally possessed a positive attitude regarding how the CCSS was being implemented, while other teachers expressed an increasingly negative attitude about how it was being conducted for certain grade levels, making it even less favorable for those who had thoughts of leaving the profession early (Matlock et al., 2016). Overall, responses varied among teachers with various degrees of experience. This division among teacher expectations concerning how CCSS instructions for ELA were being provided by professional development indicates that further research was needed in this area to better address the impacts of recent educational policy changes.

Moreover, Murphy and Haller (2015) researched literacy during the first year of the CCSS' implementation with ELL and SPED teachers, attempting to align the CCSS

with recently used standards and instructional approaches to investigate the experiences and perceptions encountered by 20 ELL and SPED teachers. Open-ended interviews with those teachers focused on the teachers' experiences as they began aligning their curriculum and teaching methods with the CCSS. These interviews revealed that the teachers needed and received support regarding the challenges they faced and their ability to implement the lessons, and that these forms of support are also still very much in need today. Overall, Murphy and Haller determined that extensive associations across schools, districts, and communities are essential for backing professional development and responding to objections and obstacles. This includes the understanding that time and supports are essential at all levels, particularly for SPED teachers.

Supporting SPED, ELL, and At-Risk Students

Support for ELL students and students with disabilities represents an area where educators should be more conscious of learning techniques and should apply strategies for CCSS for ELA instructions in the classroom (Murphy & Haller, 2015). Numerous studies, such as that of Wolf et al. (2014), have researched CCSS for ELA with ELL teachers, determining that successful teachers often collaborated more with content-area and language teachers. There appears to be more challenges for ELA instructors to implement instructions following the initial acceptance of CCSS, as ELL and regular content-area teachers often need to collaborate and hold discussions with them to identify and overcome challenges connected to the language demands of the CCSS for ELA (Wolf et al., 2014).

Research by Thurlow (2014) asserted that being optimistic about education could help improve student learning and influence their aspirations to succeed, though not without extensive forms of professional development and new assessment approaches being taught to teachers to clarify learning progressions. Thrulow also claimed that a focused, district-wide commitment to success is imperative for teachers in each grade when teaching students with disabilities. This type of training means that teachers can benefit from professional development that emphasizes self-efficacy and social cognitive learning, whereby participants can feel prepared to overcome many of the expectations and lack of access to curriculum that is endemic to special education (Bandura, 1986).

The research of Rowe, Mazzotti, and Sinclair (2015) revealed that numerous teachers required appropriate support for teaching students with disabilities, with self-determination skill development identified as connecting into schools' models for how to implement CCSS with multi-tiered support systems. To help SPED students succeed after implementing CCSS for ELA instructions, Sun et al. (2013) examined how a multi-tiered support system may need to be implemented with a high-quality professional development program seeking to advance the diffusion of effective teaching strategies among teachers. Furthermore, Konrad et al. (2014) identified similar needs for teachers whose states adopted CCSS and who continue to face new challenges; as such, teachers need to unpack the standards and develop explicit learning targets so that the rigorous standards can be made attainable for their students.

Bartlett, Otis-Wilborn, and Sim (2015) reminded educators that children in special education are often regarded as an afterthought, much like many of the school reforms

initiated over the last six decades. Furthermore, they asserted that reform through the CCSS represents another situation where conflicts can arise and create consequences that affect social justice and equity for at-risk students.

Faggella-Luby, Drew, and Schumaker (2015) cautioned educators that the CCSS and the regular inclusion of learning-disability students in Tier 1 classrooms comprise changing situations in how close reading of texts occurs in ELA classes. Possible effects of literacy-related evidence-based practices at this stage need to be well understood, because across 16 studies, Faggella-Luby, et al. identified substantial limitations in existing research, indicating a need for better service for learning-disabled and at-risk students in the classrooms.

In conclusion, as indicated by the current literature review, professional development of CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations depends on accurate student data that does not overlook details that can affect the program's design. While new and veteran core teachers demonstrate opposing views of CCSS for ELA, this does not mean that the new standards are not sound, however; the current literature indicates varying interpretations of current instructional practices and how that influences teacher autonomy in the classroom. The literature review further revealed that effecting change at the policy level and helping to make informed decisions regarding teachers' professional development, curriculum, and instruction was critical. This indicates an urgent need to connect those designing CCSS professional resources with recommendations for a full range of existing research to obtain clear explanations and guidance, which can be assisted by three UDL learning area

principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines.

Furthermore, the literature review exposed a need to conduct interviews with and observe teachers so that reliable interpretations could be acquired for making informed decisions regarding professional development practices, as well as how teachers were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. Moreover, the literature review demonstrated a strong need for extensive forms of professional development and new assessment approaches in these areas. Finally, through teacher reporting, the literature review expressed that teachers require more focused training with CCSS for ELA. This means that, for professional development for CCSS for ELA to be successful, program efforts need to be properly identified with accurate focus points, which was why conducting a study with teacher perspectives in the field can help generate a set of design recommendations for CCSS for ELA for professional development. In turn, this could lead to more teachers being able to better unpack standards so that learning targets with rigorous standards can be made attainable schoolwide, then possibly throughout the school district, and maybe beyond to other regional middle schools and districts.

Implications

This study examines teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression,

along with the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). Furthermore, this study also explores the challenges and benefits of implementing standards-based practices. Information collected regarding how teachers design and implement lessons from professional development on CCSS for ELA training may further help identify where improvements can be made with curriculum, instruction, and assessments to help close the achievement gap between struggling SPED, ELL, and at-risk students and the regular education students on state literacy tests. The study utilizes UDL (Meyer & Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002) principles (see Appendices B, C, and D) and the guidelines (see Appendix E) and collects data from teacher interviews (see Appendix G), pertinent documents related to this study (e.g., school and district records, current Single Plan for Student Achievement, and professional development agendas), and observations for triangulation. This can help view all the relevant data and conduct an analysis in a meaningful way.

The intention was to use the research findings to pinpoint and rectify any noticeable issues with professional development on CCSS for ELA being provided to teachers for instruction and implementation in order to determine if and where more precise forms of guidance may be provided that adhere to principles of learning (see Appendices B, C, and D), including engagement, representation, and action and expression.

Additionally, the findings were used to assess new knowledge and skills gained by the participants as well as what the professional development program was trying to promote, including a response concerning how it may be supporting and accommodating

teachers to enhance learning (see Appendix G). Based on this study's findings, a professional project was developed to inform educators about the importance of the UDL model's principles—specifically means for engagement, representation, and action and expression (see Appendices B, C, and D), along with the guidelines (see Appendix E)—in order to help improve SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations' academic performance.

Summary

The problem with the state literacy test gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students may be that teachers are not appropriately utilizing instructions from their professional development training on CCSS for ELA when designing lesson and unit plans to support the diverse needs of all their students. Furthermore, the problem with the gap could come from teachers not knowing how or where they can readily access information to help them produce lessons and unit plans that were purposeful, resourceful, and strategic for maximizing learning for these struggling populations. These represent some important reasons why the potential barriers creating this problem need to be investigated. Moreover, examining the potential barriers to this problem may help identify what was interfering with the learning process and possibly to lead to further indications of what can be done to make the content more accessible to students.

Because the local problem has been explained as being part of a contextually broader issue, this research study investigates teachers' perspectives and experiences with professional development on CCSS for ELA that was being offered to MSJHS teachers. To this end, I asked teachers to describe their views about it, identified problem areas

with implementing instructions for raising student performance, and examined whether what was being provided for teachers to employ meets adequate rigor in their instructions. A discussion of the local problem in this work included examining research literature related to enhancing learning through professional development, as well as considering sufficient professional development training and implementing rigor for teaching. Thus, it was important to note that all of these areas contextually support the need to assist SPED, ELL, and at-risk students within this study's conceptual framework. Therefore, in the upcoming methodology sections, it was important to consider how an intended research project may approach collecting and analyzing data from educational participants, observations, and documents. This approach was employed here in a concentrated effort, checking how teachers were utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations (see Appendix G) through the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression; see Appendices B, C, and D) and the guidelines (see Appendix E).

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

In this study, I examined teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This includes how the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). This study was qualitative in nature and utilizes data through interviews with educators, essential documents (Single Plan for Student Achievement, staff development agendas, and district and school records related to professional development implementation), and observations (checklist).

The inquiry for this research was concerned with the professional development, materials, and workshop sessions on CCSS for ELA in that it demonstrates an attempt to instruct all students in a research-based manner that resembles the three UDL principle learning areas (see Appendices B, C, and D) and the guidelines (see Appendix E) to help enhance student learning. Moreover, by employing a case study for this task, I conducted observations in teachers' classrooms while they were teaching to determine how they were developing and implementing lesson plans in the classroom, along with a lesson plan review based on what they learned in professional development sessions. Observations of this sort offered additional data concerning how effective instructional components of CCSS and UDL principles from professional development on CCSS for

ELA at the site were being implemented by teachers, which may enhance learning outcomes for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Furthermore, choosing a case study design to conduct the research for this work helped the study be carried out as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Additionally, the case study approach made it possible to conduct a linear iterative process that enables technical and practical discussions for the six elements (the plan, design, preparation, data collection, analysis, and reporting) of case study research to be achieved (Yin, 2014).

Consequently, the case study approach was deemed the most appropriate qualitative method to proceed with, as this involves a deep understanding of multiple data types, such as interviews and documents. Undertaking this task enabled data to be collected and analyzed so that greater knowledge regarding the professional development for CCSS for ELA being provided to MSJHS teachers could be made comprehensible. In turn, this helped clarify how teachers attempt to maximize engagement and achievement with their students when implementing classroom instructions and lessons. Furthermore, collecting and analyzing data for this study revealed how teachers receive instruction from professional development on CCSS for ELA as well as how they put this into effect through their lesson plans.

By using the three learning area principles (see Appendices B, C, and D) and the UDL framework guidelines (see Appendix E) to help view and collect data, I was able to explain how professional development instructions help produce effective lessons plans

by teachers that align with goals associated with the CCSS for ELA. Moreover, this approach helped explain which supports demonstrate success for all students and which represent potential barriers regarding the achievement gap. Tracing teachers' attempts to arrange and coordinate lesson plans to particular CCSS for ELA goals made it possible to determine whether professional development instructions were being effectively aligned to help teachers enhance learning with their students and adhere to the research questions and data forms employed in this study. Hence, the collected and analyzed data helped provide results via triangulation.

Comparatively, choosing ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, or grounded theory approaches to conduct this study did not seem appropriate. An ethnography approach would have limited the study's focus to the culture involved (only offering a holistic view of how the culture-sharing group works) and would have relied on observations and interviews, whereas a narrative approach would have severely limited the study's sample size and focus (only offering stories about an individual's life). A phenomenological approach would have focused solely on those people who experienced the phenomenon and would have limited much of the data to interviews (only offering a description of the essence of the experience). A grounded theory approach would have focused only on developing a theory grounded with field data and would have relied solely on interview data with open and axial coding (only offering a theory portrayed in visual model).

Consequently, none of these theory approaches appeared to provide the best approach for gaining information and meeting this work's specific goals. Hence, the case

study method was deemed the most appropriate qualitative approach for this study. Creswell (2012) contended that a case study approach such as this one offers multiple sources of information for data collection and allows the researcher to report the meaning learned regarding the issue in question, with the findings reported through an in-depth study of a bounded case.

Participants

The participants involved in this study comprise educators from MSJHS, a rural middle school in Southern California. Convenience sampling was preferred for this case study, in which I interviewed nine teachers, the site principal, and the program improvement specialist. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University approved this study as # 08-03-18-0339267. It was also preferable to acquire these teachers from various fields of teaching—such as social studies, ELA, science, ELL, and special education—to help demonstrate that the problem and human experience associated with the study exists throughout the school. Additionally, interviews were extended to the program improvement specialist and the principal to acquire their unique perspectives related to this study.

Furthermore, I conducted teacher observations (with a checklist—see Appendix F) with the same interview participants, all of whom were easy to contact, in order to acquire more data. I used a digital voice recorder to record all the interviews, which were later transcribed and used for analysis and member checking. To participate in this study, participants had to (a) be employed at the school site and (b) be currently involved with the professional development of the CCSS for ELA taking place at the school site. These

procedures made it possible to conduct a case study examining teachers' perspectives concerning how instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA was being used to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations through UDL learning principles and guidelines (see Appendices B, C, D, E, F, and G).

Convenience sampling was used for this study because this permits accessibility to those site teachers who were readily available and willing to participate, along with the program improvement specialist and principal. Educators asked to participate in this study could opt to decline the invitation. Thus, those site educators who agreed to perform the study chose to participate willfully. At least nine teachers agreed to participate in this study, which means at least two or more teaching fields from social studies, ELA, science, ELL, and special education were represented in this study, since no single teaching department at MSJHS has nine teachers in it. Hence, I collected and analyzed diverse perspectives from teachers working in two or more teaching fields at MSJHS, which strengthened this study's credibility and validity, as teachers from more than one field identified the same problems in professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Furthermore, the sample was sizeable enough to permit a significant amount of time to collect data from the participants, which helped ensure a balance of participants with depth of inquiry.

The school district's assistant superintendent and the principal of the site granted permission for the research to be conducted, provided that I could obtain IRB approval. To gain written and oral approval of my proposed research, I informed the Walden IRB that in my teaching position, I held no supervisory role over the teachers in the study. I

also provided the IRB with a copy of the written letter I submitted to potential study participants explaining my reasons for conducting this research, which they received via a letter in their on-site mailbox and an e-mail invitation. The first teachers to respond to the request to participate in the study via a slip attached to the letter placed in their mailbox or by e-mail, and who belong to diverse teaching fields at MSJHS, along with the program improvement specialist and the principal (who also had a choice to participate), were selected for participation in this study.

I then met one-on-one with each interested participant to answer any questions they had regarding the study, and I presented a consent form to each person who agreed to be interviewed and observed to participate in this study. The consent form included a description of the study's purpose, participants' rights, and expectations (which further described and answered any questions regarding the nature of the study, along with the mentioning and time agreement of 45 minutes to 1 hour for both interviews and observations, including an agreed-upon time when they could perform member checking), as well as my phone number and e-mail address in case participants needed to contact me. Furthermore, permission to audiotape was written into the consent forms for participants to be made aware of and agree to. Finally, participants signed and returned their consent forms before the study could begin. Teachers did not sign the consent forms in my presence and had 24–48 hours to review before returning them to me. I provided a checklist for how the teachers could return the consent forms to me, which included handing to me directly, placing in my school mailbox, or mailing it to my home.

Potential participants could ask whatever questions they had and could withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, the identity of all participants was protected in this study to ensure confidentiality and protection from harm. Participants' real names were not utilized in this study—rather, a pseudonym, letter(s) and number was assigned to represent each participant. All collected data from this study was placed onto a hard drive and a flash drive. The hard drive and flash drive were password protected, and both were stored and locked in the filing cabinet in my home, which also contained all paperwork. The data will remain on these devices and in the filing cabinet throughout this study and for 5 years following its conclusion.

Participants were notified that they possessed important perspectives and experiences that can provide valuable data for potentially improving the professional development of CCSS for ELA, which can help enhance learning in this area for students, especially for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. After the data were collected, recorded, and transcribed, and once notes had been taken, I analyzed the data and asked participants to follow through with member checking via mail, where a copy of the draft findings was sent to each participant for review of my interpretations based on their provided data. Participants could then discuss the interpretations with me, as member checking such as this helped secure the validity of the research (Creswell, 2012).

Data Collection

Teachers' perspectives were examined in this study to help determine how teachers were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This

includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study (see Appendix B, C, D, and E). The concept of a qualitative case study for this work was concerned with utilizing various sources of appropriate data so that evidence of triangulation may be applied with Yin's (2014) four data collection principles: (a) use multiple sources of evidence, (b) create a case study database, (c) maintain a chain of evidence, and (d) exercise care when using data from electronic sources. Triangulating the three data sources associated with this study (interviews, observations, and documents) aided validation by cross verifying from at least two or more of the sources. A sufficient amount of data was gathered for this study based on the concept of collecting enough data that confirmatory evidence (from two or more different sources) can be acquired for the main research topics (Yin, 2014). Thus, triangulation further helped establish this study's credibility and trustworthiness.

Data were collected via open-ended questions that I presented face-to-face to the interviewees in semistructured forms ranging between 45 minutes to 1 hour. Research by Moustakas (1994) considered presenting open-ended questions to interviewees before the official interview so that interview questions could be adjusted accordingly throughout the interview process. The interviews were scheduled for 1 hour with each participant at a time and place conducive to their schedule. The questions in Appendix G focused primarily on the first research question pertaining to the perspectives of teachers, the program improvement specialist, and the principal regarding the use of instructional

training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

The questions in Appendix E focus primarily on the second research question pertaining to the perspectives of teachers regarding how educators use the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. These questions come from page 112 of Meyer et al.'s (2014) work "Key questions to use to consider the UDL Guidelines" (see Appendix E). The interviews were audiotaped, and as I listened to each participant, I took careful notes and strove to gain insight into their perspectives and experiences. These guiding research questions resemble credible questions stemming from similar studies (see Appendix E and G).

I also collected data from documents pertinent to this study in order to perform effective triangulation, which includes interview and observation data. Merriam (2009) described triangulation as one of the best-known strategies for building up a study's internal validity, contributing to its credibility and trustworthiness. Furthermore, Merriam (2009) noted that "triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or in interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow up interviews with the same people" (p. 216). The documents utilized in this study strive to extract pertinent data such as the current Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA); the yearly professional development plan; staff meeting agendas; late-start day agendas (monthly staff-development meetings); staff development day agendas; district

and school records related to a variety of data regarding implementation that have been advocated, facilitated, and supported; and materials from the professional development on CCSS for ELA.

The SPSA document was produced by a variety of stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, and administrators) and represents the school's cycle of constant improvement of student performance. The SPSA was used to coordinate all educational services at the school and addresses how school funds and efforts were used to increase the academic performance of all students. The goals listed and defined in the SPSA represent MSJHS target areas for enhancing learning and making improvements schoolwide, which calls for necessary support with professional development, CCSS, and for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The SPSA identifies school goals based on an analysis of confirmable state data, as well as the Academic Performance Index, which relates to the research questions in that it concerns teacher growth, expectation, and participation via professional development to help enhance learning for all students.

Staff meeting agendas, late-start day agendas (monthly staff-development meetings), and staff development day agendas represent part of the unobtrusive data collected for this study, which can also be used to help explain some areas of research context and assessment information connected to the professional development for CCSS for ELA. Staff development meetings can include biweekly or monthly meetings that occur after school and were intended to inform teachers about a variety of concerns, many of which include professional development and SPSA goals. Late-start day agendas occur monthly and bring site educators together for two-hour meetings focused on

selected and defined goals to help with ongoing professional development. Finally, staff development day agendas were strictly devoted to the site educators working exclusively on focused professional development goals for entire days without student attendance. Unobtrusive data such as these agendas can lessen the chance of bias with participants, because they provide evidence-based information that supports an authentic representation of performance improvement (Chyung, 2015). Ultimately, the content of what was being taught in professional development was identified for studying and making connections with defined SPSA goals and instructions.

Finally, district and school records can be used to collect information concerning top-down mandates related to the focus on professional development mandated by the district and principal. Regardless of some of these top-down mandates, in numerous areas, MSJHS educators can voice their opinions regarding the direction of professional development for the sake of enhancing student learning. School and district records may help supply additional data forms (e.g., School Accountability Report Card, various forms of data and statistics disaggregated by groups) that can be utilized to help support the purpose of this study, along with participant perspectives of the professional development when attempting to triangulate. Access to this data, relevant to the research questions, was granted by permission of the assistant superintendent of human resources and the site principal, as well as permission from any individual educator who might be pertinent to the data (permission will be given to IRB to use all of this data).

Observation data was always collected in the teachers' normal, everyday surroundings (e.g., classrooms) for this study. Observations were also always performed

overtly for this study. I represented a nonparticipating observer for this study who observed professional development meetings and all teachers who agreed to perform the interviews, in their classrooms, while they implemented professional development instructional goals. All observations were performed to understand the ongoing process with the purpose of this study. By performing observations, I could watch and monitor the processes and situations that occurred.

I utilized a checklist (see Appendix F) comprised in part with my own pertinent information, as well as information from www.doe.in.gov (Classroom Walkthrough Checklist) and www.cast.org/udlcourse/UDLLessonChecklist.doc (UDL Lesson Plan Checklist), Appendix E and G, and other types of classroom observables worth noting that were pertinent to the first and second research question—all of which were based on and reflect constituent parts of the three learning principles (see Appendices B, C, and D). I did not include preset questions or responses. The checklist allowed the collected data to be written down and marked accordingly. Observations lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, and the participants determined the times.

The observations were conducted in the described manner based on people's willingness or ability to provide information. The identity of all participants was protected in this study to ensure confidentiality and protection from harm. Participants' real names were not used in the study—rather, a pseudonym, letter, or number was assigned to represent each participant. All collected data from this study was placed onto a hard drive and a flash drive. The hard drive and flash drive were password protected, and both were stored and locked in a filing cabinet in my home that contains all

paperwork. The data will remain on these devices and in the filing cabinet throughout this study and for 5 years after its conclusion.

As the researcher, my role for this study consisted of collecting data while continuing to work on site as a social studies teacher without any authority over my colleagues. As a researcher working at this site, I became acquainted with all the staff members. However, I was more conversant with those staff members for whom I have served on a team (interdisciplinary and department) in the past and the present. Nevertheless, I strove to collect data in an unbiased manner by requesting participation from any teacher(s) in the departments of the fields I intended to use in my research as I enacted convenience sampling. I did not specifically request only those staff members I was more acquainted with to participate in this study. In this way, I avoided influencing data collection through my past and present relationships with them and increased the chances of gaining participants who genuinely wanted to take part in this activity and felt they had something of value to contribute. This act also freely permitted first-year teachers and veteran teachers to all fairly partake in this study and helped eliminate biases that I, as a researcher, could bring to a related topic.

Therefore, the procedures for this study's data collection should be understood as fitting in accordance with Yin's (2014) system for collecting case study evidence, thus enabling later data analysis performances to be coordinated. First, three data sources were identified (interviews, documents, and observations) as acceptable to help triangulate evidence for this study. Second, these data sources adhere to Yin's four data collection principles, as well as the CCSS and UDL conceptual framework and both research

questions. The principles of data collection for this study were recognized through the multiple sources of evidence pertaining to it, and a case study database was created out of computer files with an evidentiary base of the acquired information and an organized researcher's report. Furthermore, a chain of evidence was made and maintained throughout this study to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the information in this case study (cited and footnoted relevant sources). Finally, an exercise of care was firmly applied to data taken from electronic sources, because information accuracy and relevance was of the upmost concern for performing this work.

Data Analysis

This study collected and analyzed data from three sources: interviews, observations, and documents. According to Merriam (2009), data analysis describes the procedures for understanding data by combining, decreasing, and deciphering what people spoke, as well as what the analyst looked at and interpreted—it is a series of actions used to achieve understood results. The general strategy for analyzing case study evidence focused on developing a descriptive framework and considered examining plausible rival explanations that might occur during the study process. Because MSJHS teachers were expected to benefit from the professional development being offered to them, this analysis examines data that might have emerged regarding why they were not benefitting from the professional development. This was performed to help clarify if any other ideas were negatively influencing the effectiveness of the professional development of the CCSS for ELA and for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations.

Merriam's (2009) and Yin's (2014) analytic techniques of explanation building were utilized to help explain the purpose of this work. The goal in this technique was to analyze the case study data via constructing an explanation about the case. Elements of explanations in this sense consider "explaining" a phenomenon as stipulating a presumed set of causal links about it, or "how" or "why" something occurred (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Small questions from the case study protocol were posed when beginning to analyze the case study data. Evidence was then identified that addressed the question, whereby a tentative conclusion could be drawn based on the weight of the evidence, along with a display of the evidence that can be used to represent the assessment (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). This analysis process repeated again and again with larger questions being posed until it was believed that the main research questions had been addressed within the context of the CCSS framework and UDL framework principles and guidelines.

Collected data was analyzed frequently throughout this study. Data collected during the day was transcribed as soon as possible, preferably on the same day, to increase retention and clarity of the concentrated efforts. The collected data was placed and stored on a case study database. A chain of evidence was maintained and organized via codes from the analyzing software program. The ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis and software program aided in measuring and analyzing pertinent categories and themes from the collected data. This program helped organize the data listing and grouping. Moreover, codes were utilized to reflect the research questions, marks were made connecting the interview text to references, and all data forms referring to the same

subject matters were studied. Furthermore, I presented descriptions and themes in tables and graphs.

Collected data was triangulated alongside further updates and peer reviews, which were then placed onto a hard drive and a flash drive. Transferability was accomplished by providing readers with evidence, such as this study's database, concerning the research findings that could be applicable to other schools featuring the same kind of population, culture, or gap (problem) between regular education and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. These efforts helped ensure credibility and trustworthiness within the study, because they were based on strategies for promoting validity and reliability, as noted by Merriam (2009). These strategies include triangulation, member checks, sufficient engagement in data collection, researcher's position, peer review, audit trail, rich and thick descriptions, and so on. This study's results should reflect the reasoning processes employed during its investigative operations.

Limitations

This research features some limitations worth noting. First, the UDL comprises a promising framework producing successful results as a model of good pedagogy; however, more research in this area still needs to be administered. Second, the collection of firsthand evidence regarding changes in students' academic achievements and teacher knowledge and practice may limit this study's scope, as the actual period for conducting the data and the level of resources to allocate was restricted within the temporal limits of the study itself, as well as the span for assistance via the professional development program.

Data Analysis Results

Procedures for Data Analysis

I gathered data from interviews, observations, and documents to conduct data analysis with triangulation for this study. Data gathered from the interviews came from nine teachers and two non-teachers (i.e., the program improvement specialist and the principal). My initial goal was to interview 10 teachers, but two of the 11 qualifying teachers for this study did not wish to participate. The teachers and non-teachers interviewed for this study accepted the invitation to participate and signed a letter of consent. Both teachers and non-teachers were notified that they would be provided a letter and a number in lieu of their real name (i.e., T for teacher and NT for non-teacher, followed by a different number for each person) to help ensure that no identifiable information would ever be used where presentation or publication was concerned. Later, the participants decided where and when I could conduct their interviews. The majority of teachers agreed to be interviewed in their classroom; however, a few teachers came to my room to be interviewed. Both non-teacher interviews were conducted in my classroom at their request.

Interviews with the teachers were held during teachers' prep periods or after school. Interviewees received a copy of the open-ended questions at the start of the interview so that they could follow along with the questions I asked. The teachers answered all of the 11 questions, along with some probing questions, and the non-teachers answered eight questions, along with some probing questions, because three questions specifically designed for teachers did not apply to them (see Appendix G for

the interview questions). The interviews were recorded via a digital audio recorder and some hand notes that I took. All of the interviews were transcribed within three days after they took place. The transcribed interviews and related materials were placed in a locked filing cabinet. Digital copies of the transcriptions were coded and added to Atlas.ti on my password-protected laptop, which helped me analyze patterns, relationships, and themes that aligned to the research questions.

Data collected from the observations came from the same nine interviewed teachers. The teachers who participated in the observations received invitation letters to participate in the study and, upon their agreement, signed a letter of consent. The teachers were informed in the letters that observations would focus on what and how teachers were implementing instruction in their classrooms as related to the professional development of CCSS for ELA. All of the teachers agreed to be observed in their classroom and were made aware that I would be utilizing a classroom observation checklist. Furthermore, the teachers agreed to perform a follow-up discussion regarding their observed lesson plan and to answer some short questions pertaining to UDL forms of instructions that they may have used to implement ideas learned from professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Follow-up discussion meetings with teachers regarding their classroom observations were held in their classrooms during the teachers' prep periods or after school. The classroom observation checklist was discussed with the teachers to inquire about what I observed and to ensure a full understanding of what the teachers were aiming to accomplish with their students. The discussion also helped clarify what might

not have been made apparent during the observation, since I walked into some classes after the agenda was introduced and the lesson was already in session. The teachers received a copy of the nine follow-up questions regarding the observed lessons upon my discussions with them, which related to the UDL Guidelines. The teachers answered the follow-up questions, along with some probing questions (see Appendix E). The observation follow-up questions were recorded with a digital audio recorder and some hand notes that I took. The observation follow-up questions were all transcribed within three days after they took place, and related materials were placed in a locked filing cabinet. Digital copies of the classroom observation checklist and the observation transcriptions were coded and added to Atlas.ti on my password-protected laptop, which helped me analyze patterns, relationships, and themes that aligned with the research questions.

Data gathered from the documents came from notifications emailed to staff members (from site administration) concerning the scheduled agendas for professional development and its various forms, including PowerPoint presentations and activities employed during these sessions, which were stored on archives in the school network. Data gathered from documents also included such works as the SPSA; an outline of the yearly professional development plan; staff meeting agendas; late-start day agendas (monthly staff-development meetings); staff development day agendas; and particular district and school records pertaining to various forms of implemented data; as well as materials from agendas regarding various forms of professional development on CCSS for ELA. Some particular district and school records also came from the district office

website and the California State Department of Education, including the Academic Performance Index. Unobtrusive data such as these documents lessened the chance of bias with participants, as they provided evidence-based information that supported an authentic representation of performance improvement (Chyung, 2015).

The content of material being taught in professional development, as noted in particular documents like the SPSA with its goals, was used in part for studying and making connections to help guide instructions. Additionally, some district and school records were employed in this study to help focus on the goal of the professional development. Access to document data pertaining to the research questions was granted by permission of the assistant superintendent of human resources and the site principal. Digital copies of the documents were added and coded to Atlas.ti on my password-protected laptop, which helped me analyze patterns, relationships, and themes as findings that aligned to the research questions.

The Problem and Research Questions to Build Findings

The research problem concerns middle school teachers at a site in rural Southern California that have been reporting issues with implementing CCSS for ELA, along with an achievement gap in ELA between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study examining teachers' perspectives regarding their use of instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students through the three UDL learning area principles (engagement, representation, and action

and expression) and the UDL Guidelines. Considering this aim, the data analyzed in this study addressed the following research questions and triangulation:

1. How are teachers utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?
2. How do educators employ the three UDL learning area principles (namely engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?

The findings from data pertaining to the interviews, observations, and documents were related to comprehensive themes derived from the literature review to support the aforementioned research purpose. The data was initially coded using descriptive coding and then placed into categories or organized into seven overarching themes according to what Attride-Stirling (2001) called "Global Themes". Attride-Stirling's article, *Thematic Networks: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research*, was based on the realization of a lack of tools available for analyzing qualitative material. This work provided a detailed description of the analytic process based on familiar techniques explaining how thematic analyses could be conducted by thematic networks, wherein "thematic networks are presented as web-like illustrations that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 385). Thematic networks were comprised of three parts: a) the Basic Theme, or the lowest-order theme stemming from the textual data (salient and uncategorized descriptive codes); b) the Organizing Theme, or the middle-order theme organizing the Basic Themes into assembled groups to reflect main ideas that

expose several parts contributing to it and pointing to a much broader theme; and c) the Global Theme, or the super-ordinate theme delimiting implied comparisons of data as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The Global Themes group sets of Organizing Themes that present “a position or an assertion about a given issue or reality. They are macro themes that summarize and make sense of clusters of lower-order themes abstracted from and supported by the data” (Attride-Stirling, p. 389). Thus, Global Themes provide information on the texts as a whole within the circumstances of a given analysis.

The interview, observation, and document data I inserted into the Atlas.ti program were organized, after repeated efforts, so that I could administer descriptive coding. According to Saldaña (2016, p. 102), “Descriptive coding summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data." Descriptive codes were then printed and analyzed so that those identical or similar in nature could collapse into analogous alternatives. Data was then reexamined in Atlas.ti to identify particular pieces of text related to the Organizing Themes.

Atlas.ti was utilized to group data according to interviews, observations, and documents. I then generated a list of codes (and quotes from interviews and follow-up observation questions) from each part of the data collection in Atlas.ti. Next, I created a template for each aspect of the data collection based on salient descriptive codes derived from the generated list, which turned into the Basic Themes of my thematic networks. After manually grouping the Basic Themes into my template by Organizing Themes, I

then analyzed the data and grouped matching Organizing Themes into one or more of the Global Themes to help generate findings linked to the problem and research questions.

Patterns, Relationships, and Themes as Findings

A presentation of the thematic networks comprised of Basic Themes, Organizing Themes, and Global Themes have been included in detailed tables (see Appendices H–J) based on interview data from both teachers and non-teachers, observation data from the classroom observation checklist and the follow-up questions with teachers, and document data (see Table 6) from various forms of professional development, including pertinent district and school records used in this study. Patterns, relationships, and themes (relevant to thematic network) were recognized from interview data between non-teachers (the program improvement specialist and the site principal) and teachers (nine teachers from the subject areas of ELA, science, history, and special education). These findings were significant to the triangulation processes in that they were used to help substantiate some later findings that corresponded with some forms of collected observation and document data. Accounts of the seven Global Themes findings were described by recognized patterns and relationships that emerged from each of the data sources.

Patterns, Relationships, and Themes as Findings from Interview/Observation Follow-up Questions

The descriptions used for interview data were listed by concurrences found between teachers and non-teachers that pertained to specific Organizing Themes, which made up Global Themes that emphasized salient findings between the two matching groups. The interview data questions related to teacher and non-teacher perspectives

concerning research question number one because they pertained to *Key Questions to Consider How Teachers are Using Instructional Training from Professional Development on CCSS for ELA to Enhance Learning* (see Table 1 and Appendix G). Descriptions of specific Global Themes from observation follow-up questions with teacher data were acquired with concurrences found among Organizing Themes that matched up with interview data, which helped provide an account of detected patterns and relationships for analyzing data. The observation follow-up questions with teacher data relate to research question number two, as they pertained to *Key Questions to Use to Consider the UDL Guidelines* (see Table 2 and Appendix E).

Table 1

Themes and Interview Questions for Research Question #1

Themes	Interview questions
Theme 1: Obstacles	How would you describe your perspective of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance student learning? What is your perspective about the professional development instructional practices involving CCSS for ELA that are currently in place at this school?
Theme 2: Collaboration	What is your perspective about the status of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA among site teachers? What is your perspective about the practices and strategies your school employs to encourage professional development on CCSS for ELA?
Theme 3: Supports (individuals or groups)	Describe particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for all students?
Theme 4: Inclusionary practice	How effective are the particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students?
Theme 5: Rigor	How effective are the particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for regular education students? How would you describe your perspective of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students?
Theme 6: Flexible learning environments	Do you think your measures positively influence the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students? Explain why or why not.
Theme 7: Instructional policies	How is the professional development program on CCSS for ELA developing and maintaining instructions for all teachers to enhance student learning? What kinds of professional development instructional practices involving CCSS for ELA are currently in place at this school?

Table 2

Themes and Observation Questions for Research Question #2

Themes	Observation questions
Theme 1: Obstacles	Does the lesson provide options that help all learners sustain effort and motivation? Does the activity provide options that help all students act strategically?
Theme 2: Collaboration	Does the lesson provide options that can help all learners regulate their own learning?
Theme 3: Supports (individuals or groups)	Does the information provide options that help all learners understand the symbols and expressions?
Theme 4: Inclusionary practice	Does the lesson provide options that engage and interest all learners?
Theme 5: Rigor	Does the information provide options that help all learners reach higher levels of comprehension and understanding?
Theme 6: Flexible learning environments	Does the information provide options that help all learners perceive what needs to be learned?
Theme 7: Instructional policies	Does the activity provide options that help all learners physically respond (through speaking and writing)? Does the activity provide options that help all learners express themselves fluently?

Obstacles

The first Global Theme of Obstacles from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives alluded to expectations that overall professional development instructions received by teachers would lead to lessons that would be comprehended and practiced by all students, which did not turn out to be the case. A frequent problem for teachers attempting to implement professional development instruction stemmed from many educators not fully comprehending that no two students are identical (Hall et al., 2012). Not all teachers realized that “an essential part of building a UDL culture is

providing effective professional development and training so that staff can grow as a team in their knowledge of and experience with UDL" (Meyer, et al., 2014, p. 170). According to participant NT1 and participant T1, the problem of all teachers being able to receive effective professional development instructions was compounded by the ability of teachers living in this rural area to be able to travel to distant forms of professional development offering CCSS for ELA and UDL-like forms of instructions, which could help them acquire more knowledge and enhance achievements with their SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

The first Global Theme of Obstacles noted in observation follow-up questions from teacher data centered on lesson-design problems that they were not inclusive of all students' learning having options to sustain effort, motivation, and to act strategically, nor did all teachers seem to sufficiently know where or how to find sufficient resolutions to their problems. For instance, participants T7 and T9 pointed out that when students used technology, many of them exhibited problems following procedures that taught them how to ask the right questions and acquire the answers they needed. Further support for these two participants' acknowledgements came from observations and their assertions that the site did not feature an effective typing program capable of assisting many students who struggled with typing on their keyboard, especially SPED students. Enabling students to empower themselves with such skills was considered beneficial, along with the need to purchase necessary materials, provide further training for teachers, and add relevant elective classes, which would permit students to learn and focus on these instructional techniques.

Collaboration

The second Global Theme of Collaboration from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives included pertinent forms of CCSS for ELA knowledge and outside forms of relevant professional development instructions, on behalf of site ELA teachers, that were shared with all site teachers at meetings. Further information shared with site teachers included some forms of critical and collaborative skills provided by AVID teachers regarding Common Core types of strategies that teachers could add to their repertoire of classroom instruction. Further group cooperation was stressed by participants T3, T4, and T5, which pertained to the ongoing need to examine SBAC scores and practices (ELA) while having to modify formal and informal assessments routinely throughout the school year.

The second Global Theme of Collaboration noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data included a need for group cooperation among site educators to enhance student learning by providing more options that involved multiple skills and reasoning processes via CCSS for ELA while also establishing parameters for group projects to empower student thought processes. Put another way, because motivation is fundamental to learning (and easily hindered in learning environments that are not designed well) UDL suggests to provide multiple means of engagement (Meyer, et al., 2014). More activities of this sort seemed like they could help provide extra forms of purpose and motivation to students, since each one needed to be assigned an integral part of the overall work and could employ various procedures and skills that they felt comfortable with to help them complete it.

Supports (Individuals or Groups)

The third Global Theme of Supports (Individuals or Groups) from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives indicated that some teachers utilized instructional training from professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning with the aid of various kinds of meetings (e.g., teams, departments, etc.) to develop multi-forms of classroom cultures. These meetings emphasized importance, since designing all-embracing learning environments is a continued series of ethical planning and doing, analyzing, and responsive teaching (Hall et al., 2012). Some concerns identified within this Global Theme concerned the numerous types of meetings at this site, which were strongly noted between new teachers and veteran teachers.

Participant T9 indicated that it seemed like new teachers came to the site wanting and needing to get together with their team and department leaders to talk and learn more about their specific roles and responsibilities; however, they usually seemed overwhelmed when beginning their first few years of teaching. Nevertheless, it seemed like the new teachers were more willing than veteran teachers to make the time to accept help and learn more strategies. Participant T9 also noted that veteran teachers may not want to seek help when in need of support, for one reason or another, which provided an explanation for why the site implements teachers-visiting-teachers weeks a few times during the school year.

Participant T9 also indicated that some at-risk students might really just be struggling in general education classes, acting adversely to this, and failing to receive the specially recognized attention they needed to qualify for SPED, since they fell under the

category of the multi-tier system of support (MTSS), which ended up placing them "out of the special program completely." Participant T9 also noted more problems with students potentially "falling between the cracks" in that the Resource Specialist Program (RSP) students seemed to be "struggling because there's no follow through. There's no back up. They don't have a teacher support because all of the resource teachers are teaching all the time."

The third Global Theme of Supports (Individuals or Groups) noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data indicated that new teachers needed to receive formal training—within the school—on cross-curricular training quickly, because as participant T1 emphasized, they need to know how to teach according to the standards. Additionally, information teachers provided to students seemed in need of having more options where symbols and expressions were concerned. It was considered that if teachers could quickly pick up on where particular students could utilize effective options presented to them, then overall learning could potentially be enhanced for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. According to Meyers et al. (2014, p. 85), "Learner variability is systematic and to a large degree predictable," and "learner capacities are context-dependent;" therefore, "That predictability can be used as a basis for designing flexible options that will reach most learners" (Myers et al., 2014, p. 85). This was why participant T7 felt that the forms of professional development offered to the educators should continue exposing them to the ELA standards and that teachers should continue working on strategies already taught them more specifically in their classroom.

Inclusionary Practice

The fourth Global Theme of Inclusionary Practice from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives indicated that some teachers were focusing on helping student groups who needed assistance so that the teachers could approach and utilize educational materials and instructions for effectiveness. An important aspect of this approach concerns the need to employ instructional methods and materials in a manner that "should be pliable and diverse to include the right amount of access, challenge, and backing for students, and to enable students to achieve their aims ways that best assist for each person (Hall et al., 2012).

According to participant NT1, the site was accessing the AVID program and AVID strategies, which "are just good strategies across the board for everybody to use. I am seeing that consistently in classrooms, taking notes, summaries, Cornell notes" and "citing textual evidence." Participant NT1 also noted that the English Department was using the RACE strategy (Restate the question, Answer the question, Cite the source, and Explain your answer) to cite textual evidence and would be sharing this tool with all teachers during an upcoming professional development meeting. These inclusionary practices represented only a few contemporary activities that the site teachers shared with their colleagues to add to their repertoire of classroom practices.

The fourth Global Theme of Inclusionary Practice noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data included contemplation on how to set up choices for conducting assignments and creating in-depth learning activities that engaged and interested students. Several teacher participants demonstrated recognition of curriculum

options provided to a broader range of students that included contemplation, which already came from their department meetings when they examined data analyses and SMART goals that could enhance learning for specific subgroup categories. According to participants T2, T3, and T5, because numerous teachers performed routine forms of monitoring on their students, some progress was already made, as well as was some development of instructional planning.

Some of these practices had already found a practical means for teaching to a wide range of students that implemented effective systems of instructions that seemed to be providing interest, acknowledgement, and importance for all. However, when it came to ELL students, many teachers did not have much to say about the professional development program including them in their instructions. According to participant T9, the professional development program required more ELL training to be provided to all site teachers, especially veteran teachers, in order to better assist them in implementing classroom instructions.

Rigor

The fifth Global Theme of Rigor from interview data between teachers and non-teachers included recognizing the needs to engage and provide more stimulation to students in the learning gap of CCSS for ELA. This was accomplished by appealing to them in various ways that utilized reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, such as project-based learning activities and writing programs, which required closer monitoring of their progress. The instructional training seemed to help some teachers design lessons that promoted critical thinking with a purpose and provided more interest to students,

which in turn helped them measure student progress more reliably in skill set areas of CCSS for ELA. According to Hall et al. (2012, p. 86), "Students need tasks that are challenging—not so easy that they become boring, or so difficult that they are viewed as requiring too much effort," and "Adjustable levels of challenge will allow both of these groups of students to work at their optimal level of challenge without feeling threatened by failure." Participant T9 stated she had SPED students gain success with MobyMax to help them engage in vocabulary challenges, and participants T3, T4, and T5 indicated that the computer lab helped many of their students succeed by frequently answering quiz questions on reading comprehension and vocabulary that challenged their knowledge and continually monitored their progress.

The fifth Global Theme of Rigor noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data that students were required to use their skills in various ways to reach higher levels of learning and understanding, accomplished by exerting more effort and working with others. Participant T7 indicated that his students worked in groups where they had to answer challenge problems, by levels, that required using various resources to solve particular issues before they could proceed to the next levels. Participant T8 had students working on information together to create a PowerPoint presentation on a designated topic where everyone had a role requiring them to research, design, and speak formally to the class in order to complete the activity. These activities indicated how some educators were successfully employing the UDL-like principles of learning and guidelines to enhance learning by keeping options open for their students to pursue

higher learning goals and tasks in enjoyable and personally creative ways where their capabilities were used to achieve them.

Flexible Learning Environments

The sixth Global Theme of Flexible Learning Environments from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives indicated a need to become more aware of CCSS reading and writing standards and to learn more from outside forms of professional development to incorporate into the classroom, whereby students would find their classroom activities more appealing. Following these procedures seemed like it could help teachers aid their students in feeling empowered and taking ownership of work assigned to them, as well as to help them break down (chunk) considerable forms of information more efficiently. Therefore, teachers need to create types of places that enable students to choose, put to use, and plan out actions to solve a new dilemmas (Hall et al, 2012). Correspondingly, participant T1 noted some strategies and techniques that she used to facilitate close reading, enable students to read technical writing and informational texts, and interpret content to the point where the students utilized annotation skills, note-taking in the margin, and reading with a pen in hand. These procedures helped participant T1's students to break down complex informational text and become more resourceful by enhancing their approach to content presented to them.

The sixth Global Theme of Flexible Learning Environments noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data that teacher planning put selected methods into action in their classrooms to help the students perform tasks in pliable ways that were conducive to their abilities and made sense to them. These methods appeared to

enhance learning because they reflected consideration of various learning styles present in the classroom and accommodated needy students with activities to the point where they could utilize their skills to increase their potential and understanding of it. This type of approach was viewed as having the ability to enable students to concentrate more on important learning skills that included forms of organizing information, as well as how to understand it.

Comparatively, participant T6 was able to help SPED students become more successful in these areas by having them brainstorm big ideas and interests before utilizing them to write on an ascribed topic. Participant T7 had groups of students developing spreadsheets based on a formula needed to solve a basic mathematical calculation. Students in this situation were able to bond and achieve solutions via tools such as Google and YouTube. Finally, participant T1 did not believe that the professional development program *Step Up to Writing* or the site provided a uniform writing strategy that could be taught and applied comprehensively as a tool. As such, she took it upon herself to research and implement effective writing strategies and techniques that provided options for students to learn what needed to be taught for their grade. Hence, her students were observed working independently and resourcefully as they researched complex texts and online sources in preparation for a group debate.

Instructional Policies

The seventh Global Theme of Instructional Policies from interview data between teacher and non-teacher perspectives concerned the recognition of professional development instruction being comprised of different parts with numerous goals aligned

to it. One such part recognized a need for teachers to experience and share deeper levels of understanding and implementation of CCSS for ELA so that more effective strategies for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students could be included. Another part recognized a need to examine various types of professional development offered by the site or district to try and craft more instructions that could impact the learning gap associated with CCSS for ELA subgroups.

The instructional policies for designing professional development on CCSS for ELA indicated that the training was attempting to help enhance student learning via UDL-like principles and guidelines by adhering to several levels of planning that had to be included in site professional development (e.g., state requirements, district requirements, site requirements, etc.). According to participant T9, the input levels for professional development at the site featured a limited voice, because other groups or parts possessed influencing agendas that the program also needed to follow. Additionally, participant T9 felt that numerous SPED, ELL, and at-risk students were "extremely underprepared" when they entered the site from local elementary schools, contributing to a negative connotation of these subgroups and making them more challenging for teachers to instruct where professional development expectations were concerned.

Routine forms of communication shared by teachers with other teachers regarding professional development strategies and techniques that worked, coupled with the part of the training that teachers had a voice in, helped guide some forms of positive change within professional development instructional policies itself. That action was achieved by addressing more precise and desired agendas to be included in the trainings on the part of

teachers so that the site could help close the learning gap for the CCSS for ELA subgroups. According to NT1, she felt that the site did the best that it could to talk about things and make things more comprehensive for site educators via leadership and AVID committees. Participant T4 indicated that developing a rapport or relationship could have been a contributing impact for the subgroups' learning gaps, because many had not yet acquired some form of ownership over their learning or materials, nor had many established a kinship with their teachers or peers. Apathy also represented a problem area that stood out for participant T4 and was alluded to by other teachers. Participant T4 indicated that if students suffered from apathy, then they would probably not be successful, regardless of any of the strategies teachers implemented.

The seventh Global Theme of Instructional Policies noted in the observation follow-up questions from teacher data recognized forms of professional development that included state agendas, district agendas, and teacher agendas. These observations indicated that additional concerns needed to be monitored, particularly with providing options for engagement, while also implementing classroom instructions for CCSS for ELA to help close the learning gap. Hence, professional development appeared to need a stronger ability to utilize data and time to better support teachers with essential forms of collaboration and communication (like providing more meeting times for SPED and regular education teachers to get together), which included introducing teachers to more various types of classroom instructions.

Most participating teachers indicated that the professional development on CCSS for ELA provided to them required more pertinent forms of instructions to be included in

their presentations. Participants T4, T6, and T9 strongly acknowledged that professional development for CCSS for ELA did not provide a sufficient amount of instruction for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, while many other participants alluded to this notion as well. Some participating teachers noted that much of the professional development on CCSS for ELA seemed to have been prepared solely for regular education students. Numerous teacher participants indicated that presenters did not seem to fully understand or implement exactly how or what all needed to be monitored for effective CCSS for ELA via professional development instructional policies. The professional development program still possessed some room for growth regarding instructional policies. Participant T6 aptly noted that "We are probably somewhere in the middle with professional development."

Observation Patterns, Relationships, and Themes as Findings

Patterns, relationships, and themes (as related to the thematic network) were identified from both parts of the data collected from teacher observations. The first part comprised the classroom observation checklist, while the second part constituted the follow-up questions with the nine teachers whose classes I observed (as already combined and described in the interview section). The classroom observation checklist was divided into two parts related to the two research questions aligned for this study. The first part dealt with an inventory of observed and verified agenda topics on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning, guided by instruction from professional development and applied to help SPED, ELL, and at-risk students in support of research question one (see Appendix J). The second part of the classroom observation checklist focused on research

question number two, where it was indicated how educators were utilizing the three UDL learning area principles of engagement (Affective Networks), representation (Recognition Networks), action and expression (Strategic Networks), as well as the UDL Guidelines, to enhance learning (see Appendix J).

The first part of the classroom observation checklist included a tally of noted areas on CCSS for ELA identified while observing the nine teachers instruct their classes. These findings helped support an understanding of research question one by providing details regarding how and what the teachers were doing in the lesson. During the observations, more teachers were found using reading informational text than reading literature, and all nine teachers employed at least some type of writing and speaking and listening activities within their lesson plans, while eight of the teachers worked with language and communication as a skill to some degree. Furthermore, data pointed to almost half of the teachers having students read some type of literature including key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas. Similar results could be found concerning teachers reading with some type of informational text in these same areas.

The reading range and text levels being used revealed that five teachers employed strategies of this sort that were performed at various levels, which included putting reading into forms of data in computer programs and using symbols to represent meanings. According to UDL principles and guidelines, when teachers are able to "gauge how a student's knowledge, skills, and affect change during instruction, they can also develop a good sense about what is causing the change," and "Teachers can do this by

examining the interaction between the student and the learning environment over time, assessing not only performance, but also what underlies performance" (Meyer et al., 2014, p. 140). Use of complexity revealed that a little less than half of the teachers included various information topics for students to work on, along with some challenging vocabulary, government, and science activities. Writing with texts and purposes demonstrated that a majority of teachers employed some sort of related activity that included note taking, reading articles, providing information about data, and government procedures. Additionally, UDL authors have described research on writing as being an ability that is not readily moved across dissimilar forms and subject matter. Learners who have acquired how to write in one subject area may not always write as capably in other forms and subject areas (Hall et al., 2012). This was considered important, because some teachers alluded to some problems with their writing program at the site, including a lack of uniformity.

Beyond this, UDL authors have also noted that students will require direct instruction for writing and determining specifics for each discipline, as well as to have opportunities to practice with quality writing models in each field (Hall et al., 2012). In addition, UDL authors have claimed that utilizing the UDL framework can, using web-based technology, guide educators in constructing flexible writing models that can meet the needs of diverse learners, such as SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, and impart to them a desire to write well and frequently (Hall et al., 2012). Overall, the production and distribution of writing and the use of research to construct and present knowledge demonstrated that most teachers had students take and use notes and work on PowerPoint

presentations. Therefore, it seemed as though site teachers had been incorporating many of the writing skills to a certain degree; however, their frequency may need to be increased and monitored, as well as varied among the resources they used to ensure success.

The range of writing employed by teachers illustrated that a majority employed some type of activity for their students that ranged from informal to formal writing. All of the teachers conveyed a presentation of knowledge and ideas and utilized some sort of speaking and listening skills with comprehension and collaboration. Nearly all teachers were found to employ conventions of Standard English in their lessons, while almost a similar count had students use knowledge of language. Vocabulary acquisition and use found nearly all teachers to employ some type of activity, some of which included prepped discussions regarding cultural and customs vocabulary, government vocabulary, and Moby Max vocabulary.

The Focus on Learners and Relevance revealed a majority of students to be authentically on task where student engagement was concerned. Students worked in various ways—individually being the most common, followed by small groups—and student levels of work were performed in various manners across the board. The majority of teachers were found to use one or more forms of technology in the classroom, while technology being used by students reached slightly more than half.

The Focus on Instruction and Rigor indicated that all teachers employed standards-based objectives, demonstrated evidence of a lesson plan, and adhered to the fidelity of core programs. Instructional Practices and Strategies revealed that more than

half to nearly all of the teachers employed some type of differentiation, with flexible fluid groupings reflecting the lowest in this area, while content, learning process, and skill development reflected the highest. CAST instructional designer Mindy Johnson acknowledged UDL research with regards to flexible fluid groupings. According to Johnson, making decisions based on whole-group interaction and practicing UDL on the spot takes considerable practice, because the flexibility in getting to know one's students can sometimes be based on making quick decisions with little information, where a student could benefit from working in a smaller group situation, possibly as a leader, or alternatively working with support from an adult (Meyer et al., 2014). Furthermore, Johnson stated that she tried learning about students by watching their body language, paying attention to how students interacted with others, and observing behavior when she asked questions of the group, in addition to employing diverse procedures for large or small groups, and one-to-one interplay within the first exercise (Meyer et al., 2014).

Described in this manner, flexible grouping indicated that considerable practice and trial-and-error strategizing needed to go into becoming proficient while using this technique. However, it appeared that some teachers required more specific training and practice in developing this technique where students could have become engaged with it. Additionally, it appeared as though some teachers may have needed more ways to become comfortable and adaptable with the form of the flexible grouping processes.

The area of lesson design indicated that about a third of the teachers varied small and whole group activities to slightly more than half of the teachers putting into effect impartial forms of student participation, along with useful changes in assigned activities.

According to UDL Guidelines, lesson development can be supported that considered the broadest range of learners from the beginning, which involved associated checkpoints that prompted educators to "consider ways to design multiple means of representation, action/expression, and engagement directly into their instruction" (Hall et al., 2012).

Varying forms of Direct Instruction and Check for Learning/Understanding implemented by teachers ranged from very low usage to slightly more than half of teachers using a specific type of it. Forms of Classroom Discussion ranged from low to less than half of teachers employing it in some manner. Several forms of Research-Based Strategies ranged from no teachers employing some of its various types (i.e., think-pair share, guided language acquisition design, reciprocal teaching, and write from the beginning) to a majority of teachers using a few specific parts (i.e., cooperative learning and teach for success techniques). Forms of Embedded Literacy ranged from low to medium-to-high usage of its various types, with writing across the curriculum scoring the lowest and evidence of writing process placing highest.

The last part of the classroom observation checklist focused on research question two. This indicated how educators utilized the three UDL learning area principles and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning, whereby the greater the number of UDL features included in the curriculum, the greater the chances of making the curriculum approachable to a broad range of students, such as SPED, ELL, and at-risk students (see Appendix J). The column marked "Included" on Table 3-Table 5 indicated how many of the nine teachers were observed using the specific description associated with it, as labeled in the far-left column. The column marked "Not Included" on Table 3-Table 5

indicated how many of the nine teachers were observed not using the specific description associated with it, as labeled in the far-left column. The column marked “Barrier” on Table 3-Table 5 served as a reminder to the researcher to attempt to identify any obstruction that could have prevented the specific description associated with it, as labeled in the far-left column. Any of these descriptions associated with the “Barrier” column were not written in the limited spaces provided for it in Table 3-Table 5; rather, they were indicated in the designated “Global Theme: Obstacles” described in all three data sections, which attempted to account for possible explanations for it.

The first section of the UDL Checklist focused on representation, referred to as the Recognition Networks, or the “what” of learning. This section of the UDL Checklist (see Table 3) ranked first in terms of teacher implementation during the observation processes. This included counts of eight out of nine for the areas examining examples being provided to students, represented arrangements of information in multiple media and formats being provided to students, highlighted points of critical thinking being provided to students, and a count of nine out of nine that provided support for limited background knowledge and establishing a learning context. Provided support for limited background knowledge, and establishing a context for learning, brought about procedures for activating and developing background knowledge with students by encouraging them to explore what they knew, as well as to make connections with their own lives, concerns, and preferences according to UDL research (Hall et al., 2012). Furthermore, background building was recognized as helping teachers assess what their students already knew and

did not know, correcting wrong ideas they may have had, and filling in the gap where inconsistencies seemed apparent (Hall et al., 2012).

Table 3

Results of the Recognition Networks: The UDL Checklist Focused on Representation.

UDL curriculum on representation	Included	Not included	Barriers
Provide multiple examples, show the range of examples, and provide examples and counter-examples	8	1	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Represent information in multiple media and formats (e.g., text version of book, online or digital resources)	8	1	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Highlights critical features (e.g., teacher tone of voice, marker underline, etc.)	8	1	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Provide supports for limited background knowledge, and establish a context for learning	9	0	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.

The second section of the UDL Checklist focused on action and expression, referred to as the Strategic Networks, or the "how" of learning. This section of the UDL Checklist (see Table 4) ranked second in terms of teacher implementation during the observation processes. It included counts of nine out of nine for providing flexible models of skilled performance and eight out of nine for providing ongoing, relevant feedback and providing multiple media and formats for delivering feedback. In terms of

providing flexible opportunities for demonstrating skill, it received a count of seven out of nine. The last area of this set of networks requiring more growth dealt with providing novel problems to solve, which received a count of four out of nine.

Table 4

Results of the Strategic Networks: The UDL Checklist Focused on Action and Expression

UDL curriculum on action and expression	Included	Not included	Barriers
Provide flexible models of skilled performance	9	0	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Provide ongoing, relevant feedback (e.g., questions and answers in classroom)	8	1	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Provide multiple media and formats for delivering feedback	8	1	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Provide flexible opportunities for demonstrating skill (e.g., written, oral, or visual presentation, explanations, word process)	7	2	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.

The third section of the UDL Checklist focused on engagement, referred to as the Affective Networks, or the "why" of learning. This section of the UDL Checklist ranked third in terms of teacher implementation during the observation processes. It included various low counts of teachers employing these practices. Offering choices of content and tools and providing adjustable challenge levels received counts of five out of nine. Offering choices of rewards received counts of two out of nine—the lowest of all the

areas of the UDL Checklist (see *Table 5* below). Finally, offering choices of learning context received a count of three out of nine.

Table 5

Results of the Affective Networks: The UDL Checklist Focused on Engagement

UDL curriculum on engagement	Included	Not included	Barriers
Offer choices of content and tools (e.g., choice of books to study literature)	5	4	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Provide adjustable levels of challenge (e.g., range of materials at different reading difficulties)	5	4	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Offer choices of rewards	2	7	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.
Offer choices of learning context (option to work in study carrel v. open classroom, student-use headphones)	3	6	See obstacle theme in all three data sections for possible explanation.

Documents Patterns, Relationships, and Themes as Findings

Patterns, relationships, and themes (as related to thematic network) were identified from the data collected from documents pertaining to this study's focus. Only the seven Global Organizing Themes in this part of the document data that helped to establish patterns and relationships noted in the interview and the observation data were used for analysis in this section (see Table 6). The first portion of the document data illustrated patterns and themes via tables so that the following explanations could be presented. This was done to help ensure that essential findings from this study would be

readily available upon examination of quality evidence and summarizations impacting triangulation.

Table 6

Documents: From Basic to Organizing to Global Themes

Themes as Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
1) Minor Incident Reports 2) Suspension Data 3) Current Discipline Data 4) District Discipline Matrix	Interferences with Enhancing Learning	Obstacles
5) SPSA Findings ELA Goal 6) SPSA Findings Subgroup Goals 7) Subject Goals 8) SPSA Subgroup Goal 9) Empathy Goals 10) SPSA ELA Goal 11) SPSA Safe Environment Goal 12) Growth Mindset	Growth Goals	
13) AVID Program 14) Teachers Visit Teachers	Collaborative Program	Collaboration
15) Professional Practice ELA 16) Professional Practice History 17) Smart Goals	Group Cooperation	
18) Action/Date ELA Goal 19) SPSA Safe Environment Action/Date	Affective Networks	Supports (Individuals or Groups)
20) Student Learning ELA 21) Student Learning History	Recognition Networks	
22) SPSA Safe Environment Strategy	Strategic Networks	

23) SPSA Subgroup Strategy 24) SPSA ELA Strategy 25) Three Subject Strategies		
26) SPED students 27) ELL students 28) At-risk students	Inclusive Groups	Inclusionary Practice
29) SPSA Evaluation of Subgroup Goal	Challenging the Subgroups	Rigor
30) SPSA Forming ELA Goal 31) SPSA Forming Safe Environment Goal 32) SPSA Forming Subgroup Goal	Expanding Efforts	
33) SPSA Safe Environment Indicators 34) SPSA Safe Environment Findings 35) SPSA Safe Environment Progress	Situational Strategies	Flexible Learning Environments
36) Goals for Instructional Model	Situational Techniques	
37) Outline for Professional Development Plan (Mission) 38) Academic Data 39) Attendance Data 40) Behavior Data 41) ELA Data 42) SPSA (Professional Development) 43) PBIS 44) Staff Development Days Objective 45) Late-start days	PD Planning	Instructional Policies

46) Non-Violent Communication	Communication
47) Schoolwide	
48) Staff Data Review	
49) Staff Agenda Meetings	
50) Teach Like a Pirate	
51) Suicide Prevention Training	Varied Forms of PD
52) State Testing Training	

Obstacles

The first Global Theme of Obstacles noted in the documents comprised concerns with student behavior and discipline affecting student learning in the classroom, along with the SPSA findings that pointed to student performance levels, indicating goals that groups of students were expected to achieve to advance to higher CCSS for ELA levels. According to UDL authors, irrelevant barriers in established education extended further than those that interfered with students from connecting content and signifying recognition" (Meyer et al., 2014). It appeared that some of these types of affective barriers impeded students' motivation and desire to learn in some site-learning environments.

Adhering to UDL-like principles and guidelines recognized that, by assisting students in improving their self-esteem, educators could help them build confidence. In turn, this could help them manage their own behavior and increase their self-efficacy (Meyer et al., 2014). These tasks were enacted by teachers who needed to contend with behavioral problems and discipline in the classroom so that they could grow past these issues. In doing so, this would reestablish a learning environment and "growth mindset" that facilitated students achieving higher performance levels. Hence, students adhering to the "growth mindset" involved UDL-like principles and guidelines that regarded students as needing to know how to learn within a social context and when they observed others as models. This included students refining their approach based on feedback and engagement in learning.

Collaboration

The second Global Theme of Collaboration noted in the documents consisted of several written communication plans on scheduled activities that could have assisted students in developing skills to improve in areas where CCSS for ELA has been concerned and to assist teachers in creating UDL-like lesson plans by observing each other teach (e.g., SPSA, teacher visiting teachers agendas, etc.). These actions helped teachers learn from each other and broaden their knowledge about how they could improve CCSS for ELA for struggling students by having conversations with each other and actually seeing other teachers implement lessons effectively, which they could then apply in their own classroom. Furthermore, discussions were held with site teachers that included UDL-like principles and guidelines while federal education funding trends indicated an increased recognition and acknowledgement of the assurance of UDL (Meyer et al., 2014). During that time, many states, school districts, and colleges and universities across the United States and Canada were launching UDL initiatives (Meyer et al., 2014).

Supports (Individuals or Groups)

The third Global Theme of Supports (Individuals or Groups) noted in the documents included data pertaining to Affective Networks, Recognition Networks, and Strategic Networks. By addressing these needs through sources such as the SPSA and staff meeting or professional development agendas, teachers were expected to provide purposeful, resourceful, and strategic activities for their students to be effective, as it was to be aligned with the goals of the school site. These written needs coincided with

supporting affective networks, where circumstances to link learning to parts of particular interests could make learning easier for students (Hall et al., 2012). Furthermore, by providing students with options regarding content and tools, such as various forms of technology, teachers could have attempted to increase student interest and excitement for learning specific concepts and skills (Meyer et al., 2014)

Inclusionary Practice

The fourth Global Theme of Inclusionary Practice noted in the documents comprised the three identified subgroups in need of support for CCSS for ELA—SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Identifying these three subgroups, particularly with leading documentary sources such as the SPSA goals, signified awareness that these populations required assistance and that teachers needed to provide strategies enabling them to achieve higher scores. District and site records of student demographics reflected numerous forms of inclusiveness in that the school classrooms had been featuring a range of cultures, home languages, abilities, and experiences. The knowledge and practices of UDL had been regarded as being able to assist teachers in supporting diverse and pliable options for supplying a mix of learners to approach and interact with content, and to display their comprehension, learning, and abilities (Hall et al., 2012). The SBAC scores, benchmark scores, and professional development agenda attested that growth was needed among these subgroups, and that action needed to be taken to help them achieve their goals, especially with the aid of technology tools.

Rigor

The fifth Global Theme of Rigor in the documents indicated that a variety of interactions were conducted by site educators to help increase CCSS for ELA performances for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The SPSA (Site Professional Development Plan) and various professional development agendas, including AVID, indicated that students were being monitored routinely with programs such as Renaissance, Moby Max, Excel spreadsheets, and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) activities in regard to writing. Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers were letting students struggle to find solutions (instead of pointing out answers) by accessing various resources and procedures for answering questions in order to help them become independent learners. These SPSA goals targeted areas for improvement and offered some support by having programs such as AVID extend activities into the classroom to assist teachers in reaching these goals. The SPSA goals also indicated a few areas that could supply some funds for teachers to purchase particular resources that could help them conduct engaging tasks that challenge students in reaching ascribed goals.

Flexible Learning Environments

The sixth Global Theme of Flexible Learning Environments noted in the documents included the need for developing a rapport or relationship with students and applying a variety of strategies and techniques, many of which were utilized from AVID trainings, as well as others allowing students to gain assistance from teachers to help them break down content into more manageable, comprehensible forms. These strategies and techniques were noted for providing safe factors and monitoring progress via SPSA

expectations so that classrooms could function in proper instructional surroundings and all students could feel comfortable and progress with their learning as their needs required. Some situational strategies and techniques were listed as goals for the instructional model that would compel teachers to share and learn from each other. This approach was taken with the expectation that various learning designs would be implemented in their own classrooms, which could provide options for all students. The school's PBIS program (and its various agendas supplied to teachers) provided teachers with support where behavioral problems posed a concern so that teachers could more easily implement flexible learning environments in their classroom.

Instructional Policies

The seventh Global Theme of Instructional Policies comprised various types of preparations that professional development needed to cope with, such as outlines for its mission, data analysis, attributes with professional development functions, and types of staff developments—namely, full days, late-start days, and so on. Many teachers referenced documents pertaining to a variety of plans taken from professional development interactions, such as department data and team and department meetings that discussed and implemented pertinent minutes from their agendas. Some concerns acknowledged the need for more time for professional development strategizing and technique development (especially with SPED and regular education teachers). This adhered to utilized staff development books, such as *Teach Like a Champion* and *Teach Like a Pirate*, and referenced problems that could hinder working needs that teachers saw as a priority.

More concerns recognized professional development as being subdivided into part state-directed agenda, part district-directed agenda, and part site-directed agenda (so only site-directed agendas could receive a small portion of time to work directly on the needs they felt needed to be prioritized). Hence, professional development training and instructional time seemed to be hindered by other precepts regarded by some teachers as preventing closing the gap with CCSS for ELA, along with other notable problem areas. The agenda for professional development planning indicated that the site experiences numerous ongoing issues and overlapping topics, with some points supporting instructional training on CCSS for ELA while others did not. According to participant T6, much of the CCSS for ELA professional development training seemed to be embedded in agenda topics, while more information still needed to be provided to help teachers enhance SPED, ELL, and at-risk students in implementing classroom instruction.

Triangulation, Research Question Relation, and Summarization

The three sources of data collected in this work—interviews, observations, and documents—were examined, along with references in the Appendix such as figures and tables on each of the data sources. These data sources and appendices aided in presenting and discussing the evidence of quality concerning how this study followed procedures to address accuracy. According to Merriam (2009), triangulation is considered as perhaps the most familiar method to shore up the internal validity of a research paper. Triangulation, as Merriam reminded us, is often connected with navigation or land scrutinization, wherein two or three measurement points end up merging on a site".

Hence, the multiple data sources utilized in this study offered the means for "cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people," and so on (Merriam, 2009, p. 215).

In order to proceed with triangulating and summarizing this work, each Global Theme, along with its pertinent Organizing Theme(s) displaying a pattern or relationship with another matching data source, was arranged so that a discussion could follow from it. The discussion itself helped establish validity, reliability, and truthfulness, whereby two or three measurement points were used to demonstrate convergence. This procedure helped determine support for either research question number one or two, or else both research questions, which in turn enabled short summarizations to be reported.

Global Theme 1: Obstacles

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Obstacles met the criteria for triangulation. Furthermore, it related to both research questions one and two in that a fair number of problems created barriers for teachers to be able to simply move forward and implement lessons that could enhance learning for CCSS for ELA, and to utilize UDL strategies to do so. Realizing that growth needed to take place with the professional development program involved concerns extending outside of the boundaries of teachers addressing problems, especially since participants NT1 and NT2 both addressed growth goals that needed to occur, as numerous subgroup gaps beyond the CCSS for ELA were already recognized as targeted areas for improvement. Regardless, determining what was inhibiting growth in this manner could have been attributed to

what participant NT2 described as being forms of potential cultural barriers or cultural blindness, which could have affected age group/level goals, and more.

Furthermore, all teachers needed to realize that no students should be seen as exactly alike. This view contributed to why the site professional development still needed to seek out relevant forms of instruction with variations that could continue to help teachers employ effective forms of implementation of CCSS for ELA in their classrooms to assist SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Additionally, site professional development needed to provide more instructional training that would help all of their teachers fully and completely understand the demands with CCSS for ELA (especially those who teach fields other than ELA and must include forms of it in their instruction). The professional development seems like it would be more beneficial if the site or district would have arranged to bring in more outside presenters to the area instead of leaving teachers to, on their own, travel far in search of pertinent forms of CCSS for ELA trainings, as many teachers admitted lacking the extra time in their schedule to do so.

Finally, it appeared that professional development with CCSS for ELA had to be provided to teachers on the whole so that more forms of instruction (especially with varying forms of technology, keyboarding, and online tools) could be offered to assist teachers in designing lessons that included all students while offering students options for completing their assignments. Moreover, the professional development could have provided teachers with more knowledge regarding where to access support and acquire resolutions to their problems, which may have appeared limited in scope for some teachers.

Global Theme 2: Collaboration

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Collaboration met the criteria for triangulation. Furthermore, this related to both research questions one and two in that the school was putting forth some programs (e.g., AVID, Renaissance, etc.) that led to some teachers making extra efforts to share information, both formally and informally, with staff members. The ELA teachers recognized that CCSS for ELA required more understanding and methods of implementation by their fellow teachers at their site, so they occasionally helped during site professional development meetings by sharing strategies such as RACE, as well as others. However, site ELA teachers acknowledged time as the main factor limiting what they could do to acquire and provide more outside support for their colleagues.

Additionally, other site teachers shared ideas with each other that included methods they could use to help students to work together productively and effectively. Part of this focus concerned helping students adapt to the proper mindset for performing their work. Another part of this focus involved recognizing the need to reassure students that they were achieving their objectives, particularly when they had demonstrated that their purpose and motivation efforts were sufficiently maintained and helped support their interests, efforts, and self-regulation. Therefore, it was necessary that professional development provide teachers with instructions routinely. However, it also seemed to require an increased focus on its specific needs to help all teachers gain exposure to different aspects of engagement, monitoring, and sustained motivation for all, such as with projects and parameters that could be presented more descriptively and regularly.

Global Theme 3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Supports (Individuals or Groups) met the criteria for triangulation and related to both research questions one and two. A point of importance from the UDL portion of the classroom observation checklist concerned the Affective Network—the "why" of learning—which demonstrated that this represented the area where site teachers needed growth. While some teachers were including some points of the Affective Networks, still others did not appear to be doing so, or else perhaps not as often as they should be. For instance, offering choices of rewards—meaningful rewards to middle school students—could have helped motivate the students to engage in more meaningful tasks in the classroom. Other areas related to the Affective Networks that could have witnessed growth among teachers involved offering choices of learning context, providing adjustable levels of challenge, and offering choices of content and tools.

The Recognition Networks and Strategic Networks fared well by observation and follow-up questioning with the nine teachers. However, one area in the Strategic Networks—the "how" of learning—could have witnessed further growth among teachers, providing novel problems to solve. Overall, it seemed that all teachers at the site were enacting some type of designs to help enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students where CCSS for ELA and UDL-like lessons were concerned. Nevertheless, it also appeared that some teachers needed to expand their repertoire to help motivate and reach students who seemed more disinterested or disconnected with the lessons being taught. Participant T8 noted that the more tools teachers have at their disposal and know

how to use, the better off they will be in providing instruction. After observing classrooms, interviewing teachers, and examining documents, it appeared as though site teachers resided at various levels and ranges when it came to implementing instruction based on professional development for CCSS for ELA.`

Ongoing forms of professional development at the site seemed like they would continually identify and remove potential curricular and instructional barriers while incorporating valued details pertinent to them making improvements. Relying on "teachers visiting teachers" as one of the more recent forms of support included by the site was seen as being able to assist teachers with positive feedback. Nevertheless, important findings documented with this procedure needed to be incorporated and shared with all teachers, which did not always happen in follow-up meetings. The area of MTSS was certainly regarded as a particularly busy and ongoing form of support for both teachers and students. However, it may need to be reexamined at various points in time, as its universal screening of all students was acknowledged as potentially being borderline for some students exhibiting SPED needs when contrasted with behavioral needs, which could in turn help eliminate potential misnomers.

Professional development could have worked on providing topics or areas of instruction more related to UDL-like principles and guidelines by creating a checklist where teachers' choices could have been selected for upcoming trainings because they felt more information was needed regarding certain area(s) of instruction. Finally, some teachers could have acquired more ideas for scaffolding and building knowledge to help

their SPED, ELL, and at-risk students further enhance their performance in the area of CCSS for ELA.

Global Theme 4: Inclusionary Practice

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Inclusionary Practice met the criteria for triangulation and related to both research questions one and two. According to participant T4, much of the professional development instruction provided to teachers regarding the CCSS for ELA was ingrained in other agenda topics. More closely examining professional development instruction sometimes revealed programs such as AVID that helped support CCSS for ELA instructions, as well as some late-start-day agenda topics. Both teachers and non-teachers acknowledged a fair number of instruments and instructions included and viewed them as being able to help all students. What seemed to be needed more to help improve CCSS for ELA instructions on the part of professional development consisted of spending more time specifically discussing it and making all teachers fully aware of what its content was about, as well as enabling teachers to work more with ideas and tools related to an understanding of the DOK associated with it. Perhaps teachers could later spend some extra time reflecting on their implementation of their DOK designs before attempting to make improvements for their students the next time they try to implement pertinent lessons.

Overall, it did seem that more forms of inclusionary practice could have been supplied to assist teachers in implementing instructions. While AVID strategies have been available for everyone to use, some teachers still did not use it for one reason or another. Similarly, many teachers worked with and used their own type of inclusionary

practice within the context of their department-formulated goals. For this reason, sharing ideas on inclusionary practices could have been more strongly advocated by professional development throughout the school year, as this may have provided fresh ideas for some teachers and refreshed ideas already present but forgotten, as well as their outcomes. Finally, it seemed as though new teachers were more predisposed to seeking help when they needed to resolve an issue, differing from the disposition of veteran teachers. Working with ELL strategies and techniques, and finding a resolution for an English language development situation, offers an important example of this kind of need.

Global Theme 5: Rigor

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Rigor met the criteria for triangulation and related to both research questions one and two. Several teachers at the site did much to help keep their students motivated in terms of rigor. Participant T1 appealed to the students' competitive nature by holding in-class debates requiring all students to speak. Meanwhile, participant T7 focused on monitoring and elevating student potentials via problem-based learning strategies. Some teachers seemed to allow students to struggle to find information they needed as opposed to providing them the answer, but still other teachers, such as participant T9, asserted that all students needed to be able to break down CCSS for ELA instructions into more manageable segments to comprehend it and apply it. Instructing teachers at professional development meetings to inform their students on how to effectively break down CCSS for ELA content represented an area that participant T9 believed needed to be taught more, especially for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Thus, many teachers at the site were

implementing rigor; however, it seemed that this area required more progress, as teachers were observed using it at different ranges.

Global Theme 6: Flexible Learning Environments

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Flexible Learning Environments met the criteria for triangulation and related to both research questions one and two. Creating and maintaining such environments represented an expectation for enhancing CCSS for ELA learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, in addition to implementing UDL-type lessons. Many teachers seemed liked they needed to provide more forms of options, motivations, resources, and strategies to help transform their classroom into a pliable environment. It seemed that teachers could have made greater use of techniques, such as maintaining a rapport with students and engaging them, more in informal types of discussions to help stimulate thinking. Furthermore, they could have benefited from utilizing tools to positively influence forms of differentiated instructions for all students.

A key point that emerged with creating and maintaining flexible learning environments was that teachers need to help students feel empowered about their work so that they could take full ownership of it. In this way, the students could have better managed and interpreted their information. Some methods for assisting students in concentrating and maintaining a positive environment were reflected in how some teachers took the time to instruct the students in how to develop their ideas and interests, such as brainstorming a topic and then selecting the right idea(s) to use to write about it that was important to them. Several site teachers employed useful techniques such as

helping students to better communicate about their learning objectives, encouraging them to bond better with classmates, and prompting them to use some tools they were already familiar with, especially when it came to using computers, such as YouTube and Google. In turn, this helped stimulate their students into achieving success. Finally, providing more choices to students with a variety of activities that they were assigned to perform helped teachers begin thinking creatively, such as being able to debate or record statistics (for vocal or quieter personalities) to achieve participation points. Finally, providing a uniform writing strategy with the site was addressed as needing to be put forth by professional development so that instruction could focus more on enabling teachers to present it comprehensively to students, thus, allowing all students to follow it successfully.

Global Theme 7: Instructional Policies

A summarization of findings associated with the Global Theme of Instructional Policies met the criteria for triangulation and related to both research questions one and two. Instructional policies were recognized as an area of professional development that needed to share time with teacher instruction, as it had to contend with various agendas at the site. Data embedded in the documents conveyed that the site featured numerous agendas and groups, which concentrated on tasks concerned with its professional development. Recognizing this notion helped clarify why CCSS for ELA had a list of things to do that was being presented to educators via high-quality instructions, as it was believed that they could effectively train teachers to implement engaging lessons in the classrooms that could realistically help SPED, ELL, and at-risk students close the

learning gap in this area. Effective communication represented another area that teachers and professional development leaders needed to focus on.

Numerous goals aligned with professional development had already been established at the site; however, it seemed as though either the site or the district needed to look more closely at trying to craft more instructions that could more deeply influence learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Regardless of the goals aligned for professional development to present to teachers to implement instructions related to CCSS for ELA, numerous competing levels of planning and presentation time still needed to be recognized, organized, and made available to deliver them more effectively. Realizing that professional development needed to be shared by state and district objectives meant that a system of prioritization needed to be established, and that listening to what teachers discussed needed to be considered when arranging such forms of professional development on CCSS for ELA to be presented. Finally, professional development agendas needed to discuss the monitoring of students, particularly SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, in that they should be more carefully watched and assisted as needed. Moreover, this could help them reach levels of achievement that would demonstrate enhanced learning, accomplished via progress monitoring, peer assessment, and self-assessment.

Accounting for Salient Data and Discrepant Cases

Next, the salient or most important data in this study was organized into thematic networks. Here, Basic Themes were classified under Organizing Themes, which were in turn later grouped and classified under one of the seven Global Themes that emerged

from the findings. The discussion of patterns and relationships from the interview data was identified if a concurrence between teachers and non-teachers was identified and the Organizing Themes of the Global Themes matched up. The two parts of the observation data—the classroom observation checklist and the follow-up questions with the observed teachers—were examined to note what teachers were using and doing in the classroom to help support the detected patterns and relationships. Noted patterns and relationships of the follow-up questions were employed if the Organizing Themes of the Global Themes matched up with one or more of the other data sources—namely, interviews (teachers/non-teachers) or documents. Similarly, document data was arranged by patterns and relationships of the Organizing Themes of the Global Themes that matched up with one or more of the other data sources via interviews (teachers/non-teachers) or observations. These procedures, along with a member check, aided the triangulation processes so that any findings could be made transparent. Finally, procedures for dealing with what could be discrepant cases utilized probing questions, although no outstanding forms of discrepancy were noted.

Presenting the Findings

I used tables to organize my data collection according to interviews with teachers, interviews with non-teachers, classroom observation checklist (tally sheet), observation follow-up questions, and documents. All of the tables and figures utilized salient data according to thematic network procedures—namely, Basic Themes, Organizing Themes, and Global Themes. This made the emergence and development of each theme transparent.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The chosen project genre consisted of an evaluation report addressing the need for professional development of CCSS for ELA to help instruct teachers at MSJHS to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. This evaluation report expresses the data analysis results to stakeholders, as aligned with this study's two research questions:

1. How are teachers utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?
2. How do educators employ the three UDL learning area principles (namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for these populations?

The evaluation report was expected to aid stakeholders in comprehending identified problems with the existing professional development on CCSS for ELA, and to decide whether clearer approaches to making such improvements can positively influence teachers in closing the achievement gap.

Providing an evaluation report to stakeholders allows disclosing pertinent evidence about whether the professional development provided to teachers demonstrates achievement with its ascribed student learning outcomes. Moreover, it was essential that such evidence utilize multiple data sources to discern the current state of the professional development with reliability and validity (Killion, 2018; Killion & Harrison, 2016). This

is because “no single source of evidence tells the whole story” (Guskey, Roy, & von Frank, 2014). Therefore, an evaluation report about the professional development, and its critical components, can deliver a concise understanding about the processes employed and the results discovered. For those planning the professional development of CCSS for ELA, these findings can illustrate focal points for making effective instructional improvements with teachers to be better prepared to enhance student learning.

This project’s evaluation report will utilize possible components in a full report, as exemplified by Killion (2018). The evaluation report can guide stakeholders through the processes leading to the data analysis results by utilizing many possible components of a full report for this study. Stakeholders can then determine what the evaluation report contains and apply their own insights by questioning it and understanding a “broader array of possible outcomes,” which “is an important aspect of evaluation and vital in judging effectiveness” (Guskey, 2017, p. 34). Furthermore, unforeseen consequences, positive or negative, can occur when a stakeholder looks beyond the stated goals and considers what is possible (Guskey, 2017). As such, it was vital that possible report components be carefully selected and clearly delivered in the stakeholder presentation.

Many of the components comprising a full report, as conveyed by Killion (2018), will be utilized in this project. A list of the full report’s broad components includes the following: Introduction, Overview of the Program, Evaluation Design, Evaluation Findings, Recommendations, and Appendix A: The Project (Killion, 2018). The full report components will be embedded in the evaluation report’s appropriately fixed

positions that apply to the *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* by Guskey (2000)—the intended framework for delivering the project.

Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* include (a) Participants' reactions, (b) Participants' learning, (c) Organization support and change, (d) Participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and (e) Student learning outcomes. Guskey maintained, "the key to success is recognizing that if we plan well, beginning with a clear idea of the destination, most evaluation issues are self-evident" (2017, p. 36). As such, he encouraged evaluators to use backward planning for the evaluation report. By beginning with the end in mind, this project will use backward planning with Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* by reversing the order of the above-listed levels.

Guskey (2017) informed evaluators that the foundation of professional development is what improvement efforts must be built on, and it resides with high-quality professional learning. Therefore, "To be successful in determining the effectiveness of those efforts, we must plan backward. We must begin with the student learning outcomes we want to affect" (Guskey, 2017, p. 37). The process of beginning with the end in mind can also be beneficial where UDL needs are a concern. For instance, SPED, ELL, and at-risk students struggling with CCSS for ELA instructions can be better assisted when their proper needs have been identified (Meyer et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it remains important for educators to view these students as individuals with various needs in the classroom where a teacher is instructing them, and to realize that the assistance they may need might be wrongfully identified. Because of predicaments like

this, Guskey cautioned evaluators about developing models of universal best practices in professional learning, and why it can be so challenging: "What works always depends on where, when, and with whom" (p. 37). With this understanding of the project's introduction, a scholarly rationale for an evaluation report must be addressed.

Rationale for the Project Genre

This project genre's purpose was to help disseminate and use the findings from the data analysis results in Section 2 of this study. An evaluation report was chosen as the intended project genre for this work. The rationale for this choice derives from the expectation that stakeholders will be engaged, comprehend the outcomes and criteria used to study the professional development program, and utilize this to make decisions to improve professional development instruction for teachers. Moreover, the expectation was that an evaluation report could be used to guide stakeholders' information on the research question findings so that teachers can improve the implementation of instructions to enhance learning with CCSS for ELA for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, including the UDL principles of learning areas of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines.

The evaluation report should be viewed as "a tool that summarizes the evaluation and promotes its use. How it is structured can leverage interest, engagement, and support for the use process" (Killion, 2018, p. 177). Therefore, when disseminating and using the data analysis results' findings, typical components of a traditional evaluation report, such as those provided by Killion (2018), will be presented as a hard copy to the assistant superintendent of human resources and site administrators (if site administrators wish for

me to present the evaluation report to site educators, then I will do so via a condensed PowerPoint presentation that will last up to one hour, which is included in Appendix A). Regardless, the evaluation report will be framed according to Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation*. This framework will be employed to establish a foundation for improving teachers' professional development, and to improve the delivery of UDL instruction to aid SPED, ELL, and at-risk students with enhanced learning on CCSS for ELA. The evaluation report was expected to provide information that can aid in closing the achievement gap in CCSS for ELA and help promote leadership among teachers that may improve larger views of community-centered education.

Review of the Literature

Research was conducted to demonstrate the rationale for choosing an evaluation report as the appropriate genre to help explain teachers' challenges and perspectives regarding how they were using the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. Moreover, using an evaluation report as the appropriate genre to help explain teachers' challenges and perspectives included a description on how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, and the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study. Conveying the results through an evaluation report to pertinent stakeholders may also help determine whether teachers are designing instructions appropriately to support all their students' diverse needs, and if they particularly know how or where they can readily

access information to help produce purposeful, resourceful, and strategic lessons (stemming from the noted UDL learning areas) to maximize learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

According to Patton (2002), in order to "enhance a report's impact, the evaluation should address clearly each major evaluation question, that is, present the descriptive findings, analysis and interpretation of each focused issue together succinctly" (p. 511). To help achieve these tasks, this literature review will utilize Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* to guide the evaluation report. In order to successfully evaluate and present the study's findings, the evaluation will work backwards through the five levels, as designed by Guskey (2017). In doing so, Guskey (2002) believed that an evaluator can obtain a deeper understanding of the breakdowns and difficulties occurring between the first and fifth levels—one must start where one wants to end. Therefore, the literature review for this project's evaluation report will utilize each of Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional developmen*t, backwards, as the subsections of (a) Student learning outcomes, (b) Participants' use of new knowledge and skills, (c) Organization support and change, (d) Participants' learning, and (e) Participants' reactions. From this process of working backwards, a thorough, critical, and interconnected analysis of how theory and research support the project's content was provided, including a discussion of the findings from Section 2. Furthermore, working backwards enables important components of the evaluation report to be properly selected to aid improvements and provide information for the report's presentation.

The content in this literature review focuses on past studies, books, and journal articles. The Walden University Library offers numerous online professional journal articles from the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, and ProQuest, all of which are utilized for this literature review. These resources were searched using the following keywords: *blended learning, causal studies of professional development, class activities, collective efficacy, context effect, critical reflection, curriculum implementation, educational change, educational coaching, educational objectives, logical thinking models, networks, perceptions of risk, program effectiveness, program evaluation, rural schools, self-efficacy, teacher agency, teacher collaboration, teacher education evaluation,* and *teacher leadership.*

Student Learning Outcomes

Guskey (2000) considered each of the five levels of evaluating professional development to be important. Early-level success in evaluating professional development is usually required for positive results at the next level; however, Guskey (2000) noted that how success was achieved may not be clearly sufficient or understood, particularly in how it relates to the next level. Moreover, Guskey (2017) declared that the foundation for any educational improvement must be built on high-quality professional learning: nevertheless, to see favorable results with the effectiveness of those efforts, one needs to plan backwards by starting with the student learning outcomes that need to be affected (Guskey, 2017). The fifth evaluation level, student learning outcomes, can be considered the essence of what students achieved in education—namely, its effect on them.

For Guskey (2000), it was crucial for student learning outcome goals to be accurately designed and able to interpret unintended outcomes. Understanding what students may gain or lose by implementing certain instructional strategies and techniques might be important for assessing the program's overall impact. As such, Guskey maintained that multiple student learning measures, through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor indicators, need to be considered when accounting for changes made.

Bradley, Munger, and Hord (2015a) sought to foster awareness among educators concerning the need and purpose for a change approach that can effectively impact student achievement, provided educators first contemplate the outcomes. Bradley et al. acknowledged some common problems and points of confusion educators encounter when writing goals for change projects: lack of awareness of the educators involved, habits and shared thinking from fast-moving school cultures for completing work, and lack of time and focus to acquire information between the process-focused and outcome-focused goals. The confusion that educators typically experience here can indicate that something is wrong with their change approach and that they need to reflect on and revise their plan. Bradley et al. recommended for educators in this dilemma to adopt a theory of change empowering them to make effective changes by utilizing proper knowledge, skills, and dispositions to transform student results via instructional strategies and techniques. The authors further proposed a logic model to help leaders develop plans through a change project to aid identifying performance measures. Such actions can help guide struggling educators in achieving their desired student outcomes.

A follow-up article on student learning outcomes by Bradley, Munger, and Hord (2015b) recommended that educators implement six strategies for a change endeavor: (a) develop and communicate a shared vision, (b) plan and provide resources, (c) invest in professional learning, (d) check progress, (e) continue to give support, and (f) create an atmosphere and context for change. Compliance with these strategies can ensure that teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, practices, and discipline to increase the student learning outcomes. Moreover, compliance with these strategies can aid a professional development evaluator when conducting an evaluation report about student learning outcomes by providing a proper index to reference while examining a program, as well as offering advice about the assessment.

Achieving and maintaining student learning outcomes could be considered a difficult task for some educators. To improve student learning outcomes, many educators advocate using instructional technology with its supported research, especially for language teaching. As a result, Greene and Jones (2020) recommended creating technology-oriented forms of professional development to consider teachers' backgrounds or habitus, as well as their instructional and technical capital. Even though research in this area remains limited by various technological tools, by examining teacher knowledge in utilizing these tools, the authors sought to account for this problem by referring to the Bourdieusian concept of habitus. Greene and Jones describe the Bourdieusian theory as a concept that aims to reveal social agents that devise strategies to adapt to the structures of the social worlds they live in, and that these strategies are basically unconscious acts carried out on a level of bodily logic. The authors then utilized

the concept of habitus to convey a theoretical basis for designing a professional, technology-oriented development.

As noted by Guskey (2000), the tools of instructional technology can contribute positively or negatively to student learning outcomes when evaluating this level of professional development. Furthermore, because so much technology is commonly used in society today, and since most teachers utilize technology to some degree, many students are already familiar with various forms of it and are expected to be using technology more in the future. As such, Greene and Jones (2020) argued the importance of training teachers in using assorted technology forms in the classroom. In this way, more teachers can design multimedia and hypermedia learning environments and understand how their habitus contributes to their effective technology integration, and how their lack of comprehension may hinder its learning benefits. Finally, such frameworks may help evaluation reports measure or assess student learning outcomes.

McFadden and Williams (2020) emphasized that teacher professional standards have reached a global level of concern requiring teacher research and evaluation skills to be designed and implemented by educators as both individual learners and participants in learning groups. Overall, McFadden and Williams (2020) noted that not much is known about how educators use evaluative abilities to fully comprehend the influence of their teaching and educational agenda. Regardless of the various approaches to design research and evaluation capacity, professional learning communities (PLCs), mentoring, and teachers conducting projects, as well as pre-service teacher coursework, were deemed the most commonly used approaches for these efforts. This supports what Guskey (2000) and

other professional development and learning authors, such as Killion (2018), have stated about the history of performing professional development evaluations—that many of them have been inaccurately performed, used the information incorrectly, or did not pursue the evaluation to the necessary extent. This literature gap signifies that downstream problems probably exist for educators. Realizing the importance of research and teacher evaluation skills indicates that the effectiveness of new knowledge and skills acquired by educators should be evaluated before the next level of professional development evaluation.

Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills

The fourth level of Guskey's (2000) evaluation of professional development involves determining if what participants learned during professional development influences their practice. Clear indications in this level can disclose both the degree and quality of implementation by the participants. For instance, data collected from the interviews and the observations in this study can provide information regarding the evaluation process of professional development at this level. The "measures of use must be made after sufficient time has passed to allow participants to adapt the new ideas and practices to their setting. Because implementation is often a gradual and uneven process, measures also may be necessary at several time intervals" (Guskey, 2000, p. 85). A trained evaluator should be able to detect differences at this point, given an ongoing interest or use of instructions from professional development by participants' acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Much of the use of new knowledge and skills presented to participating educators was discussed through professional development program groupings that often carry over into forms of dialogue in PLCs and aim to enhance student learning. Much of this use comes in the form of what Colton, Langer, and Goff (2015) termed collaborative cultures of trust and openness, which is vital to teachers' understanding of what is taught in their professional development and how they can effectively analyze and apply it.

Part of what holds teachers back with enhancing student learning outcomes involves what Colton et al. (2015) considered the "old way of thinking," which results in the lack of both students and teachers achieving success. Basically, "new ways of thinking" that are considered insightful and contrived for team, department, or school-wide implementation should first be conferred and agreed upon openly. Colton et al. explained that teachers who are grouped together first need to establish trust with recorded, agreed-upon rules so that each teacher can work in a positive manner, without fear of being judged or criticized. After the groups establish working agreements and communications skills, then the teachers are permitted to move ahead with their group learning to the point where they feel psychologically safe and free from judgment or criticism (Colton et al., 2015). Many such strategies and techniques linked to collaborative culture can be identified and used as evidence when evaluating professional development regarding participants' use of new knowledge and skills.

According to a synthesis of more than 1,500 meta-analyses, Donohoo, Hattie, and Ellis (2018) indicated that collective teacher efficacy (CTE) is far more effective and prognostic of student achievement than socioeconomic status, prior achievement, the

effect of home environment and parental involvement, student motivation, concentration, persistence, and engagement. Donohoo et al. contended that CTE is greatly attributed to cultural beliefs, the role of evidence, and resetting the narrative. Many such values reflect high expectations for student success, essentially translating to a common terminology that serves as a focus on student education as averse to instructional agreement (Donohoo et al., 2018). According to the notion of CTE, teachers come to view themselves as agents of "change" and as "evaluators" in that they help establish and contribute to the make-up of the school culture to the point where they believe they are connected to the success or failures at their site. This notion is reflective for students, as well.

Eventually, CTE affects student accomplishment diffusely via beneficial patterns of instructional conduct (Donohoo et al., 2018). Conversely, if educators feel they can do little to positively influence students, then they will probably face negative student learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers should collect student evidence from their daily routines to measure their influence, as well as to adjust their classroom practices in the event of decreased student learning outcomes (Donohoo et al., 2018). Finally, school leaders need to convey a positive interaction among their teams while remaining attentive to verbal comments and body language via situational awareness, which can help with evaluating participants' use of new knowledge and skills.

Another way of viewing participants' use of new knowledge and skills involves the role of coaching. According to Simos and Smith (2017), many studies indicate that coaching is productive for improving teacher practices and enhancing student learning. Coaching seems like it may allow teachers to feel comfortable because it is considered a

means of continued growth for all teachers, and not a means for remediation. Since the emergence of Common Core and its forms of instruction to be implemented in the classroom, many school districts have utilized literacy coaches to help teachers meet their objectives. Literacy coaches are usually viewed as learning-process experts who instruct teachers in how to implement lessons aligned with student learning outcomes and help focus on how to read a variety of texts and write for various purposes, especially when communicating in different settings and contexts (Simos & Smith, 2017). Literacy coaches may help support many different forms of collaboration and learning, particularly with professional development and PLCs that can lead to improved teacher practice and student achievement.

As suggested by McLeod (2015), the critical reflection for teachers required for embodied readiness starts with teachers practicing openness. For teachers to improve their readiness to facilitate participatory learning with their students, McLeod suggested they begin by reflecting on reflection, leading to the nine steps of reflection: readiness, recalling, recognizing personal, reflecting on the child's experiences, reviewing, relating to relevant reading, re-appraising the relevance, responding, and remembering. Reflection as a process can serve as identifiers when targeting areas for documenting and improving implementation of program content, as well as providing feedback when evaluating professional development.

The transition to Common Core incited the California Department of Education to supply time and funds to help teachers across the state identify and target innovative professional learning through grants known as the T-BAR (Teacher-Based Reform)

program. This aimed to promote teacher-directed professional development by enabling teachers to choose professional learning that would meet their personal requirements and be receptive to their local school's circumstances (Sullivan & Westover, 2015). Numerous variances occurred among subject areas, grade levels, and individual projects. Additionally, the study examined what teachers learned and how it affected student learning among schools and districts where both teacher professional growth and school- and district-level impact measures revealed increases. While the study noted aims and gains for students in general, it did not note targeting gaps between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Gaps of this sort are areas evaluators need to examine specifically in evaluation reports.

Organization Support and Change

The third level of Guskey's (2000) professional development evaluation concerns documenting and improving organization support to inform future change efforts. Measuring or assessing much of the reliably usable information is based on what the organization supports, advocates, facilitates, accommodates, and recognizes. Information that is measured or assessed for reliable use, particularly for studies such as this one, is typically gathered through interviews with participants and school administrators, use of pertinent district and school records, and minutes from follow-up meetings. Asking the proper questions in interviews can lead to the correct form for gathering information to evaluate organization support and change.

Evaluating organization support and change can pose a challenge for novice professional development evaluators or even experienced evaluators analyzing it from a

model providing too much information about the research and practice. As such, evaluators at Guskey's (2000) third level of evaluation need to pursue reliable ways of reconceptualizing professional learning models as tools. This way models can be reconceptualized alongside other designs that can assist in providing more information about the theoretical models being used in a study.

The five learning process models, as referenced by Boylan, Coldwell, Maxwell, and Jordan (2017), can potentially aid in evaluating professional learning experiences. Three of the learning process models deal with understanding path variations, one concerns a systemic conceptualization of learning, and other deals with cognitive learning. Illustrating an analytical framework focused on modeling components involving purposes, scope, implicit and explicit learning theories, and change process within the agency and its philosophical groundwork contrasts pertinent learning process models by leading to enhanced understandings about the organization's support system and any detected changes within it (Boylan, et al., 2017). This means that the learning process models can address particular variables with different purposes as a questioning tool, which may inform research about its intricate design and pertinent meanings for professional learning activities where an evaluation report is concerned.

According to Boylan (2016) and Boylan et al. (2017), teacher leaders are informed by moral purposes drawn from their systemic leadership practice orientation, serving as a beginning point to examine the identity of teacher system leadership. Consequently, the questioning processes associated with an evaluation report can help

decipher what is involved with their practice while better understanding the system leadership.

Evaluating organization support and change connected with professional development for a report at a rural school site can be fraught with issues: “Rural school districts face unique challenges in procuring funds, recruiting staff, and obtaining high-quality instructional materials and implementing best practices” (Timar, Carter, and Ford, 2018, p. executive summary). Many rural and small school districts across California encountered challenges in implementing new state education policies, particularly with the CCSS (Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016; Timar et al., 2018). Responding to these challenges, the authors decided to work with a local County Office of Education (COE) and Pivot Learning to establish the Rural Professional Learning Network (RPLN) to help resolve shared problems of practice related to standards implementation (Timar et al., 2018). As a result, the authors and Pivot Learning aided educators in producing an effective design and implementation system revealing progress for state and national rural education policy.

Pivot’s design process helped drive improvement with RPLN. The design process in this collaborative learning network included the following phases: (a) discover, (b) interpret, (c) ideate, (d) prototype, (e) feedback, and (f) refine (Timar et al., 2018). These phases addressed noted challenges and enabled access to professional development and collaborative time with peer districts. By facilitating the network, Pivot and the local COE could arrange for external experts to come in, provide online collaboration and resource platforms, organize meetings, offer technical assistance, and support site visits

(Timar et al., 2018). Site educators individually produced instructions agreeing to student learning outcomes by working in groups or teams. By creating a serious and contributory environment for the defined problems, the districts achieved improvements after two cycles of instructional improvement. An analysis of the strategies and techniques involved with the RPLN can help create a model for evaluating professional development based on its organization support and change.

To explore how risk perceptions influenced teachers in making sense of activities and actions amid a professional learning and development (PLD) initiative where teachers needed to change their customary performances, Twyford, Le Fevre, and Timperley (2017) adopted a risk perception lens focusing on uncertainty so that they could capture teachers' experiences while participating in PLD. Much of the data collected from this three-school qualitative exploratory study was acquired from interviews with 21 teachers and some supporting facilitators and administrators. The risk perception process model developed during this study became an instrument for educators to guide and reduce anticipated risk while enhancing learning in change, such as with the CCSS. This model provides a basis for future research on change efforts while helping to document and improve organizational support. The model does so by utilizing three key components related to the findings: uncertainty, vulnerability, and responses as emotion and actions (Twyford et al., 2017). By connecting how teachers recurrently utilize PLD based on their existing and past experiences to future experiences, new PLD events become viewed as unique moments arising where sense can be made out of each occurring activity.

The resultant measures recognized in this model can be considered dynamic, ongoing, and iterative; however, it is also "responsive to and affecting the social-cultural and contextual factors in the school and wider environment. This process ultimately impacts on teacher and student learning" where teachers feel vulnerable (Twyford et al., 2017, p. 97). Because teachers experience emotion as a response to perceived risk, as the authors noted in their interviews with the teachers, continued changes made by PLD facilitators, and noted examinations by administrators of teachers employing the newly learned instructions, complete with follow-up student comments in class during implementation, revealed that the entire process associated with this PLD was grounded in tremendous emotion for most of the interviewed teachers. Furthermore, the teachers added that it contributed undue stress when instructing students, increased their workload, and raised concerns about how unmentioned appraisal forms might impact their professional standing (Twyford et al., 2017). The authors explained that this led many teachers to take only minimal risks and develop implementation plans that would fit their existing scope of anticipating conceivable outcomes, as based on their prior education experiences and background. Fortunately, this model can mitigate uncertainty and worries teachers may have created or manifested themselves, and it may also utilize findings that can broaden understandings of teacher response to educational change via evaluation reports.

Participants' Learning

The second level of Guskey's (2000) evaluation of professional development concerned participants' learning from their professional development experience. The

evaluation information collected at this level is usually preferable if acquired from case study analyses, participant reflections, and forms of simulations and demonstrations. Additional data collections for this level of evaluation information can involve paper-and-pencil instruments and participant portfolios. Measures taken for participants' learning need to be established on the learning aims recommended for a specific program or task. However, this means that specific principles and signals of beneficial learning must be defined before the start of the professional development occurrence (Guskey, 2000). The new knowledge and skills examined by this evaluation level will be especially useful if it can help improve the program, including its content, format, and organization. Furthermore, an evaluation report on professional development focused on participants' learning should be mindful of "unintentional learning," where advantageous or disadvantageous findings may become apparent that influence the outcome in some way.

In order to properly consider participants' learning for evaluating professional development, it is important to first become familiar with some of the best practices recognized with it. According to Desimone and Garet (2015), five key features of professional development in the U.S. make it effective: (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) sustained duration, and (e) collective participation. A deeper understanding of best professional development practices was conveyed via insights gained by the authors during their study.

When questioning whether participants acquired the intended knowledge and skills of a professional development program, Desimone and Garet (2015) found that professional development could change teachers' procedures more easily than their

fundamental subject-matter knowledge or skill via reflective practice. As such, the authors believed the nature and quality of questioning teachers drives the need to make improvements when providing instruction. Thus, improving the quality of what teachers do appears more challenging than increasing time spent on a particular behavior.

Moreover, the authors gained insight into how teachers varied their response to the same professional development, producing differences with student learning outcomes. Because teachers come to professional development with different levels of content knowledge and experience, as well as classroom contexts, such as SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, a professional development evaluator will have to be mindful of these factors that may influence the overall measurements or assessments connected to the actual degree of participants' learning. As such, Desimone and Garet (2015) contended that professional development needs to be calibrated to individual teacher needs, along with teacher evaluation. By doing so, the authors believed that each teacher can be exposed to a catalog of professional development opportunities and that teacher data can be drawn upon evaluation data associated with coaching and mentoring.

Engaging participants, both collaboratively and individually with inquiry, can help produce evidence for an evaluation report. This evidence can then be collected and analyzed to present findings about professional development for teacher links to students as inquirers, as inquiry can be considered a challenging undertaking to decipher, involving decision-making and curriculum-oriented selections. Consequently, Clayton and Kilbane (2016) contended "professional development to promote inquiry, both with teachers and with students, would be necessarily multi-dimensional, ongoing and

complex" (p. 458). As such, the authors accepted a one-year grant to assemble school- and university-based inquiry groups to assist teachers in developing and visualizing ideas and actualizing inquiry procedures to benefit both teachers and their secondary students in a variety of content areas. Data collected for this study included surveys, reflective writing, and teacher work samples exploring the connection between developing abilities for both student and teacher. Progress with the study, as acknowledged by Clayton and Kilbane (2016), indicated teacher achievement in their learning and student inquiry while demonstrating skill at the starting levels. Subsequently, this led to discussions about the practical and conceptual difficulties involved with teacher learning, along with the inquiry procedures for teachers and students developing together that still required further work and research in these areas.

The current state of CTE, as related to professional development, still requires additional research, as well as circumstantial factors that influence beliefs about it. According to Donohoo (2017), the act of interpreting findings from routine conversations among educators about in-depth teaching strategies can help reveal more impactful patterns for conducting professional learning. Furthermore, it is important that improved professional development designs that positively impact teacher learning be described for research in this area, after which contextual and environmental variables associated with collective efficacy beliefs can benefit practitioners as they relate to remote sources and past experiences (Donohoo, 2017; Killion & Harrison, 2016). The act of recording and describing newly acquired knowledge and skills regarding participants' learning can shed light on an evaluation report whereby the evaluator can include the detected changes

through measurements or assessments to help bridge theory-practice gaps and offer suggestions for improvement.

Assessing participants' learning via professional development evaluation can include data acquired from not only what teachers learned in a professional development program about instruction and implementation for traditional classrooms, but also from hybrid classrooms and blended learning community classrooms. In Azukas' (2019) study of 18 teacher participants who took pre- and post-self-efficacy tests concerning nine personalized learning constructs, the teachers were found to display greater self-efficacy levels related to implementing personalized learning with the professional development community. Data collected included individual interviews, feedback surveys, and online postings. Overall, teachers reported "increased confidence with regard to personalized learning in the areas of planning, risk-taking, implementation, continuous improvements, and sharing their knowledge with others" (Azukas, 2019, p. 275). Additionally, many teachers mentioned gaining abilities such as knowledge about students, skills linked to technology, design, problem solving, and support.

These findings indicate where participants' learning for professional development evaluation can be assessed and monitored to improve personalized learning. If properly funded and guided, such programs appear to possess considerable potential for helping teachers be flexible and open minded in making dispositional shifts to manage the uncertainty surrounding educational change (Barak & Levenberg, 2016). This study further possesses the potential to pique interest for some schools willing to make changes

with faculty and students by working on closing achievement gaps via various forms of technology offering transferable value to other schools.

Participants' Reaction

According to Guskey (2000), the simplest and most common form of professional development evaluation in which educators have the most experience is participants' reactions to the experience. Much of the data collected at this level is often acquired through questionnaires completed by educators after an activity, including rating-scale items and open-ended response questions. The same questionnaire is often used by professional organizations to follow up on the professional development; however, Guskey noted that other valued resources for assessing this level of professional development could be utilized through interviews, focus groups, and personal learning logs. Asking the right questions to measure or assess participants' reactions is useful for gathering information for an evaluation report. Usually, reactions identified as beneficial concerning the professional development program offer grounds for an evaluator to pursue evaluation results at a higher level.

Participants' reactions to professional development programs might be regarded as having much to do with educators' current views on education and educational policies. Existing global tensions concerning educational policy between countries seeking to limit opportunities for teachers to exercise agency over their own work, and those who seek to advance it, have led some educators and leaders to view teacher agency as a defect within school operations, which they desire to replace with data-driven and evidence-based approaches (Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson, 2015).

A related study on teachers' beliefs in education focused on three points when interviewing teachers: beliefs related to (a) children and young people, (b) teaching, (c) and educational purpose. In analyzing the data, Biesta et al. (2015) were surprised by the similar beliefs expressed by the small group of teachers, regardless of their placement in various areas of education where the teachers were more prepared for achieving short-term goals. This was especially so when dealing with policy documentation, raising some questions about the disposition and extent of the disjointed type of resources teachers have ready to use, and how this effects their accomplishments within their organization or shortcomings of organization. Furthermore, the authors noted particular problems within school cultures that led to confused discourses and partial understandings in some schools and with some teachers (e.g., vague ideas and disparity), often leaving many teachers muddled as to their role.

The study's main finding revealed the lack of a vigorous professional dialogue about instruction and education more ordinarily (Biesta et al., 2015). Basically, the authors felt teachers were more concerned with the present and not with fully meeting long-term goals, such as student learning outcomes. Many teachers seemed to implement lessons that aimed to maintain a cheerful environment by focusing on a few objectives for the day's work, lacking an overall vision for the work, such as college and career-readiness preparations. Finally, the authors stated that wider education purposes need to be understood and extended among teachers collectively within their schools to help produce a robust professional discourse about teaching. Comprehending findings from this study can be instrumental for professional development evaluators preparing an

evaluation report to critically examine the answers provided by teachers and school culture in order to better understand the participants' disposition, which can strongly influence their reactions.

Participants' reactions for required professional development across the U.S. has produced a decline in teacher collaboration, loss of directed focus, feeble forms of implementation, and deprivation of teachers' professional identities in having their needs met (McCray, 2018). These views may influence ongoing forms of evaluation with participants' reactions to professional development, where educators are asked to assess their satisfaction with them. If professional development for secondary teachers is mostly viewed as being incapable of helping them, wasting their time, and failing to make sense to them, then knowing what these problem areas involve and where these problems are most likely to be found in order to direct surveys and questions for upcoming professional developments can suggest ideas for long-term improvements. Based on findings supported by researchers dealing with professional development, McCray (2018) declared that the quality and meaningfulness of professional development has reduced due to the declining teacher leadership and motivation necessary for improving new skills and enhancing existing skills to serve teachers' needs. By incorporating positive forms of teacher leadership and input, educators can provide valuable dialogues to properly assess and assist them in making improvements and aligning instructions for student learning outcomes. An evaluation report might find much to assess if one could verify that the program was designed via analyzed data about teachers' needs and high-stakes classroom assessments to help teachers and administrators pinpoint student needs.

Participants' reactions to professional development evaluation could be affected by their demographics, particularly if located in a rural area, such as MSJHS. Many border states, such as California and Texas, have been experiencing significant increases in new Latina/Latino immigrants in rural areas for which their communities are not economically and culturally prepared (Thomas, Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016). These increases mean that rural schools are not as likely to have an adequate number of teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to sufficiently instruct and assist these students, often producing negative reactions in participants. Consequently, these shortages are most likely leaving numerous such teachers feeling helpless and prone to considering many of the professional development programs available to them useless, unless these programs utilize some type of research-based information that can positively guide their programs with ELL or ESL (English Second Language) content and training. Professional development evaluations, including those using evaluation reports, may be made transferrable depending on the findings and the inclusiveness of these issues. More professional development in states like California and Texas that are designed to include focused ELL and ESL instruction might be able to help increase teacher efficacy in the classroom and positively influence teacher participants' reactions to the professional development programs and findings in an evaluation report.

Research by Bulger, Elliott, Machamer, and Taliaferro's (2020) revealed the importance of the processes of teacher "buy-in" for increasing classroom physical activity via professional learning to support school policy implementation, as many instructions that seem promising by program leaders need to be received well so that

teachers can properly implement them and collaborate with site teachers. The authors found positive reactions with professional development when following up with teachers and administrators involved. Furthermore, Bulger et al. (2020) stated that it was mostly veteran teachers who were the workshop presenters in the study that explained the importance of making instructional strategies run smoothly, and invited participants to express their thoughts on how to improve adjustments to better assist their students, as well as to help teachers feel relaxed and assured with implementing physical activity. While these comments may seem trivial to professional development, they meet the participants' basic needs, serving as an effective foundation for its leaders to build interest and success between teachers and administrators. Making resources available to participants can also improve their reactions to the professional development so that they can view their time as well spent and cared for by thoughtful leaders (Norris, Shelton, Dunsmuir, Duke-Williams, and Stamatakis, 2015). Ensuring that participants' reactions to professional development are initially satisfactory further ensures high-level results for later evaluation reports.

In conclusion, this literature review should help clarify many salient elements found within each of Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* essential for an evaluation report. Guskey (2017) recommended for evaluation reports to begin with the end in mind and then work backwards by assessing each of the levels. In this way, an evaluator can be more likely to notice intended and unintended influences on the professional development for an evaluation report. Professional development evaluations and their influence can be either positive or negative, which is

especially important when an evaluator is working to provide an assessment of the program for administrators, program leaders, and teachers. Evaluation reports account for the program's success and failures by examining its planning, formative, and summative stages. Systematically investigating the program's merit or worth via an evaluation report can help policymakers and program leaders make decisions about it.

The literature review concerning the fifth level—student learning outcomes—seeks to clarify the essence of what students achieved. A literature gap exists in this area (Guskey, 2000; Killion, 2018). Nevertheless, it is necessary to verify programs' change approach for reliability, and program leaders need to orient teachers via more forms of instructional technology.

Literature on the fourth level—participants' use of new knowledge and skills—indicates that implementation can be a gradual and uneven process, and that collaborative cultures need to adopt new ways of thinking to make effective changes respecting each other so CTE can achieve high student success expectations (Colton et al., 2015; Guskey, 2000; Samos & Smith, 2017). This includes collecting evidence to measure impact, using literacy coaches, and reflecting on target areas.

Literature on the third level—organization support and change—can be a challenge when conducting evaluation reports analyzing professional development from varied models (Guskey, 2000). Evaluation reports can decipher what program leaders are thinking and learn about the system leadership. Models and networks can invite other educational groups, speakers, and other institutions to help provide guidance (Boylan, 2016; Boylan, et al. 2017). Models can also reveal program designs demonstrating

uncertainty, vulnerability, and responses as emotion and action with teachers' feelings that can hinder a program's success.

Literature on the second level—participants' learning—explores the use of the new knowledge and skills learned and implemented by teachers to enhance student learning (Guskey, 2000). Teachers at sites possess various backgrounds, contextual experiences with education (e.g., SPED, ELL, and at-risk students), and different forms of knowledge they bring to the school (Donohoo, 2017; Killion & Harrison, 2016). For evaluation reports, this indicates that professional development needs to calibrate the teachers' individual needs, include more forms of blended learning to increase self-efficacy, and utilize CTE to bridge theory-practice gaps.

Literature on the first level—participants' reactions—sets the grounds for an evaluator to pursue higher levels of evaluation by examining dispositions and surveys, where many teachers are recognized as operating from short-term goal perspectives, lack of resources, and residing in rural areas that make teaching be considered difficult (Biesta et al., 2015; Guskey, 2000; McCray, 2018). Using thoughtful and knowledgeable program leaders to assist teachers in overcoming challenges can foster teachers' "buy-in," motivating them to start working in a positive direction, realize long-term goals, and advance student learning outcomes.

Project Description

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

This portion of the work explains the means and structures that I utilized to create and deliver the evaluation report, especially since I examined and assessed this project.

Nine of the site teachers at MSJHS partook in interviews and classroom observations. Additionally, the school district's assistant superintendent and the principal of the site granted permission for the research to be conducted. Moreover, the Walden IRB granted permission to conduct research for this study. Furthermore, Walden University approved the evaluation report to be conducted so that it could be provided to stakeholders, especially the assistant superintendent and site administrators.

The existing supports comprise the teachers and the non-teachers (the site program improvement specialist and principal), who provided their perceptions of the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. Additionally, the same teachers granted me permission to observe them in their classroom and to meet with them to discuss follow-up questions dealing with CCSS for ELA and UDL-like implementation to enhance learning for all students, including SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Data collected from documents pertaining to the SPSA, professional development agendas, and district and school records (e.g., School Accountability Report Card, various forms of data and statistics disaggregated by groups) contributed to existing supports to help triangulate findings from the collected data used to evaluate the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Finally, Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* served as the supporting guide to assess the professional development on CCSS for ELA. This helped the evaluation report to include comprehensive knowledge about the performance, enhancement, and procedural directions and design of the professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

A possible barrier for presenting the evaluation report to stakeholders at MSJHS was that it would come at the start of the second semester of the academic year. The problem with this was that the outcomes of the professional development on CCSS for ELA, as presented in the evaluation report, would probably not produce as strong an impact on student learning outcomes as it would at the start of the academic year. Presenting the evaluation at the beginning of the academic year would provide professional development leaders a chance to consider the findings and suggestions of the evaluation report, and to adjust or modify recognized needs accordingly so they can be better applied to designated best practices. To help resolve this barrier, professional development leaders could begin making moderate changes and implementations with the program to provide prompt assistance in delivering meaningful instructions to site educators (e.g., including the use of technology in training, having department members work during and after trainings in the day to establish both formative and summative activities based on the ideas of the current instruction, and inviting motivational presenters on CCSS for ELA to speak at site meetings). Moreover, stakeholders can begin a thorough discussion and consideration on implementing suggestions and recommendations from the evaluation report during the SPSA meetings in the spring, allowing them to initiate a solid plan and select ideal practices to enhance the professional development on CCSS for ELA at the start of the following academic year.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

After receiving consent from Walden University to proceed with the project study and the evaluation report, administrators at MSJHS (plus the assistant superintendent of human resources) will be notified of its completion and each will be presented with a hard copy of the evaluation report. If said administrators grant me permission to present the evaluation report to site educators, then I will do so by modifying the essential components into a PowerPoint presentation for a meeting that includes time for questions and answers, which will last 45 minutes to 1 hour (or whatever time administration allots). The presentation will take place in either the site library or one of the computer labs, as usual with site meetings. I will provide the PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix A) to administrators at least 2 weeks before its scheduled delivery to site educators to give them time to comment and approve it. Most likely, the presentation will take place during an after-school staff meeting or a monthly late-start day meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

It will be my duty to deliver hard copies of the evaluation report to the administrators, which can conceivably lead me to present to the stakeholders. Stakeholders can follow along with my presentation as I deliver it, via an overhead projector, onto a screen that everyone can see in the room. I will secure the date and time with the principal to deliver the presentation, along with the room, projector, and computer. The area of presentation will be up to the principal, as will her monitoring of my presentation of the report. Finally, participants will be responsible for discussing

determinants of the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Project Implications

Local Stakeholders

This portion of the work includes an assessment of the professional development on CCSS for ELA at MSJHS. The evaluation report will serve as a guide in making recommendations for local stakeholders (including administrators, teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, program improvement specialists, parents, and students) regarding instructions and implementations by the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The recommendations include implications comprised of associations and suggestions stemming from Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels for evaluating professional development*.

Making support available for teachers, such as coaching to increase rigor, may help achieve higher success rates with SLOs. Outlining and presenting various forms of monitoring to check for understanding with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students can help determine whether they fully comprehend instructions and find it useful to take control of the work. Furthermore, it was beneficial if the merit and value of best practices were assured of being current and validated, as this can influence learning.

Professional development trainings needed to ensure that all teachers were familiar with the latest and most efficient computer programs employed by the site so that all teachers achieve efficacy and maintain 21st-century learning expectations; professional

development presenters invited to the school's rural area may assist with this need. Additionally, presenters may be able to help inspire teachers and increase instructional knowledge.

It was also recommended that issues on organization support and change with professional development on CCSS for ELA be provided time to troubleshoot professional development topics and designs critical for implementing changes. Specific time and focus also needs to be spent on overcoming the gap in CCSS for ELA, and site leaders and educators should unify in identifying and implementing strategies to close it. This can expose teachers to various aspects of engagement, monitoring, and sustained motivation via projects and parameters, as well as the quality and meaningfulness of professional development among educators. Moreover, it can help ensure participants' reactions to professional development result as satisfactory or better, which can help ensure later high-level evaluation results with the program's design and delivery.

Therefore, it was important that professional development include instructions via computer programs, especially ones that detail how to employ them with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. It was also important that professional development foster a teacher prioritization list to voice agenda topics, includes refreshments for late-start day and full-day professional development meetings, and provides needed materials for instruction and implementation. These recommendations align to help support SLOs.

In short, the site exhibits numerous concentrated efforts aimed at professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. However, each level of evaluation reveals areas where suggested improvements need to

be made so that each and every level can work independently and dependently to fully achieve the desired SLOs. By initiating some positive changes, local stakeholders can effectively close the CCSS for ELA gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Larger Context

In a larger context, community members, supporting businesses, and other districts in California, particularly rural communities, can benefit from the project study used in this work. Perhaps the evaluation report will be utilized for its transferability value by helping other districts evaluate their professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, as well as to incorporate UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, and the UDL Guidelines. Furthermore, the evaluation report may help recognize and support meaning relevant to closing their gaps with CCSS for ELA.

Summary

This section described the project and outlined its associated goals, rationale, and literature review. Also included were a project description and project implications. The rationale for using an evaluation report within the context of this case study was explained. Furthermore, I discussed the evaluation report that I performed within the context of Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels for evaluating professional development*. An advantage of this project was that administrators and professional development leaders can utilize it to examine areas of effectiveness and of ineffectiveness, where they can continue performing what is working with the program and use those actions to help

bridge and rectify what is not working with the program by means of descriptive reasoning, suggested action, and supportive research. Over the course of identifying pertinent forms of literature relevant to this study, taking and utilizing collected data in order to interpret and analyze it, and then using this to purport an evaluation report that a school site can employ to help improve its professional development on CCSS for ELA, I believe, based on a great deal of contemplation, that I have learned what it means to become a professional scholar and researcher. Moreover, I believe that the findings I acquired from this project can be made transferable to other similar schools and districts struggling with similar problems not only in California, but also throughout the United States.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This portion of the work addresses the strengths and limitations of the project study and how it resolved the problem, and provides recommendations for alternative approaches. The professional development program on CCSS for ELA was designed to acquaint educators with assessment types associated with Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (standardized test consortium that creates CCSS-aligned tests to be used in several states) and expected educators to begin designing instructions that would prepare students for them. Additionally, the program was expected to help develop a comprehensive and innovative system for assisting educators in devising formative assessments and summative assessments that included CCSS for ELA. Continued support and implementation of CCSS for ELA was expected to foster a schoolwide change in culture and literacy, not just for regular education students, but for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students as well.

The intent of this work was to explore the perspectives of both teachers and non-teachers (program improvement specialist and principal) regarding professional development on CCSS for ELA and to acknowledge how teachers were utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study. Moreover, findings on the program aimed to help close the gap on CCSS for ELA

between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. In the following sections, I discuss what I learned while developing the evaluation report and how this helped me, contextually, to understand areas of scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. The latter portions of this section include thoughts and impressions related to the overall significance of this study.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

Creating an evaluation report helps establish a vital and formal foundation for this study that contributes to information on which future decisions regarding the program's design, status, and resources can be utilized (Killion, 2018). Numerous evaluation reports employ several common elements to help seek answers related to a study's questions (Killion, 2018). Many such common elements found in evaluation reports provide information about the program that policy makers and decision makers have implemented over time, including practices, policies, and resources aimed at implementing change (Guskey, 2000). The third level of Guskey's (2000) f*ive critical levels for evaluating professional development* was intended to provide organizational support and change that assists levels 1, 2, 4, and 5, which in return were intended to support level 3 via quality, content, context, and process. Furthermore, Patton (2002) reminded evaluation writers of the importance of understanding the human side of evaluation, as well as relationships with participants in the program, because it is the interaction and mutuality between the evaluator and the people who use the evaluation that will end up providing situational and interpersonal authenticity. Moreover, Patton noted that, after interacting with participants

and conducting the evaluation, it is important for the evaluator to reflect on these interactions, as this can help provide a personal and in-depth description of the perspectives and authenticity involved with the study. Accordingly, these common elements and interactions with participants have been considered for the evaluation report.

The first strength of this evaluation report was that it identifies positive and negative findings with the study, including intended and unintended findings. These findings substantiate impact with Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels for evaluating professional development* and then help to outline the findings, interpretations, limitations, and implications for each level so that information and suggestions can be reliably reported. The second strength of this evaluation report was that it can be confidently presented to administrators to examine the efficacy and reliability built into the existing professional development on CCSS for ELA, helping them forecast any changes with organizational support and aligning instructions and practices that may need to be modified to enhance learning with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students via UDL-like lessons seeking to close the CCSS for ELA gap. The third strength of this evaluation report was that it addresses the need and value of particular resources, such as technology, supporting websites, and books, as well as some time-saving factors that can help justify needs and spending of funds with district offices to enable and improve knowledge and material use and efficacy for teachers to implement within the classrooms. The fourth strength of this evaluation report concerns its transferability, as

other similar schools and districts may be able to apply this to their professional development on CCSS for ELA to help generate useful results.

Limitations

I discovered some limitations as I was writing the evaluation report. The first limitation was that the sample size came up one teacher short for interviewing and observing. My initial goal was to acquire 10 teachers from the fields of ELA, science, social studies, and SPED to interview and observe for this study. However, the nine teachers that I did acquire for the study were spread out across all fields. The second limitation of this evaluation report was that I collected and reported data by myself. Many researchers contend, or at least mention, that it is better to use more than one collector and reporter of information for a study (Killion, 2018). Some researchers feel that this can help promote objectivity and eliminate bias. Nevertheless, my intentions with collecting and reporting data did aim at being objective and avoiding bias. The third limitation of this evaluation report was that I did not compare and contrast findings with this site against the other middle school in the district to note and substantiate findings with MSJHS because of time and financial restraints. Doing so could help shed light on similar school practices, policies, and resources, as well as potential top-down mandates from the district office that may either positively or negatively influence the site's professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I examined whether professional development on the CCSS for ELA enhanced learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations at MSJHS, which included how the

three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, helped recognize and support meaning relevant to this study. Alternatively, I could have compiled and examined all of the data from the documents used in this study before conducting my interviews, which might have helped me address other specific and pertinent questions with participants to help broaden the understanding and impact of data related to agendas and outlines for professional development meetings. A second alternative approach would have been to conduct a mixed methods study using survey results, such as a Likert scale, to help enumerate findings instead of relying on documents to help balance purported findings with words, thereby reflecting on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. By employing a mixed method design, I might have been able to relay a better understanding of the research problem and questions, though this would have required more time and extensive data collection and quantitative analysis by merging, integrating, and embedding the two "strands" (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, a mixed method design might have allowed me to apply a more in-depth understanding to help satisfy potential policymakers (e.g., administrators) regarding both the "numbers" and "stories" of an issue (Creswell, 2012). Even though the selected qualitative case study employed for this research offers an excellent way to focus on activities presented by the professional development, its "pure" research using words instead of numbers may not always provide exactly what some leaders and administrators are hoping to find in an evaluation report (Creswell, 2012). Once again, a mixed method design may be the answer for an alternative perspective.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

My doctoral journey with Walden University has taught me much about what it means to be a scholar. My tenacity has taught me the importance of patience, which was necessary to achieve professionalism, especially where time management and reliable research was concerned. Beginning my first full-size case study taught me how little I knew about all of the processes involved. Moreover, it taught me how to ask the right questions, how to seek out information, and how to write like a scholar. Furthermore, it gave me confidence and ability to research databases, informed me about how to formally interview participants and appreciate the professional respect and relationships shared with them, and taught me how to observe teachers objectively and without bias, as well as to acquire documents pertinent to collecting and transcribing data. I also learned how to utilize data results by compiling findings into an evaluation report that administrators and other educational leaders and teachers can use to help guide their programs to improve student learning, which I find to be personally rewarding and satisfying. Finally, I have learned how to overcome problem after problem related to performing this study, both as a student and as a teacher. This process has increased my personal level of efficacy to succeed in education and to make a difference within the area of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Project Development

My concern with making the evaluation report as the project for this study focused on determining whether or not each level of Guskey's (2000) professional development evaluation could clarify whether the instruction provided to teachers from

the professional development on CCSS for ELA was helping them implement instructions in the classroom that they and the students could relate to effectively. During the processes of the evaluation report, I was concerned with whether the findings would yield sufficient information to establish if each level of evaluation cohered enough to address overall success with administration accordingly. The overall findings in the evaluation report indicated that the professional development on CCSS for ELA did not cohere successfully. Each level of the professional development evaluation possessed pros and cons that needed to be addressed.

In my evaluation report, I recognized numerous themes that emerged in the literature review for this project. Additionally, several themes reflected similar patterns and themes inductively found with the data analysis process involving interviews, observations, and documents. These themes and findings were appropriately matched with each particular evaluation level, making it easier to break down findings and professionally possible for me to explain and suggest findings. I feel confident that purported findings in the evaluation report represent vital issues with the professional development program that were properly identified and offer suggestions for administration and professional development leaders to be able to follow up on with the findings, interpretations, limitations, and implications that I provided for each level of evaluation. Furthermore, I feel that, if administration and professional development leaders implement positive change based on the findings I indicated in the evaluation report, they will start seeing the program growing successfully, and the gap in CCSS for ELA closing.

Leadership and Change

Evolution of the evaluation report has helped me develop more as a leader and an agent of change. Thinking back to when I began this program with Walden University helped me to realize that I naturally accepted everything that was presented by administration and professional development as being sure proof, and that if I did just what was suggested, I would see changes, which was not always the outcome. Learning more from my doctoral classes, and gaining experience with the components involved in conducting a project study based on qualitative research and analysis, has demonstrated to me that a considerable amount of work and consideration was necessary to successfully enable a professional development program to work. My biggest surprises in working on this study came to me when I interviewed teachers and received various responses regarding their take on professional development for CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The interviews helped me realize that both teachers and non-teachers have much to offer professional development; however, perceptions and ideas on implementing instruction differ vastly in some cases, as further revealed when I conducted my observations. Determining how to validate and organize such varied forms of perceptions and ideas on implementing instruction via professional development takes considerable insight to produce a viable program that can support success with all of its participants.

I now realize that numerous components need to be considered when devising a professional development program, and that various forms of perceptions influence its success. I now feel I can critically analyze designs and instructions that go into devising a

professional development program with greater self-efficacy. I also feel that I am able to offer insight and guidance on professional development and can suggest and make proper adjustments and changes where needed with such programs. Therefore, based on a deep understanding of processes involved with professional development as well as the skills I acquired through this doctorate program, I now feel capable of being a successful educational leader and agent of change.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The findings in the project section of this work, including the evaluation report, helped provide a more comprehensive understanding of the efforts put forth in the professional development on CCSS for ELA. Many educators exhibited considerable effort in implementing instructions to enhance learning for their students, so it was not easily identifiable at the beginning of this research as to why SPED, ELL, and at-risk students were unable to achieve proficient scores on state tests in the manner that regular education students could perform. It was not for lack of effort on the part of educators that they have been struggling with this issue for several years now; it was for lack of greater understanding regarding the complexity of the processes and components, including time restraints involved with the professional development on CCSS for ELA that educators have been struggling.

Now, with the provided evaluation report, site administrators and educational leaders can consider targeting areas for improvement with the program. This can be achieved by utilizing provided suggestions and recommendations based on their understanding and experiences with the school culture to initiate changes within the

design of the professional development and organizational support as they see fit. Moreover, this can lead to improved overall success in CCSS for ELA instructions via UDL-like lessons, along with providing resources needed for teachers to increase their efficacy and help close the achievement gap with CCSS for ELA.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of research regarding professional development and its relation to implementing CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, along with implementing UDL-like forms of instructions. Social change with this study can be affected by its influence for administrators, professional development leaders, and teachers. Moreover, social change with this study may be able to influence CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students so that they can be proficient with regular education students, and help close the gap in this area at levels that can potentially include local, state, and national.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This work was based on the CCSS for ELA that drew on the UDL framework to help guide instructions and implementation of classroom lessons, via professional development, to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, which also aimed at closing the gap in this area between these students and regular education students. Moreover, findings from the evaluation report and the review of literature sections included in this work greatly assist in illustrating the impact of each evaluation area, according to Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation*. These finding identify and enable purporting of reliable suggestions and

recommendations to administrators, professional development leaders, and teachers to positively influence and aid future decision-making processes regarding change in the program, as well as how to maintain guided support with the instructional design of the professional development on CCSS for ELA to assist teacher efficacy in this area.

Furthermore, these findings from the evaluation report, and the literature review sections included in this work, may contribute to and guide strategies and techniques that lead to new theories regarding professional development on CCSS for ELA and UDL, particularly where putting suggested practices into action is a concern. A particular suggestion for expanding this study's acumen where future research is concerned is to try to discover why and how, for several years, participants in the professional development on CCSS for ELA continually struggled to enhance learning of SPED, ELL, and at-risk students in this area, and were left unable to close the gap between these and regular education students.

Conclusion

The project section of this work, complete with the evaluation report, helped bring together the essence of this study. Overall, the project section elucidated the two research questions that guided this study. One strength brought about by this study illustrated that administrators and professional development leaders can utilize the findings from the evaluation report to confirm what was working with the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students to help close the achievement gap between them and regular education students in this area. In this way, they can continue to employ and share these practices with other site educators and use

these positive findings as extensions to help make improvements where suggestions and recommendations indicated deficiencies.

Another strength brought about by this study utilized Guskey's (2000) *five critical Levels of professional development evaluation* by examining them in reverse order so as to broaden the understanding of each particular level of the professional development and its impact on other levels. The underpinning idea associated with this approach was to examine the findings from the professional development levels, beginning with where the program was at based on the SLO results, and then to determine any major unplanned obstacles or unrecognized hindrances that interfered with the professional development program's overall success. The determinants from these findings can then be employed by administrators and professional development leaders to improve the program, which can help guide problems stemming from changes and organizational support and assist in closing the CCSS for ELA gap.

One noted form of limitation brought about by this study revealed that not all documents used in this work were fully compiled and analyzed before interviewing teachers and non-teachers. This may have curbed some data results related to the interview questions. Another limitation faced by this study was that only nine teacher participants were utilized for interviewing and observing where data collection was concerned. However, this study initially aimed to achieve 10 interviewees. It was debatable whether having one more teacher participant for this study could have impacted it. A last noted form of limitation was that I as the researcher of this work, collected and analyzed all of the data related to this study and conducted the evaluation report. Some

researchers believe that this can lead to bias and possibly influence a study's findings; nevertheless, I made an honest all-around effort with the study to organize, interpret, and report data as it naturally unfolded.

I triangulated findings among data collected from interviews, observations, and documents pertaining to the site to help increase this work's credibility and truthfulness. Moreover, I noted how I learned and grew as a scholar and was able to exhibit skill and knowledge by demonstrating project development, all of which led me to progress in areas where leadership and change allowed me to contribute more to my site and in the field of education associated with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Furthermore, the case study of the professional development on CCSS for ELA and implementation of UDL-like instructions to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students enabled me to reflect deeply on the latter portions of this section with regard to what they may be able to imply, apply, and guide in future research, to the point where this study can be viewed as making a base-contribution that encourages social change. Based on the project study, administrators and professional development leaders at the site can utilize this work to initiate positive changes and close the achievement gap for CCSS for ELA. Additionally, transferability value found in the project study can potentially make it useful to employ at the other middle school in the district, other local and state school districts, and conceivably throughout the nation. Finally, the project study can potentially be used to express findings and make recommendations pertinent to developing new theories about professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students; UDL principles and guidelines; and in evaluating

professional development.

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Appendix A: The Project

Introduction

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The purpose of this evaluation report was to focus on the professional development on CCSS for ELA to consider the program's merit, worth, impact, and significance regarding how teachers were utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This includes how the three Universal Design for Learning (UDL) learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can help recognize and support meaning relevant to this study. Stakeholders are encouraged to make changes via summarizations of findings from analyzed data results to forecast next possible actions that administrators, professional development leaders, and teachers can make with the program.

Moreover, the purpose of this evaluation report was to provide simplicity and clarity that makes information accessible and comprehensible to those who intend to use its findings. Much of the presentation should be able to help correct identified misuses in the program. This evaluation report aimed to contribute to professional development and was created to be used as an instrument for stakeholders to understand how professional development reached its purported student learning outcomes (SLOs), along with any factors that helped or hindered its intended changes. This study may contribute to positive social change by encouraging and creating platforms for teachers to share effective instructional strategies and techniques for improving practices to enhance learning and

close the CCSS for ELA gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Outcomes of the Professional Development Program

The findings for SLOs indicate that the gap in CCSS for ELA between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students was still occurring. *Figure A1* illustrates that regular education students still obtain higher scores than those in the SPED, ELL, and at-risk subgroups, indicating that these subgroups were not achieving at the same proficiency level on the state literacy test, which was aligned with (or based on) the CCSS for ELA. This means that said students were not mastering the CCSS objectives for ELA (CDE, 2016a).

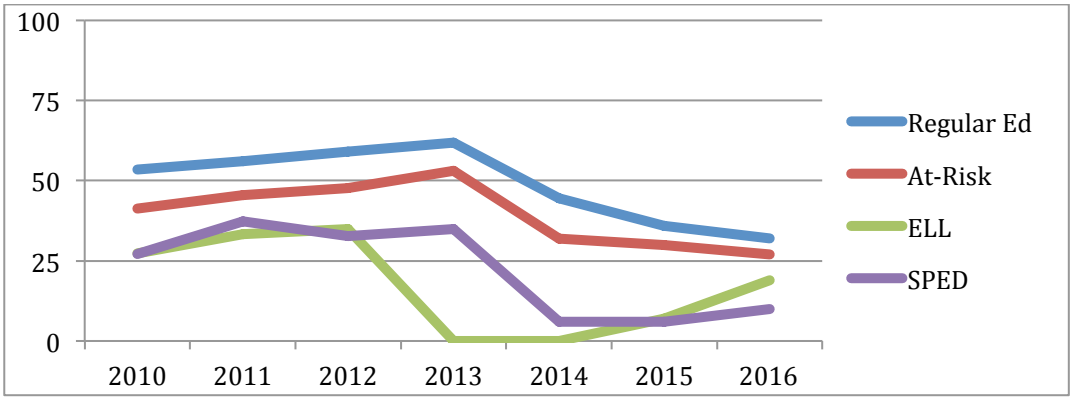


Figure A1: Student percentage of standards met and standards exceeded on ELA assessments between 2010 and 2016.

Evaluation Questions

This study examined teachers' perspectives to help determine how teachers are employing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for

ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations. This includes how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, as well as the UDL Guidelines, can recognize and support meaning relevant to this study. Considering this aim, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are teachers utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?
2. How do educators employ the three UDL learning area principles (namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?

Overview of the Program

Program Description and Context

The professional development on CCSS for ELA was introduced by the school district in August 2013, just as the school year was starting and the site was expected to implement them. The program addressed Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium as creating the new Common Core assessments for the state of California and other states. Furthermore, the program aimed to acquaint educators with the assessment types associated with Smarter Balanced and expected educators to begin designing instructions that would prepare students for these types of assessments. The program concentrated on developing a comprehensive and innovative system assisting educators in devising formative and summative assessments connected to ELA and aligned with CCSS. The intention was to prepare students before leaving high school to successfully pursue

college education or a career. Continued support and implementation of CCSS for ELA was expected to foster a school-wide change in culture and literacy.

Because the local problem comprises part of a contextually broader issue, this research study investigates teachers' perspectives and experiences with professional development on CCSS for ELA that was being offered to Mojave Springs Junior High School (MSJHS, a pseudonym) teachers. To this end, I asked teachers to describe their views about it, identified problem areas with implementing instructions for raising student performance, and examined whether what was being provided for teachers to employ these needs meets adequate rigor in their instructions. A discussion of the local problem in this work also included examining research literature related to enhancing learning through professional development, as well as considering sufficient professional development training and implementing rigor for teaching. Thus, it was important to note that these areas contextually support the need to assist SPED, ELL, and at-risk students with this study's framework.

Program Outcomes and Activities

The district program introduced in August 2013 initiated outcomes and activities intended to serve as a starting point for implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessments on CCSS for ELA. These outcomes and activities were then expected to contribute to and expand continuing professional development on CCSS for ELA by the district and the site. The outcomes and activities associated with the trainings were to be utilized not only by ELA, but also within science, social studies, and career and technical educational fields. Such outcomes and activities included expectations of educators

gaining a clear understanding and working knowledge of the Common Core Literacy Standards, along with Smarter Balanced assessments; a working knowledge of close reading and text-dependent questions; and integrating Common Core Reading and Writing Strands activities and strategies within the current curriculum. Further activities included expectations for recognizing shifts in CCSS in comparison to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards; Reading Strands, strategies, and curriculum templates; Writing Strands, strategies, and curriculum templates; and teacher teams working to align curriculum and lessons with standards (related to both Reading Strands and Writing Strands). However, initiation of the professional development on CCSS for ELA did not stress full emphasis for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Resources

The professional development on CCSS for ELA, and various forms of it, have included and provided many resources for educators since the outset of Common Core. Professional development forms included routine staff meeting agendas, late-start day agendas, routine team and department meeting agendas, and staff development day agendas. Such resources in professional development for educators included and provided teachers with books and videos, template sheets to implement activities, and some reflection resources. Other resources included and provided by professional development consisted of some training on useful websites for teachers and educational technology.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders involved in the professional development on CCSS for ELA include people with a vested interest in the learning that occurs at the site. Many of the participating stakeholders come together at School Site Council (SSC) and provide input regarding the school's programs and its Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), which discusses school goals that can impact professional development. The stakeholders pertinent to professional development on CCSS for ELA often include parents, students, teachers, counselors, administration, community members, and supporting businesses.

Participants

The participants involved in this study comprise educators from MSJHS, a rural middle school in Southern California. Convenience sampling was preferred for this case study, which interviewed nine teachers. It was also preferable to acquire these teachers from various fields of teaching (i.e., social studies, ELA, science, ELL, and special education) to help demonstrate that the problem and human experience associated with the study exists throughout the school. Additionally, interviews were extended to the program improvement specialist and the principal to acquire their unique perspectives related to this study. To participate in this study, it was required that (a) participants be employed at the site and that (b) participants currently be involved with professional development of the CCSS for ELA taking place at the school site.

Theory of Change

This study's chosen conceptual framework features Universal Design for Learning, which contains three learning area principles (Meyer & Rose, 2000; Meyer,

Rose, & Gordon, 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2002). The UDL instruction framework is organized around three principle areas in the learning sciences—namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression. These three learning area principles direct the design and development of curriculum to be productive and inclusive for all learners (Rose & Gravel, 2010). The three UDL learning area principles help explain research that went into designing supportive learning environments and the nature of learning differences that transfer onto three groups of brain networks—affective, recognition, and strategic.

These three brain network groups are intended to assist in answering pertinent *why*, *what*, and *how* questions regarding the framework (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Support for affective learning enables engagement with flexible options to generate and sustain motivation, guiding *why* learning needs to take place. Support for recognition learning enables representation with flexible procedures to present *what* needs to be taught and learned. Support for strategic learning enables action and expression with flexible options to indicate *how* learning and knowing take place.

The UDL educational framework is grounded in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, and so helps guide the progress of flexible learning environments in a manner that can assist individual learning needs (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Meyer and Rose (2000) maintained that educators who design their learning methods for the "divergent needs of 'special' populations increase usability for everyone" (p. 39). Thus, embedding UDL within curricula was expected to improve outcomes for all learners.

Evaluation Design

Data Collection

The concept of a qualitative case study for this work was concerned with utilizing various sources of appropriate data so that evidence of triangulation may be applied with Yin's (2014) four data collection principles: (1) use multiple sources of evidence, (2) create a case study database, (3) maintain a chain of evidence, and (4) exercise care when using data from electronic sources. Triangulating the three data sources associated with this study (interviews, observations, and documents) aided validation by cross verifying from at least two or more of the sources. A sufficient amount of data was gathered for this study based on the concept of collecting enough data that confirmatory evidence (from two or more different sources) can be acquired for the main research topics (Yin, 2014). Thus, triangulation helped establish this study's credibility and trustworthiness.

Data Sources

The interviews utilized open-ended questions that I, the researcher, presented face-to-face to the interviewees in semi-structured forms ranging between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews were scheduled with each participant at a time and place conducive to their schedule. Some questions focused primarily on the first research question pertaining to perspectives of teachers, the program improvement specialist, and the principal regarding the use of instructional training from professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Other questions focused primarily on the second research question pertaining to teachers' perspectives regarding how they use the three UDL learning area principles and the UDL Guidelines

to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The interviews were audiotaped, and as I listened to each participant, I took careful notes and strove to gain insight into their perspectives and experiences.

I also collected data from documents pertinent to this study in order to perform effective triangulation. The documents utilized in this study extracted pertinent data such as the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA); the outline of the professional development undertaking for the present school year; staff meeting agendas; late-start day agendas (monthly staff-development meetings); staff development day agendas; district and school records related to a variety of data regarding implementation that has been advocated, facilitated, and supported; and resources pertaining to professional development instruction about CCSS for ELA. The goals listed and defined in the SPSA represent MSJHS target areas for enhancing learning and making improvements school-wide, which calls for necessary support with professional development, CCSS, and for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Finally, district and school records can be used to collect information concerning top-down mandates related to the focus on professional development mandated by the district and principal. School and district records may help supply additional data forms (e.g., School Accountability Report Card, various forms of data and statistics disaggregated by groups) that can be utilized to help support this study's purpose, along with participant perspectives regarding professional development when attempting to triangulate. Access to this data, relevant to the research questions, was granted by permission of the assistant superintendent of human resources and the site principal, as

well as permission from any individual educator who might be pertinent to the data (including permission from the IRB to use this data).

Observation data was collected in the teachers' normal, everyday surroundings (e.g., classrooms). Observations were also always performed overtly for this study. I represented a nonparticipating observer for this study, observing professional development meetings and all teachers who agreed to perform the follow-up questions in their classrooms while they implemented professional development instructional goals. All observations were performed to understand the ongoing process associated with the professional development on CCSS for ELA. By performing observations, I could watch and monitor the processes and situations that occurred. I utilized a checklist partly comprised of my own pertinent information, as well as information from www.doe.in.gov (2017) and www.cast.org (2017), in addition to other types of classroom observables pertinent to the first and second research question—all of which were based on and reflect constituent parts of the three learning principles. I did not include preset questions or responses. The checklist allowed data to be written down and marked accordingly. Observations lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, and participants determined times.

The observations were conducted in the manner described based on people's willingness or ability to provide information. Participants' real names were not used in the study—rather, a letter and number were assigned to represent each participant as a pseudonym. All collected data from this study was placed onto a hard drive and a flash drive. The hard drive and flash drive were password protected, and both were stored in my home and locked in a filing cabinet that contains all paperwork.

Data Analysis

This study collected and analyzed data from three sources: interviews, observations, and documents. Data collected during the day was transcribed as soon as possible to increase retention and clarity of the concentrated efforts. The collected data was placed and stored on a case study database. A chain of evidence was maintained and organized via codes from the analyzing software program. The ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis and software program aided in measuring and analyzing pertinent categories and themes from the collected data. This program helped organize data listing and grouping. Codes were utilized to reflect the research questions, marks were made connecting the interview text to references, and all data forms referring to the same subject matters were studied. Furthermore, I presented descriptions and themes in tables and graphs. Collected data was triangulated alongside further updates, which were then placed onto a hard drive and a flash drive. Transferability was accomplished by providing evidence, such as research findings that could be applicable to other schools with a similar population, culture, or gap (problem) between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

The findings from data pertaining to the interviews, observations, and documents were related to comprehensive themes derived from the literature review to support the aforementioned research purpose. The data was initially coded using descriptive coding and then placed into categories or organized into seven overarching themes according to what Attride-Stirling (2001) called “Global Themes.” This work provided a detailed description of the analytic process based on familiar techniques explaining how thematic

analyses could be conducted by thematic networks, wherein "thematic networks are presented as web-like illustrations that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 385). Thematic networks were comprised of three parts: (a) the Basic Theme, or the lowest-order theme stemming from the textual data (salient and uncategorized descriptive codes); (b) the Organizing Theme, or the middle-order theme organizing the Basic Themes into assembled groups to reflect main ideas that expose several parts contributing to it and pointing to a much broader theme; and (c) the Global Theme, or the super-ordinate theme delimiting implied comparisons of data as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thus, Global Themes provide information on the texts as a whole within the circumstances of a given analysis.

Evaluation Findings

The procedures involving Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels of professional development evaluation* helped make greater sense of the data analysis results regarding both research questions, which affected this study's overall evaluation findings. This evaluation report utilizes all five levels in reverse order, as each level depends and builds upon the one preceding it. Guskey (2017) advised that, by beginning with the fifth level, the most important of the levels, one can determine whether the planned goals were met or not right from the start, which helps identify overlooked or unintended actions that might have occurred with each professional development level. Overall, success of the professional development as a whole was contingent on the success of each preceding evaluation level.

Student Learning Outcomes

This fifth evaluation level was designed to focus and help improve all visible features of the way the program design, implementation, and follow-up (Guskey, 2000). The SLOs were used to help measure or assess cognitive, affective, and psychomotor performances. Additionally, it was used to display the impact of professional development.

Findings

The findings for SLOs reveal that the ongoing gap in the CCSS for ELA between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students still remains. According to the SPSA, three goals aptly relate to the SLOs (see *Table A1*). The three goals describe planned improvements in student performance, via assistance and instruction from professional development on CCSS for ELA, which relate to the two research questions.

Table A1. SPSA Planned Improvements in Student Performance for MSJHS (2018).

School Goal #1:	Students will demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies for their appropriate grade level.
School Goal #2:	Ensure students in all subgroups, including students requiring intervention and special education, ELs, foster youth, and unaccompanied minors, have maximum access to information and opportunities for success.
School Goal #3:	Maintain a safe learning, working, academic environment that supports all student learning.

Therefore, these three goals serve as reference points for supporting notable findings on the professional development and can serve as a guide for this evaluation report, as they represent ideas behind a plan of actions to enhance learning with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

The SLOs indicate that professional development on CCSS for ELA needs to be wholly provided to teachers so that more forms of instruction can assist teachers in designing a variety of lessons that engage and provide more options for all students to complete their assignments. According to participant T9, professional development needs to focus on varying forms of technology, keyboarding, and online tools. Additionally, participant T9 reported that SPED students need support with reading comprehension on the ELA portion of state tests, as they cannot apply their "chunking" strategies to it effectively.

Overall, teachers operate within different ranges of each other in implementing rigor for their classroom instructions. Teachers exhibit rigor in the classrooms by creating and maintaining flexible environments representative of expectations aiming to enhance learning in CCSS for ELA for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, including various forms of lessons that resemble UDL-like instructions. Another area that teachers operate within different ranges of each other concerns interrelationships. All teachers need to maintain a high degree of rapport with their students to help create environments that permit students to feel empowered by their work so they take full ownership of it.

Many teachers acknowledge that numerous goals already exist at the site. According to participants T3 and T4, they feel inundated and inconvenienced about

attending out-of-town professional development, because they already have their time filled with their current work obligations. Even the thought of having to provide substitute plans and materials for several days leaves them not wanting to attend out-of-town professional development. Nevertheless, competing levels of planning and presenting time of instruction need to be recognized, organized, and made available to best assist students in the classroom.

State and district objectives, as well as the site objectives, have to recognize precedence and share the professional development agenda. Furthermore, professional development agendas need to discuss more procedures for properly monitoring students—particularly SPED, ELL, and at-risk students—since a gap between them and regular education students still remain with CCSS for ELA. Providing progress monitoring, peer assessment, and self-assessment instructions to teachers via professional development can increase students' chances at reaching higher levels of achievement.

Interpretations

Due to some teachers feeling inundated by their work and inconvenienced to take on even more work, they might not always have the time and energy to search out more CCSS for ELA-related activities that can support their classroom needs and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Nevertheless, some site teachers may improve instructions if they felt they possessed adequate time or inclusive training time to calmly access and learn new information (online) that supported them with sufficient rigor and flexibility. Therefore, by enabling more forms of access to CCSS for ELA-related content and online supports that apply a balance of rigor and flexibility, the professional development

program may be able to eliminate barriers for some teachers, as well as assist new teachers.

All teachers seem to connect at varying degrees when they employ a flexible learning environment that aims to enhance their lessons via robust forms of UDL-like instruction that demonstrate their commitment towards achieving SLOs. This means that a wide range of strategies and techniques already exist among site teachers for sharing and implementing CCSS for ELA instructions that can be expanded upon, provided that professional development utilize meaningful instructions consistently. To do so means teachers can improve self-efficacy and foster more purposeful and engaging lessons.

Limitations

The professional development on CCSS for ELA appears to be limited in scope for providing plentiful knowledge and knowing where to access all of the pertinent information. Professional development leaders and teachers need to be mindful of the time available for professional development to update, implement, and initiate instruction that starts the school year with best practices, particularly because its agenda has to be shared with other state and district objectives. Since teachers only have so much time to voice their concerns with professional development, and can only do so at appropriate times, an allotted system for prioritizing and addressing needs should be maintained.

Implications

Many site teachers can benefit from coaching on diverse forms of rigor to help them achieve higher success rates. Coaches can assist teachers by enabling them to offer their students more options that recruit interest, sustain effort and persistence, and

generate self-regulation, thus empowering their students to take ownership of their work. Finally, the professional development on CCSS for ELA cannot easily undo many of the leading strategies and techniques once it has designated and introduced best practices at the start of the year. Therefore, the merit and value of the selected best practices needs to be up to date and validated so that they can impact the program as intended.

Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills

This fourth level of evaluation was set to document and enhance implementation of program content. The degree and quality of implementation acknowledged and observed at this level was employed to help measure or assess participants' use of new knowledge and skills. The objective was to discover whether educators effectively apply the new knowledge and skills delivered by professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Findings

The findings regarding participants' use of new knowledge and skills reveal that the site utilizes some programs, choice practices, and various forms of inclusionary practices to assist teachers with their implementation of classroom instructions. Many procedures were already included in the professional development on CCSS for ELA, disclosing that a fair amount of collaboration and voluntary sharing of information takes place among site educators. Nevertheless, it appears as though more routine efforts aimed specifically at SPED, ELL, and at-risk students need to be shared, taught, and implemented effectively to further enhance learning with these students.

The site utilizes programs such as AVID and Renaissance to assist teachers in implementing new ideas and routines by introducing them to more student-centered

approaches to learning. Moreover, a fair degree of sharing was put forth specifically by AVID and ELA teachers to assist site teachers based on what they consistently learned and utilized in their classrooms on CCSS for ELA. Their sharing of this knowledge was of particular value in professional development meetings among those who teach science, social studies, and SPED, as they were expected to emphasize literacy skills in these content areas. Moreover, they were expected to work within the goal of increasing stronger students who were critical thinkers and were better prepared for college and career success. Furthermore, the sharing of some choice practices by AVID and ELA teachers benefits those who assist ELL students in recognizing what their students need to be able to achieve with the acquisition of the English language, especially after they exit the program. In this way, when former ELL students enter regular education classrooms, they too may be able to pursue college and career success goals successfully.

The sharing of some choice practices by ELA teachers, such as RACE (an acronym that stands for Restate the question, Answer the question completely, Cite the evidence from the text, and Explain the text evidence), offers an example of one such introduced activity that can guide students through the process of answering constructed questions in the reading. Such choice practices, when accompanied with the proper resources, mindset, and strategies, can help enhance student learning through enjoyment. Therefore, it was important that choice practices involving professional development on CCSS for ELA be identified, presented, and taught in order to be employed and implemented within the context of SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

In their interviews, both teachers and non-teachers acknowledged a fair number of instruments and instructions that can assist students in achieving their objectives. Such notable activities shared among the professional development on CCSS for ELA include how participant T1 appealed to students' competitive nature by holding in-class debates that required all students to speak, how participant T7 focused on monitoring and elevating student potentials via problem-based learning strategies, and how participant T8 let students struggle to find information they needed for their group project as opposed to providing them with the answer. Regardless of the progress being made by many site teachers, some teachers, such as participant T9, noted that all students still needed to be able to perform particular tasks, such as breaking down reading comprehension information involving CCSS for ELA instructions, so that they can comprehend and apply content efficiently. This indicates that some students were left behind because the CCSS for ELA gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students was left open.

AVID Summer Institutes, and many of its strategies, have been made available to teachers for several years; yet some do not find interest or utilize strategies associated with it. It appears as though some teachers work to a fair degree within their own preferred forms of inclusionary practice. Regardless, all teachers can still benefit from the professional development on CCSS for ELA by routinely being exposed to new options, motivations, resources, and strategies that can help them transform their classroom into a pliable environment, especially as times and students' interests become more diversified.

Some methods for assisting students in concentrating and maintaining a positive environment were reflected by how some teachers instruct students in detail about developing ideas and interests, such as brainstorming a topic and providing time to select the right ideas they need, which can improve their writing. By stimulating student thinking via project-based learning and informal discussions, some site teachers encourage students to better bond with classmates, especially when working in groups and using some familiar laptop tools, such as YouTube, search engines, Google Docs, and Google Sheets. Unfortunately, many teachers and students cannot perform activities with technology simultaneously, since laptops were not provided in all classrooms (mobile carts for departments limit usage), and because PCs in the computer labs were sometimes fully occupied during benchmark and state-testing schedules.

Interpretations

Varying levels of participants' use of new knowledge and skills reveal that all participants were working within the realm of providing CCSS for ELA via professional development, but at different levels to enhance classroom instructions. What were not clear or directly observable were how adeptly CCSS for ELA instructions were being implemented by all teachers to engage, motivate, and enhance SPED, ELL, and at-risk students' learning. For instance, it remains unclear whether these students can consistently self-regulate and stay on-task with their activities, or if they lose interest after a short while. If SPED, ELL, and at-risk students were still not obtaining proficiency with CCSS for ELA instructions, then the professional development needs to

address this issue, refine instruction, and pinpoint areas that need to be improved so that proficiency levels can be achieved.

Limitations

During the selection of choice practices, the professional development on CCSS for ELA needs to acknowledge how teachers can effectively apply these instructions to SPED, ELL, and at-risk students—not just provide instructions for regular education teaching. This consideration needs to be factored into the design of professional development, because teachers have limited time to plan and work to make contributions. Teachers need time to be exposed to new instructions, develop plans, and to implement it.

Implications

Inviting professional development presenters to provide new and beneficial instruction on CCSS for ELA during scheduled professional development time can help increase teacher knowledge, participation in instruction, and possibly inspire them, because many educators cannot travel long distances to professional developments. Finally, some teachers feel limited in their actions because they do not possess all of the necessary resources (within reason) or computer program training. Professional development should ensure that all teachers are familiar with computer programs and functions employed by the site so they can achieve efficacy with it.

Organization Support and Change

This third level of evaluation was used to document and enhance organizational support and to inform future change efforts (Guskey, 2000). The institution's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition were acknowledged and observed

at this level to help measure or assess organization support and change. The aim was to discover whether some of the most promising improvement strategies have been seriously stifled or stopped because of ostensibly unchangeable circumstances in the organization's practices related to the professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Findings

Realizing that growth needs to take place with the professional development on CCSS for ELA involves concerns beyond the boundaries of teacher practices, not only addressed by teachers, but by both non-teacher participants. Participants NT1 and NT2 both acknowledged that growth goals need to occur at the organizational level, and that there were other group gaps at the site—aside from the one dealing with CCSS for ELA—that were recognized as targeted areas for improvement. Nevertheless, determining what was inhibiting growth with CCSS for ELA for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students can be attributed to what participant NT2 described as potential cultural barriers or cultural blindness, which can affect goals related to age, groups, and achievement levels.

Continued forms of professional development at the site aim to identify and remove potential curricular and instructional barriers. One such action promotes "teachers visiting teachers" as a form of encouragement associated with professional development that assists teachers via informal observations and positive feedback. The area of multi-tier systems of supports (MTSS) was regarded as a busy and ongoing form of organizational support for both teachers and students, especially in assisting professional development. However, MTSS may need to reexamine some students at

various points in time, as its universal screening of all students was acknowledged by participant T9 as being potentially borderline for some students exhibiting SPED needs when contrasted with behavioral needs, which could, in turn, help eliminate potential misnomers.

According to participant T4, professional development instruction on CCSS for ELA provided to teachers was ingrained with other agenda topics. According to School Goal #1 and #2 (see *Figure A1*), indicators that growth has been met where CCSS for ELA is concerned, including for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, needs to be implemented to meet the goals by each of the pertinent departments, including English language arts, science, and social studies. Strategies to help support these changes acknowledged collaboration within cross-curricular teams and departments, monitoring students, project-based learning, and infusion of 21st-century skills with a developing Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Math (STEAM) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) culture.

Additional strategies addressed "best practices," but did not specifically state what they were, where they were acquired, or how they were determined. Moreover, professional development needed to directly remind educators more often to overtly share relevant practices and topics vital to the program. Examples of such beneficial ideas included UDL-like principles and guidelines, via a checklist of teachers' choices, to disseminate areas of UDL principles and guidelines (see *Figure A2*) considered by all teachers to be professional development leaders so they can be incorporated into instructions.

In terms of strategies for "best practices," participants T1 and T5 indicated that they implemented their own writing techniques that were systematic and reliable for students to perform because the district did not provided site teachers with a uniform writing strategy. A closer examination of professional development instruction does reveal that programs, such as AVID, suggest "best practices" strategies to assist implementation of CCSS for ELA instructions via WICOR (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading). Nevertheless, a uniform writing strategy does not appear to be intact.

The professional development instruction on CCSS for ELA does not often provide examples in each teacher's subject to help them find direct relevance and understanding. Data found in documents indicated that the site features numerous agendas and student groups that require professional development time be focused on other gaps and goals, as well. Participants T2, T4, and T9 acknowledged that the site addresses a wide array of topics via professional development. Recognizing this issue helps clarify why CCSS for ELA needs allotted time for its instructions to be presented by professional development. Furthermore, the professional development agenda needs to be shared by state and district objectives, further limiting time on CCSS for ELA.

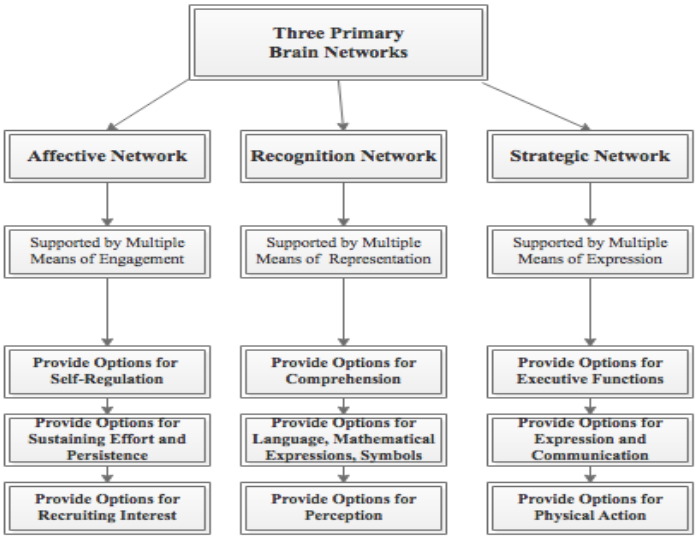


Figure A2: UDL principles and guidelines

Interpretations

Interpretations reveal that the site does advocate and aim to support, accommodate, facilitate, and recognize the professional development program on CCSS for ELA; however, this level of professional development evaluation indicates that many other issues, learning gaps, and site goals vie for time, resources, and priority with the professional development on CCSS for ELA to wholly enable successful SLOs. It appears that spending too much time across numerous issues may stymie site educators' efforts and occasion to locate and implement strategies that can bring about positive change to help close the gap on CCSS for ELA. Participant T6 aptly surmised that the site was probably somewhere in the middle with the professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Participant T9 noted that teachers and professional development instruction on CCSS for ELA need to regard the groups of SPED, ELL, and at-risk students as having

learning differences that need to be acknowledged and appropriately accommodated; however, these students also need to feel and be treated just like the rest of the students at the site. This view contributes to why site professional development still needs to seek out ongoing forms of relevant instruction with variations that can help teachers understand and employ effective forms of implementation of CCSS for ELA to assist SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. It also supports providing options with UDL-like instructions.

Limitations

Limitations on organization support and change with professional development on CCSS for ELA reveal that the site does not possess enough of some resources to accommodate all of the teachers and students where realistic requests were a concern, such as laptops for every classroom or a district uniform writing strategy. Moreover, many site educators already have their daytime hours completely occupied, including prep periods, along with work schedules that extend after school. Such schedules can make it difficult for some site educators to share more activities at professional development meetings or to collaborate on creating common assessments and activities.

Implications

Implications reveal that the site and professional development leaders do not always have sufficient time to critically troubleshoot professional development designs and topics for implementing changes. This means that problems such as the gap in CCSS for ELA may continue to occur as a result of unintentional oversight. Specific time and

focus needs to be spent on overcoming this gap, and professional development leaders need to come together with site educators to close the gap in CCSS for ELA.

Participants' Learning

This second level of evaluation was designed to help improve program content, format, and organization. The participants' new knowledge and skills that were acknowledged and observed at this level were used to help measure or assess participants' learning. The objective was to discover whether the participants achieved the intended knowledge and skills related to the professional development on CCSS for ELA.

Findings

Regardless of the numerous types of professional development topics, the site does, to a degree, include some elements from various types of professional development that carry over and assist CCSS for ELA. Trace elements of the site's professional development programs demonstrated that many teachers were collaborating, that ideas and topics were being presented, and that acquired knowledge and skills were being carried over into the classroom, but at varying levels and ranges among teachers. According to participants T2, T6, and T9, the professional development on CCSS for ELA emphasized little to nothing on a regular basis regarding instructional design and implementation for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Moreover, these participants felt that the information presented was aligned mostly towards regular education students.

Nevertheless, many activities and topics were routinely introduced in professional development meetings through teachers, departments, and programs, such as AVID,

which possesses the capabilities of assisting SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. The problem was that the activities and topics were not usually emphasized or discussed. Presenters may expect teachers to naturally identify and implement these activities for all student groups.

A point of importance from the UDL portions of the classroom observation checklist that helps demonstrate participants' learning concerns the Affective Network—the "why" of learning. In this area, site teachers exhibited the need for improvement. Some teachers included numerous points of the Affective Networks while others did not, or else did not do as much as they could. For instance, offering choices of rewards—meaningful rewards to middle school students—can help motivate students to engage in the classroom. However, other areas of the Affective Networks were not found to offer many choices of learning context, provide adjustable challenge levels, or offer choices of content and tools.

The Recognition Networks and Strategic Networks fared well, according to observation and follow-up questioning with the nine teachers. One area in Strategic Networks—the "how" of learning—could have demonstrated more implementation among teachers by providing novel problems to solve. Overall, it seems that all teachers at the site enacted some types of design to help enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students where CCSS for ELA and UDL-like lessons were concerned. Nevertheless, it appeared that some teachers could expand their repertoire to motivate and reach students who seem more disinterested or disconnected with lessons. Participant T8 noted

that the more tools teachers have at their disposal and know how to use, the better off they would be when providing instruction.

Interpretations

Many elements of the varying professional development programs may be analyzed to create a sophisticated hybrid of the overall professional development presentations that might be carried over to particular UDL-like principles and guidelines to enable cross-references to occur, via checklists, with each co-existing program. This allows the potential of all professional development programs to include pertinent topics and relevance that can create synergy by (and for) every professional development program. Additionally, presenters of activities and topics on professional development of CCSS for ELA need, at some point during their delivery of instruction, to specify how and why the activities or topics can be utilized for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Limitation

Educators possess only a limited amount of time outside of their expectations to acquire knowledge and to be able to share this to help support their colleagues. The professional development on CCSS for ELA needed to ensure that their instructions, as well as the instructions provided by presenters, were designated not only to include implementation strategies for regular education students, but also to suit SPED, ELL, and at-risk students; otherwise, it was left to chance whether the intended activity or topic was disregarded to enhance learning for all students. Success for students was dependent on how much teachers can learn, grow, and be able and willing to implement new strategies.

Implications

Some teachers can acquire more ideas for building knowledge and scaffolding to help their SPED, ELL, and at-risk students with the professional development on CCSS for ELA, providing that it exposes them to more of the various aspects of engagement, monitoring, and sustained motivation via projects and parameters presented. This suggests examining and better utilizing existing time limits in order to achieve goals, along with the SLOs, on professional development for CCSS for ELA. Moreover, providing teachers with outside professional development presenters may counter time restraints.

Participants' Reactions

This first level of evaluation was designed to help improve program design and delivery. The reactions acknowledged by educators of provided professional development programs at this level were used to help measure or assess participants' experiences with their initial satisfaction. The aim was to present how participants regard content of the professional development, examine its process and context, and establish a foundation for the subsequent levels of professional development evaluation on CCSS for ELA.

Findings

Interviews with teachers indicated a variety of predispositions towards professional development trainings. Some teachers admitted they do not like professional development provided by the site or the district. Participants T2 and T9 expressed that they do not get much out of the professional development and that they do not learn much from it that can help them enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. Other

teachers, such as participant T7, view site professional development as a way of strengthening unity among the educators, but admitted that it needs to be more inclusive of pertinent topics and issues to achieve more buy-in with it. Participant T8 duly noted that professional development and meetings were much needed to help everyone understand and communicate about the site's agenda and culture. Other teachers regarded professional development as helpful, but able to be improved. In short, some teachers liked professional development, some considered it fair, and others disliked it. Overall, it lacked a consensus.

Interpretations

Professional development leaders should make greater effort to obtain suggestions and feedback regarding the design and presentation, via program descriptions, to help target improvement. Furthermore, site leaders need to provide a robust professional discourse concerning long-range goals and skills, as well as revisit the importance of the SLOs to ensure all teachers understand the vision—the wider purpose for pursuing education—as the site does, and embed these ideas within presented activities that contribute to the benefit of the school culture. All teachers may not be fully versed with the long-range vision or may need to be reminded of it, especially new teachers, or those focused solely on maintaining daily instruction and providing formative assessments. Finally, professional development needs to run smoothly, and educators need to be provided with resources for interactive work. This indicates that knowledgeable and thoughtful presenters deliver a positive experience, which helps professional development succeed at the first level.

Limitations

Not all teachers felt that they possessed the necessary resources or were exposed to sufficient information to help them implement professional development instruction on the CCSS for ELA, so they might have come to it with little to no acceptance for the agenda. All teachers, especially new teachers, need to know where and how to seek the resources they need to be successful; failing to provide them with these resources can hinder and frustrate them in their initial experience of professional development. Lack of receiving feedback from educators can obstruct what needs to be known to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, and to close the gap with CCSS for ELA.

Implications

Increasing the quality and meaningfulness of professional development can help inspire teacher leadership and motivation among all educators. Ensuring participants' reactions to professional development result as satisfactory or better helps to secure later high-level evaluation results, especially with program design and delivery.

Conclusion

The findings from this evaluation report were acknowledged to help administration, professional development leaders, and site educators involved with the professional development on CCSS for ELA to anticipate key points discovered in research data from interviews, observations, and documents that can assist and suggest improved action to be taken. The evaluation report utilizes Guskey's (2000) *five critical levels for evaluating professional development* to help impart needs being addressed and what level of impact was being evaluated. The findings were useful not just for

evaluating the program, but also for planning ongoing professional development on CCSS for ELA, and for closing the gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Recommendations

Realizing the impact desired at each level, and knowing the barriers that prevent their achievement helps address and change the practices needed to improve each level's impact so that success can be achieved. Making support available for teachers, such as coaching to increase rigor, may help achieve higher success rates with SLOs. Outlining and presenting various forms of monitoring to check for understanding with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students can help determine whether they fully comprehend instructions and find it useful to take control of the work. Furthermore, it was beneficial if the merit and value of best practices were assured of being current and validated, as this can influence learning.

Professional development training needs to ensure that all teachers are familiar with the latest and most efficient computer programs employed by the site so that all teachers achieve efficacy and maintain 21st-century learning expectations; professional development presenters invited to the school's rural area may assist with this need. Additionally, presenters may be able to help inspire teachers and increase instructional knowledge.

It is also recommended that issues on organization support and change with professional development on CCSS for ELA have time to critically troubleshoot professional development topics and designs for implementing changes. Specific time

and focus needs to be spent on overcoming the gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, where professional development on CCSS for ELA is concerned, and site leaders and educators needs to unify to identify and implement strategies intended to close the gap in CCSS for ELA. This can expose teachers to various aspects of engagement, monitoring, and sustained motivation via projects and parameters, as well as the quality and purpose of professional development among educators. Moreover, it can help ensure participants' reactions to professional development result as satisfactory or better to help ensure later high-level evaluation results with the program's design and delivery.

Therefore, it is important for professional development to include instructions via computer programs, especially those detailing how to employ them with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students. It is also important for professional development to foster a teacher prioritization list to voice agenda topics, include refreshments for late-start day and full-day professional development meetings, and provide materials needed for instruction and implementation. By focusing on these goals, the professional development program on CCSS for ELA can improve its overall design and delivery and become better aligned with its set up to help effectively support and achieve the designated SLOs.

Evaluation Report Appendix

Slide 1

Perspectives of Professional Development on Common Core State Standards—
English Language Arts

Martin Jones
Presentation: Case Study/Evaluation Report

Slide 2

Summary of Proposal

Slide 3

Summary of Proposal

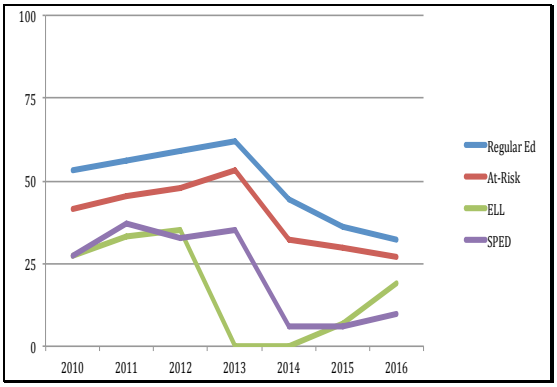
- Middle school teachers at a site in rural Southern California reported problems implementing Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS for ELA), as well as an achievement gap in ELA between regular education and special education (SPED) students, English language learners (ELL), and at-risk students.

Slide 4

Summary of Proposal

- The following is a qualitative work that was conducted as a case study (Yin, 2014).
- Focused on the impact and significance of professional development (PD) on CCSS for ELA training to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations.
- Included how the three UDL learning area principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression, and the UDL Guidelines, were recognized and supported meaning for this study.

Slide 5



Slide 6

Summary of Proposal

- Suggested the possibility of contributing to positive social change by encouraging and creating platforms for teachers to share effective instructional strategies and techniques for improving practices to enhance learning and close the CCSS for ELA gap between regular education students and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.

Slide 7

Research Questions

Slide 8

Research Questions

- 1) How are teachers utilizing the instructional training from the professional development on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?
- 2) How do educators employ the three UDL learning area principles (namely, engagement, representation, and action and expression) and the UDL Guidelines to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk populations?

Slide 9

Participants/Sample Size

Slide 10

Participants/Sample Size

- Participants included nine site teachers (across the fields of ELA, science, history, and SPED) along with two non-teachers (the principal and program improvement specialist).
- Convenience sampling was used.
- Interview data questions referred to *Key Questions to Use to Consider How Teachers are Using Instructional Training from Professional Development on CCSS for ELA to Enhance Learning* (Meyer, et al., 2014).

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Results

Slide 12

Results: Description of Data Sources and Identification of Key Findings with Triangulation

- Data collected and analyzed (Saldaña, 2016) for this study included face-to-face interviews, observations with follow-up questions, and documents.
- Descriptions used for interview data were listed by concurrences found between teachers and non-teachers that pertained to specific Organizing Themes, which made up Global Themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to emphasize salient findings between matches.

Slide 13

Results: Description of Data Sources and Identification of Key Findings with Triangulation

- Descriptions of specific Global Themes from observation follow-up questions with teacher data were acquired with concurrences found among Organizing Themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001) that matched interview data patterns and relationships.
- Observation follow-up questions with teacher data related to research question number two, as they pertained to *Key Questions to Use to Consider the UDL Guidelines* (Meyer et al., 2014).

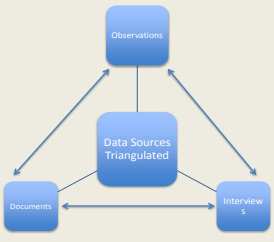
Slide 14

Results: Description of Data Sources and Identification of Key Findings with Triangulation

- All seven Global Themes utilized a summarization of findings associated with another, or more, forms of data collection: Interviews, observations, and documents, that met the criteria for success with all of the Global Themes via triangulation.
- Triangulated findings supported research questions, numbers one and two, with regards to teachers use of PD instruction on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at risk students, and to utilize UDL principles and UDL guidelines.

Slide 15

Results: Data Sources Triangulated



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Theme #1: Obstacles

Slide 17

Results for RQ #1, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Many teachers experienced trouble with receiving effective PD because the site is situated in a rural area of southern California, which was not always convenient for presenters to travel to or for educators to attend distant trainings.
- Lesson-designed problems did not always exhibit all-embracing techniques to suit every students with sustained effort and motivation.
- Teachers noticed that some students struggled with procedures and asking the right questions to acquire solutions when using technology.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Overall forms of site technology were not provided at full capacity to assist all students for working and researching.
- Many students were in need of an effective typing program and a basic computing class, particularly SPED students.
- Some teachers exhibited a limited understanding on where and how to access additional information for student engagement.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Student behavior and discipline some affected student learning in the classroom on occasions when implementing one or more UDL learning area principles or UDL Guidelines.
- SPSA findings pointed towards student performance levels by indicating goals that groups of students where expected to achieve to advance to higher measures of CCSS for ELA.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Site teachers struggled to convey the importance of "growth mindset" with some students when providing instructions on how to learn within a social context and observing others as models.
- Some teachers acknowledged a need for the district to purchase more ancillaries to support instructing students when trying to relate it to CCSS for ELA and UDL-like principles and UDL Guidelines.

Slide 21

Results for RQ #2, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Some types of affective barriers impeded students' motivation and desire to learn in various settings.
  - -Anxiety
  - -Fear
  - -Frustration
- Both RQs indicated that a number of problems created barriers for teachers to implement lessons to enhance learning for CCSS for ELA and to utilize UDL.
  - -Cultural Barriers
  - -Cultural Blindness
  - -Affective barriers

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #1: Obstacles

- Growth with the PD program involved concerns outside of the boundaries of teachers acknowledging problems, since numerous subgroup gaps existed.
- PD was in need of seeking out relevant instructions with variations to help teachers employ improved forms of CCSS for ELA in their classrooms to assist SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.
- Site PD could have done better if it brought in more outside presenters, utilized more technology and keyboarding electives, and discussed access for ongoing support.

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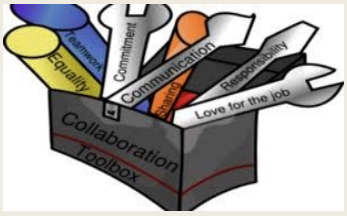
Theme #2: Collaboration



Slide 24

Results for RQ #1, Theme #2: Collaboration

- Further group cooperation among teachers was needed to assist students in preparing and taking SBAC assessments (ELA).
- The sustained amount of group cooperation among site educators needed to work on:
  - -Increasing abilities to enhance student learning
  - -Providing more options to use multiple skills and reasoning processes
  - -Establishing parameters for group projects
  - -Maintaining motivation

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #2: Collaboration

- ELA teachers shared pertinent forms of CCSS for ELA knowledge and relevant forms of outside PD.
- AVID teachers shared information among site teachers that included critical and collaborative skills related to CCSS strategies to add to their repertoire.
- Teachers' busy schedules impacted their time to for broader forms of collaboration.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #2: Collaboration

- Several written communication plans on scheduled collaboration activities existed and needed to be utilized better to help teachers assist students enhance their learning of CCSS for ELA skills.
- Several written communication plans concerned assisting teachers in creating UDL-like lesson plans by observing each other (e.g., SPSA, teachers visiting teachers agendas, etc.).

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #2: Collaboration

- PD needed to provide routine instructions that exposed various forms of engagement, monitoring, and sustained motivation for all students.
- The site used programs (e.g., AVID and Renaissance) that compelled some teachers to make extra efforts to share information.
- ELA teachers recognized CCSS for ELA required more understanding and methods of implementation with site teachers so they occasionally helped PD.

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #2: Collaboration

- Site ELA teachers acknowledged time as the main factor in limiting their ability to acquire and provide more outside support for their colleagues.
- Site teachers often shared ideas about methods they could use to assist students in working together (both productively and effectively).
- There was a collective need to reassure students they were achieving objectives, and displaying genuine interests, efforts, and self-regulation.

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Theme #3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

Slide 30

Results for RQ #1, Theme #3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

- Many types of meetings were held that made both new and veteran teachers feel they were excessive and involved many overlapping issues and topics.
- Training for new teachers was regarded as too much—it even required training on cross-curricular instructions.
- New teachers were seen as seeking out help when needing it in contrast to veteran teachers.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

- Team and department meetings incorporated some forms of PD agenda and topics into their curriculum.
- MTSS provided support for many students; yet, concerns existed that some at-risk students might be misidentified by MTSS when they act adversely in a general education class because they need SPED.
- The forms of PD offered to educators were in need of ongoing exposure to CCSS for ELA and strategies.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

- Information teachers provided to students needed to opt for use of various symbols and expressions.
- Some issues of support were limited by the lack of technology to enable growth with engagement, representation, and action and expression.
- PD assistance helped teachers to gain some insight and knowledge on improving CCSS for ELA instructions, via UDL-like strategies and techniques, by enabling teachers to support struggling students.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #3: Supports (Individuals or Groups)

- Class instruction revealed most teachers:
  - -Provided examples to students
  - -Represented arrangements of information by media and formatting
  - -Highlighted points of critical thinking
  - -Helped to establish a context where limited background knowledge was detected
  - -Increased varied forms of lesson design

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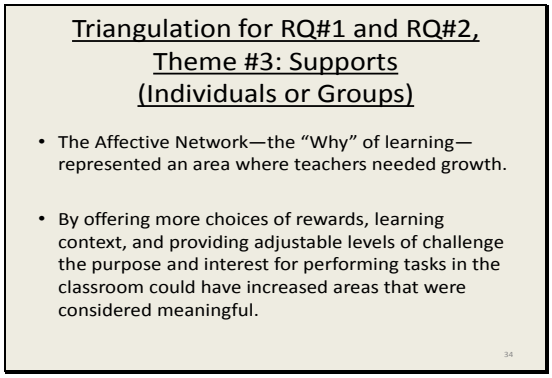

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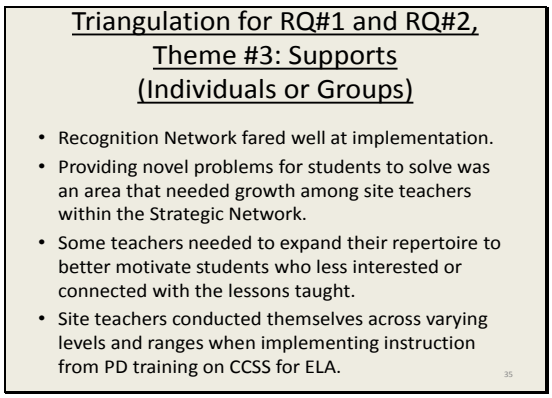

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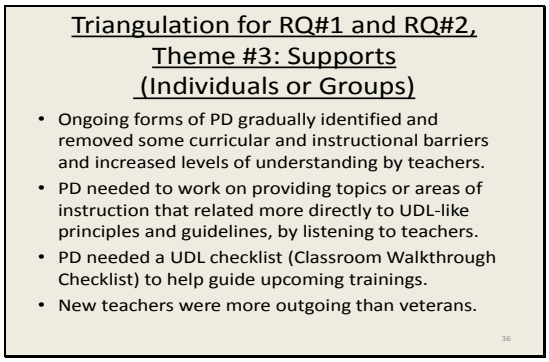

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Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice

Slide 38

Results for RQ #1, Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice

- The site included many strategies from AVID that was reflected in some teachers' implementation.
- The ELA Department shared particular strategies, such as RACE, in some PD meetings.
- Evolving instructional implementation revealed that more teachers were contemplating how to set up choices and creating in-depth learning activities to increase student interest and engagement.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice

- More teachers were found to be including informational reading rather than literature reading.
- Several teachers demonstrated use of curriculum options:
  - -A broad range of students did contemplative work based on ideas teachers got from department meetings and SMART goals designed.
  - -Many teachers increased their monitoring of student data to help reach targeted areas.

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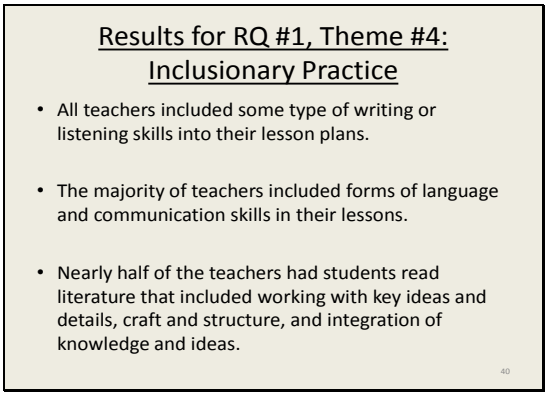

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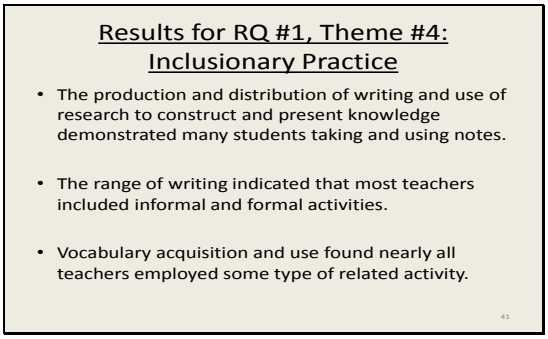

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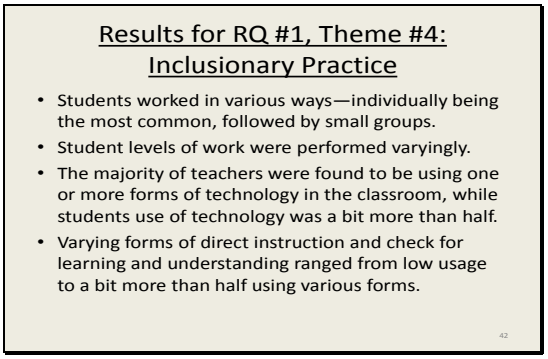

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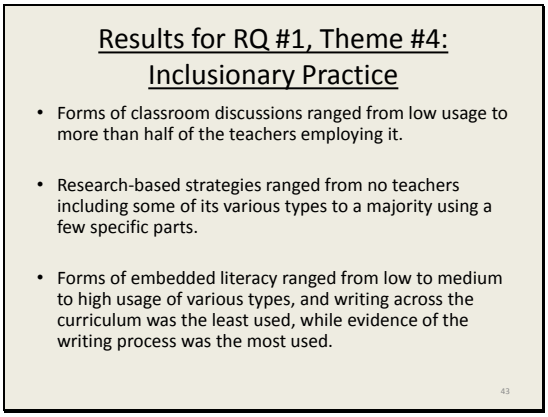

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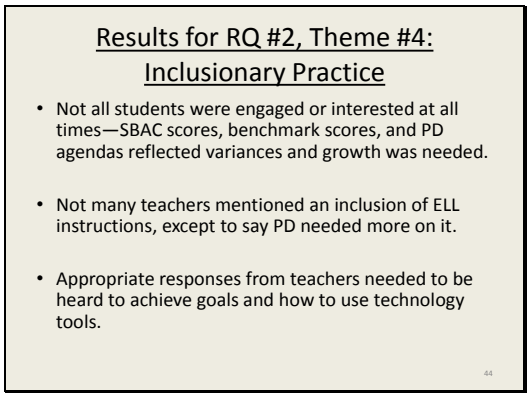

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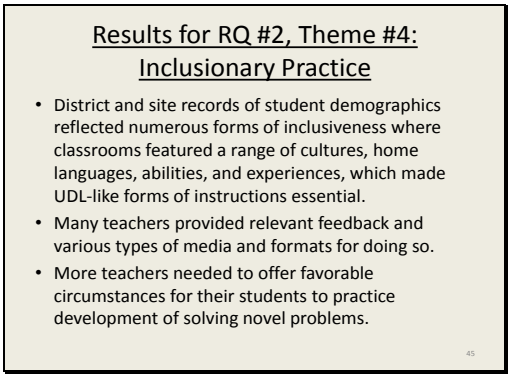

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice

- Much of the PD instruction regarding the CCSS for ELA was ingrained in other agenda topics.
- Closer examinations of PD instructions sometimes revealed AVID practices helped support CCSS for ELA.
- PD needed to spend more time discussing how to improve CCSS for ELA instructions and content.
- PD needed to spend time enabling teachers to work with ideas and tools on depth of knowledge (DOK).
- Teachers needed to reflect on the DOK designs before implementing them.

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice

- Overall, more forms of inclusionary practice need to be supplied to assist teachers with implementation.
- Several strategies were open for teachers to implement; however, some teachers chose not to use them.
- Many teachers demonstrated they worked with and used their own type of inclusionary practice.
- Sharing ideas on inclusionary practices needed to be strongly advocated by PD to provide fresh ideas for teachers and to refresh forgotten ideas.

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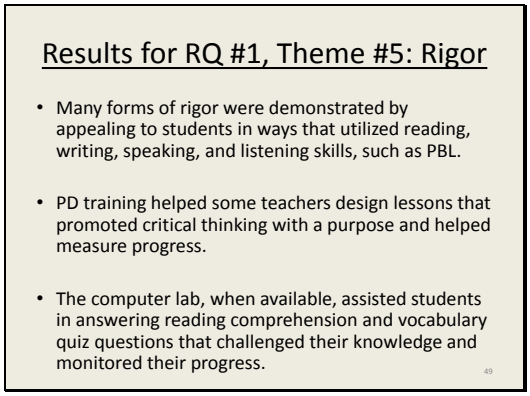
Theme #5: Rigor

Slide 49



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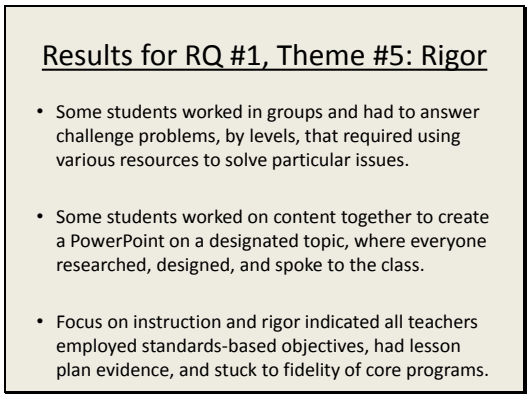

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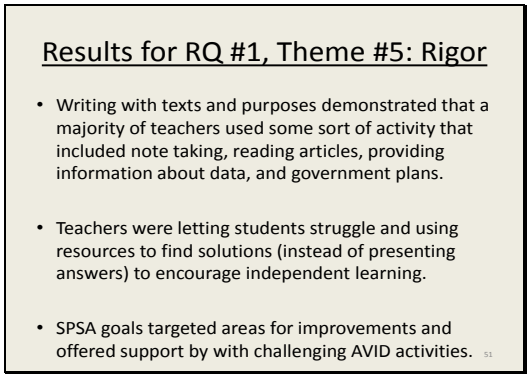

Slide 52

Results for RQ #2, Theme #5: Rigor

- Identifying SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, with leading documentary sources, such as SPSA goals, signified an awareness that these groups required assistance on CCSS for ELA testing and that teachers needed to employ more strategies to enable them to achieve higher testing scores.
- SPSA goals indicated a few areas that could supply funds for teachers to purchase engaging materials.
- Many teachers demonstrated an ability to offer more choices of content and tools and to be able to provide more adjustable challenge levels.

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #5: Rigor

- Several teachers motivated students via rigor by appealing to their competitive nature and holding in-class debates, monitoring them, and elevating student potentials via PBL, and letting them struggle while seeking out information.
- Some students needed procedures to do the rigor, such as being able to break down CCSS for ELA instructions into more manageable segments so that they could better comprehend and apply it.
- Many teachers at the site implemented rigor; however, they appeared to be operating at different ranges, which impacted school-wide coherence.

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Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

Slide 55

Results for RQ #1, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- An analysis of flexible learning environments indicated a need for teachers to increase awareness of CCSS reading and writing standards, and to learn more instructions from outside forms of PD (as well as for site PD to implement more specific instruction) and to help students find activities more appealing.
- PD and site teachers both needed to focus more on enabling students to follow procedures to help them feel empowered to take ownership of their work.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- Some notable strategies and techniques used to facilitate reading and writing practices included:
  - -Close reading (informational texts)
  - -Annotation (notes in margin, pen in hand)
  - -Chunking (complex informational text)
  - -Utilizing available resources with content

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- Some notable forms of teachers' reflections and methodologies included:
  - -Students performing tasks in pliable ways
  - -Relating content to students' abilities
  - -Reconsidering various learning styles
  - -Improved forms of organizing information
  - -Increased assistance with SPED students
  - -Having SPED students brainstorm topics before researching and writing about it

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- Some students were able to bond and achieve solutions in collaborative groups via tools, such as Google and YouTube, and to develop spreadsheets.
- Both the school district and the PD program, *Step Up to Writing*, were recognized for not providing a sufficient uniform writing strategy as a tool.
- Some teachers researched and implemented effective writing strategies and techniques that provided options for students to learn what needed to be taught for their levels.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- The reading range and text levels revealed that several teachers used strategies that were taught at various levels, which included computer programs.
- Some teachers indicated a need to receive more specific training and and practice with computer-related reading and writing programs.
- Some teachers indicated a need to feel more comfortable adapting and implementing flexible grouping processes.
- Some teachers needed a better rapport with students to improve their implemented strategies and techniques with them.

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Results for RQ #2, Theme #6: Flexible Learning Environments

- Some strategies and techniques were noted for providing safe factors and monitoring progress, via SPSA expectations, so classrooms could function in an environment where behavior was concerned.
- Some strategies and techniques were listed as goals for the instructional model that would compel teachers to share and learn from each other.
- Increased forms of engagement needed to be implemented in classroom instructions to expand learning options, motivations, and resources.

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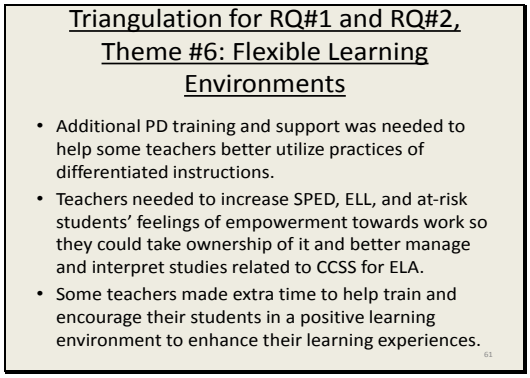

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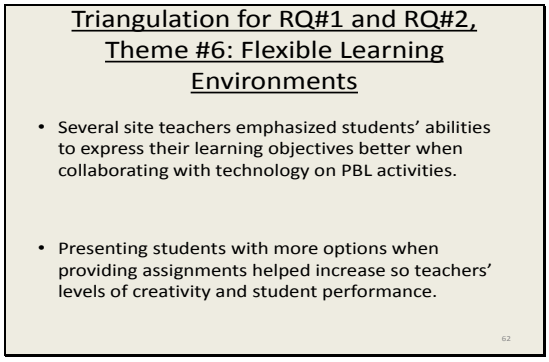

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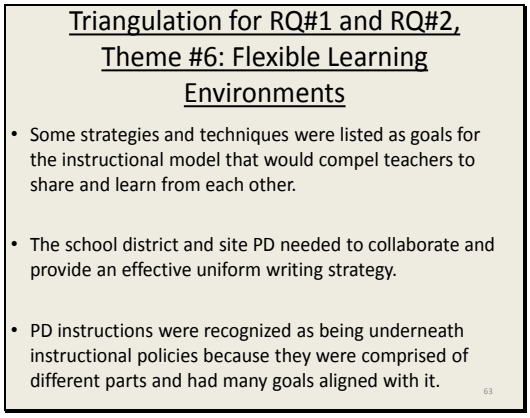

Slide 64

Theme #7: Instructional Policies

Slide 65

Results for RQ #1, Theme #7: Instructional Policies

- An ongoing need existed for teachers to experience and share deeper levels of understanding and implementation related to CCSS for ELA.
- An ongoing need existed for the site or the district to examine various types of PD offered and to try and craft more instructions that could help close the learning gap with CCSS for ELA subgroups.
- Time meant for sharing input levels of PD at the site had a limited voice because other groups/topics needed to address other types of agendas.

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Results for RQ #1, Theme #7: Instructional Policies

- Instructional policies for designing PD on CCSS for ELA indicated that the training aimed to enhance student learning, in some ways, via UDL-like principles and guidelines, by adhering to several PD planning levels (e.g., state requirements, district requirements, and site requirements).
- Feelings were expressed that numerous SPED students were “extremely underprepared” when entering the site from local elementary schools, which contributed to a negative connotation of them and more challenging to instruct PD expectations.

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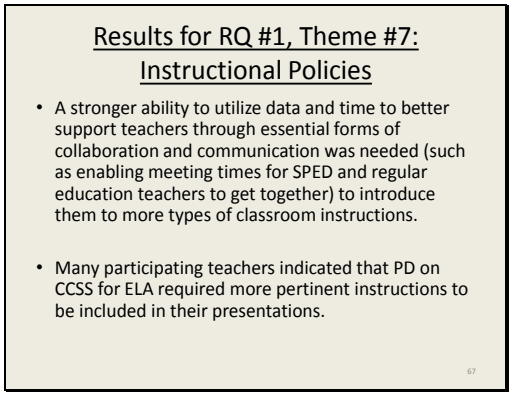

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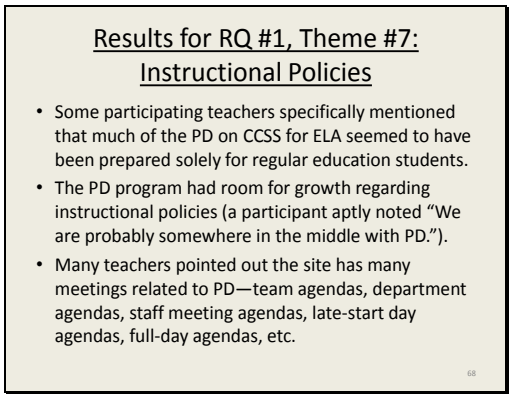

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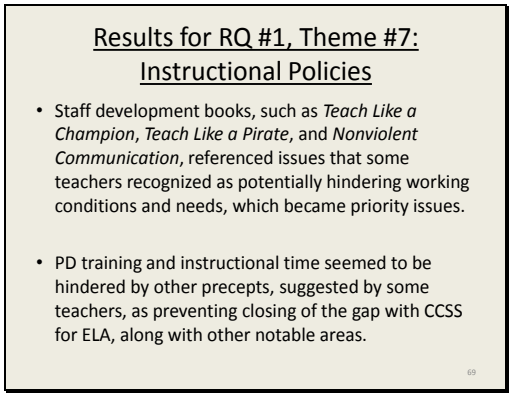

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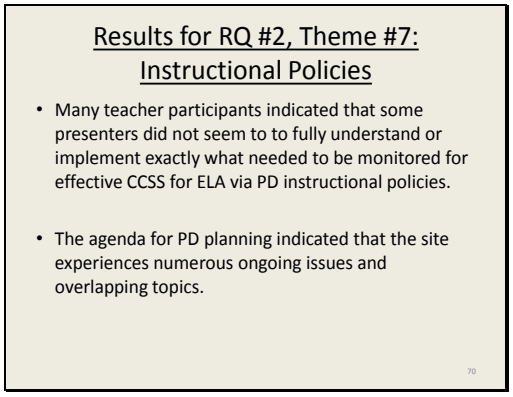

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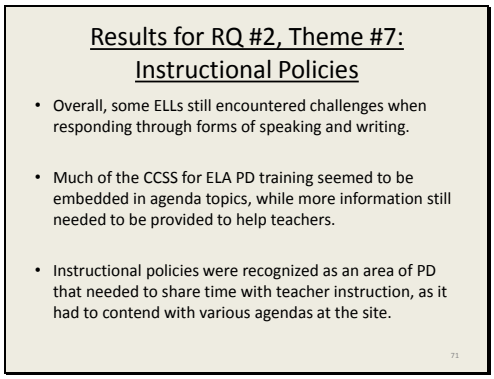

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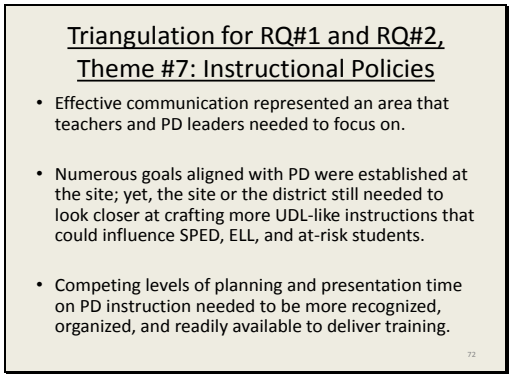

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Triangulation for RQ#1 and RQ#2, Theme #7: Instructional Policies

- Realizing that PD needed to be shared by state and district objectives meant that a system of prioritization needed to be established, and that listening to what teachers discussed needed to be considered when arranging PD on CCSS for ELA.
- PD agendas needed to discuss the overseeing of students more, especially SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, in that they should be assisted as needed to enable them to reach higher levels of achievement through enhanced learning.

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How do Findings Relate to the Literature?

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How do Findings Relate to the Literature?

- Findings in this study confirmed knowledge about PD on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students, and extended knowledge about it, in some part, when comparing it to what was discovered in the peer-reviewed literature.
- Findings from this study confirmed the Literature Review on CCSS for ELA needed to utilize accurate student data to properly impact desired change in the program's design.

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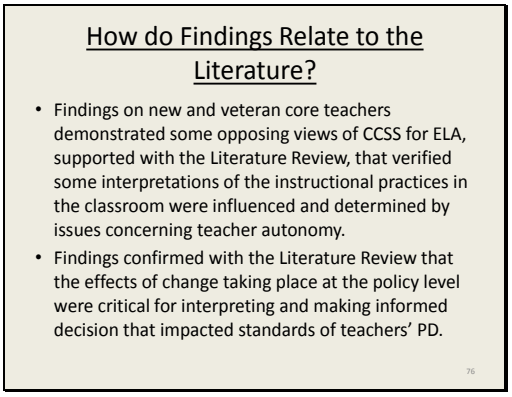

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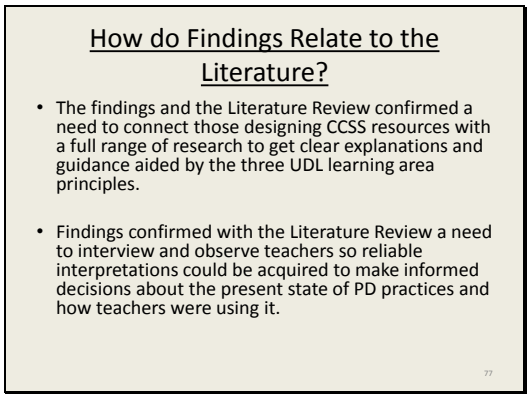

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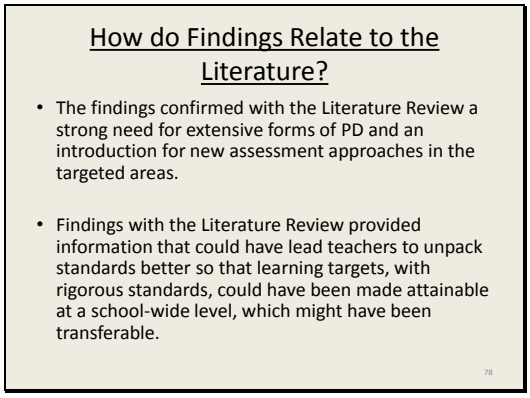

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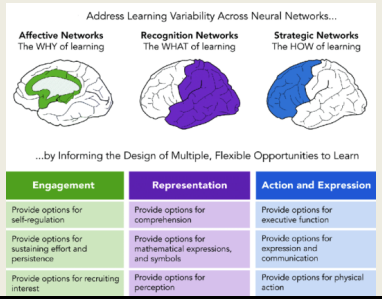
How do the Findings Relate to the UDL Conceptual Framework



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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Framework (Global Theme #1: Obstacles)?

- The global theme of obstacles related to the conceptual framework on the principles of UDL and the UDL Guidelines (Meyer & Rose, 2000) by revealing that barriers prevented teachers from fully moving ahead with implementing instructions from PD to the point of closing the gap on CCSS for ELA between regular education and SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.
- Findings indicated that growth needed to take place, via PD, with principles of UDL and the UDL strategies.

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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Framework (Global Theme #1: Obstacles)?

- Some impediments that might have affected principles of UDL and UDL Guidelines included: particular age group/level goals include:
  - -Potential cultural barriers
  - -Cultural blindness
- The notion that all students are different and needed to be regarded as such by each teacher at all times could have supported a deeper comprehension of the various strategies and techniques associated with UDL.

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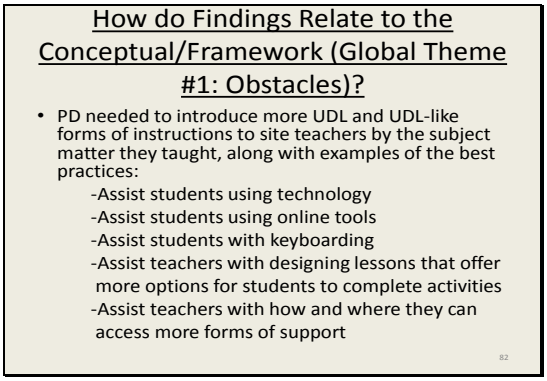

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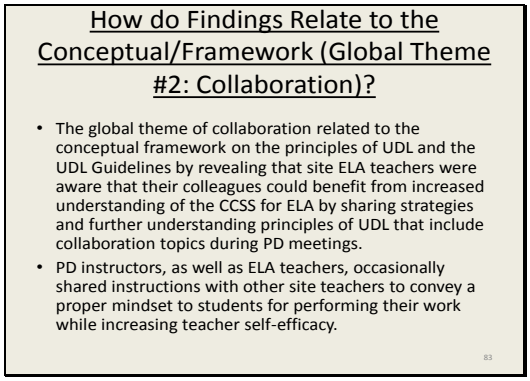

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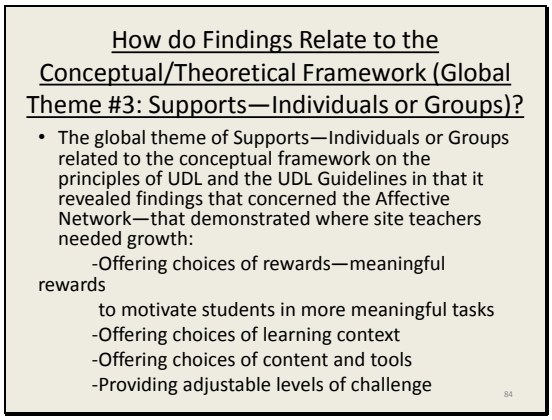

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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (Global Theme #3: Supports—Individuals or Groups)?

- One area of Strategic Network needed growth among teachers—providing novel problems to solve.
- Overall, all participating teachers enacted some type of design to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students where CCSS for ELA with UDL-like lessons were concerned.
- Some teachers needed to expand their repertoire to better assist disinterested and disconnected students
- Site teachers resided at various levels and ranges when using UDL-like lessons on CCSS for ELA.

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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (Global Theme #3: Supports—Individuals or Groups)?

- Ongoing forms of PD aimed towards improvement and employing effective principles of UDL and UDL Guidelines with various practices included:
  - -Teachers visiting teachers.
  - -Teachers sharing findings (did not always happen)
  - -PD could have provided more instruction related to UDL by using a checklist on it
  - -Some teachers acquired knowledge for scaffolding and building UDL instruction

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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (Global Theme #4: Inclusionary Practice?

- The global theme of inclusionary practice related to the conceptual framework on the principles of UDL and the UDL Guidelines by revealing that PD provided teachers with some knowledge on DOK, but still needed to provide teachers with PD time to reflect and work together on implementing lesson plan designs to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.
- Overall, results of inclusionary practice indicated that more forms of it, especially where ELL was concerned, needed to be presented to better assist teachers with implementing instructions.

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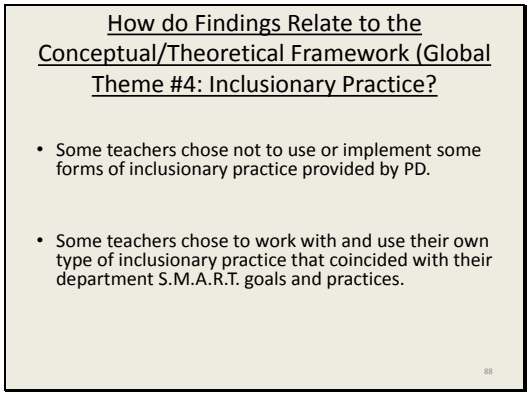

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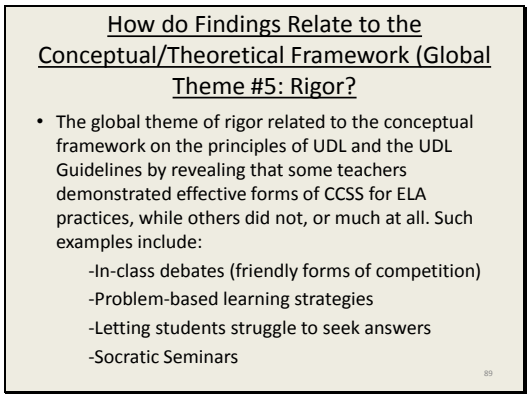

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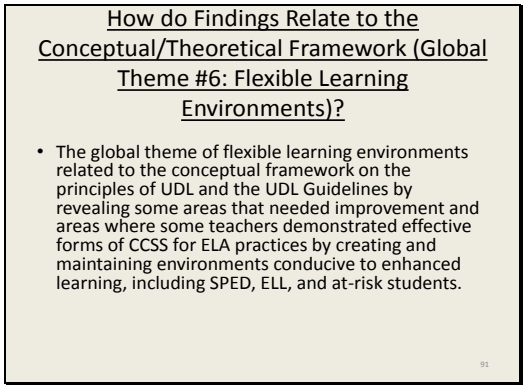

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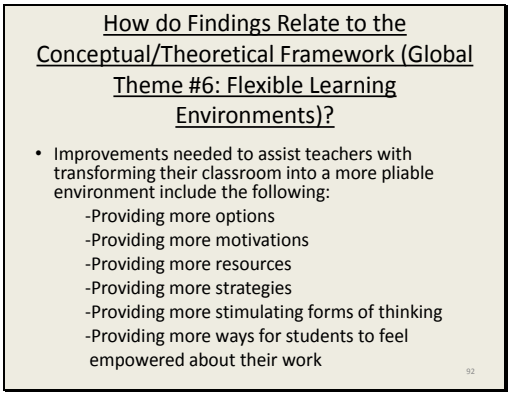

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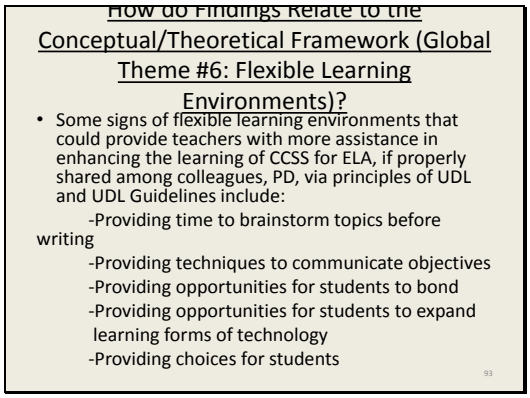

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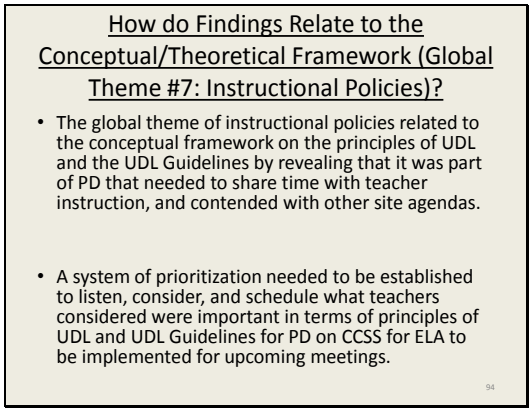

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How do Findings Relate to the Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (Global Theme #7: Instructional Policies)?

- PD needed to examine more ways to craft instruction to assist teachers' abilities with influencing deeper learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students.
- The existing planning and presentation levels of meetings needed recognition, organization, and availability to balance time for PD on CCSS for ELA.
- PD agendas needed to discuss more on monitoring students effectively with various types of UDL-like instructions to enhance SPED, ELL, and at-risk student levels of achievement on learning via peer assessment and self-assessment.

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Limitations of the Study

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Limitations of the Study

- The first limitation was concerned with its sample size because it came up one teacher short of the 10 that I was intending to interview and observe.
- The second limitation was concerned with the evaluation report because I alone collected and reported data and it was noted that it is better to use more than one collector and reporter (Killion, 2018).
- The third limitation was concerned with the evaluation report because findings were not compared and contrasted with the other district middle school due to time and financial restraints.

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Recommendations for Future Research

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Recommendations for Future Research

- Examine the efficacy and reliability built into existing PD on CCSS for ELA to help leaders forecast any changes that may be needed with organizational support and aligning instructions and practices to enhance learning with SPED, ELL, and at-risk students via UDL-like lessons to close the CCSS for ELA gap.
- Evaluate how needs and values of resources, such as technology, supporting websites, textbooks, and timesaving factors justify spending funds from district offices to implement into classrooms.

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Recommendations for Future Research

- Consider how the value of transferability with other similar schools and districts may be able to apply the results of this study to their PD on CCSS for ELA to help generate useful results.
- Examine potential top-down mandates from district offices that may either positively or negatively influence PD on CCSS for ELA.
- Determine how intended and unintended influences are better understood by working backwards when evaluating PD, in context of Guskey's (2000) Five Critical Levels of PD Evaluation.

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Recommendations for Future Research

- Seeks to clarify the essence of what students achieved according to student learning outcomes by verifying a programs' change approach and how it orients teachers with more technology.
- Consider if PD implementation was an even or uneven gradual processes when working with collaborative cultures to determine if new thinking needs to be adopted to make effective change.

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Recommendations for Future Research

- Investigate what and how program leaders were thinking and learning in terms of system leadership by applying pertinent models and networks that reflect of other educational groups, speakers, and institutions to help provide guidance about a program's success.
- Identify how PD calibrated teachers' individual needs, included more forms of blended learning to increase self-efficacy, and utilized career technical education to bridge theory-practice gaps.

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Social Change Implications

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Social Change Implications

- Purported findings could bring about reliable suggestions and recommendations to administrators, PD leaders, and teachers to aid future decision-making processes regarding change in the program, as well as how to maintain guided support with the instructional design of the PD on CCSS for ELA to assist teacher efficacy in this area.
- The findings from the evaluation report and the literature review sections may contribute to and guide strategies and techniques that lead to new theories about PD on CCSS for ELA and UDL.

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Social Change Implications

- Potential implications for positive social change with suggestions for expanding this study's acumen where future research is concerned, can attempt to discover why and how, for several years, participants in the PD on CCSS for ELA struggled to enhance learning of SPED, ELL, and at-risk students in this area, and were left unable to close the gap between these and regular education students.

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Conclusions

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Conclusions

- The project section of this work brought together the essence of this study.
- The project section explicated the two research questions that guided this study.
- A strength brought about by this study illustrated that administrators and PD leaders could utilize findings from the evaluation report to confirm what was working with the PD on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students to help close the achievement gap between them and regular education students in this area.

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Conclusions

- This study demonstrated that PD leaders could continue to employ and share practices among educators, and use positive findings as extensions, to make improvements where suggestions and recommendations indicated deficiencies.
- The underpinnings of the reverse order process of critical levels of PD evaluation helped determine if unplanned obstacles or unrecognized hindrances interfered with the PD program's overall success.
- Determinants from the findings could be presented to administrators and PD leaders to decide on what and how to correct within the program.

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Conclusions

- Triangulated findings on data collected from interviews, observations, and documents helped to increase this work's credibility and truthfulness.
- This case study of the PD on CCSS for ELA and implementation of UDL-like instructions to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students enabled deep reflections to be made on what could be implied, applied and guided in forms of future research, to the point where this study could be viewed as making a base-contribution that can encourage social change.

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Conclusions

- Transferability value found in the project study could potentially make it useful to employ at other middle schools, other local and state school districts, and conceivably throughout the nation.
- Finally this case study may contribute to change by creating a platform for teachers to share effective instructional strategies and techniques for improving practice to enhance learning and close the gap, as well as promoting leadership among teachers that may improve community-centered education.

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Acknowledgements

Thank You Faculty Members:

- Chair: Dr. Marcia Griffiths-Prince
- 2nd Committee Member: Dr. Barbara Hunter
- URR: Dr. Karen Hunt

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Appendix B: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: Engagement

ENGAGEMENT (purposeful, motivated learners):

(1) Provide options for self-regulation

- Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
- Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
- Develop self-assessment and reflection

(2) Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence

- Heighten salience of goals and objectives
- Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
- Foster collaboration and community
- Increase mastery-oriented feedback

(3) Provide options for recruiting interest

- Optimize individual choice and autonomy
- Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
- Minimize threats and distractions

Appendix C: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: Representation

REPRESENTATION (resourceful, knowledgeable learners):

(1) Provide options for comprehension

- Activate or supply background knowledge
- Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
- Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
- Maximize, transfer and generalization

(2) Provide options for language, mathematical expressions, and symbols

- Clarify vocabulary and symbols
- Clarify syntax and structure
- Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols
- Promote understanding across languages
- Illustrate through multiple media

(3) Provide options for perception

- Offer ways of customizing the display of information
- Offer alternatives for auditory information
- Offer alternatives for visual information

Appendix D: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: Action & Expression

ACTION & EXPRESSION (strategic, goal-directed learners):

(1) Provide options for executive functions

- Guide appropriate goal-setting
- Support planning and strategy development
- Enhance capacity for monitoring progress

(2) Provide options for expression and communication

- Use multiple media for communication
- Use multiple tools for construction and composition
- Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

(3) Provide options for physical action

- Vary the method for response and navigation
- Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Appendix E: Key Questions to Use to Consider the UDL Guidelines

THINK ABOUT HOW LEARNERS WILL ENGAGE WITH THE LESSON:

(1) Does the lesson provide options that can help all learners regulate their own learning?

(2) Does the lesson provide options that help all learners sustain effort and motivation?

(3) Does the lesson provide options that engage and interest all learners?

THINK ABOUT HOW INFORMATION IS PRESENTED TO LEARNERS:

(4) Does the information provide options that help all learners reach higher levels of comprehension and understanding?

(5) Does the information provide options that help all learners understand the symbols and expressions?

(6) Does the information provide options that help all learners perceive what needs to be learned?

THINK ABOUT HOW LEARNERS ARE EXPECTED TO ACT STRATEGICALLY AND EXPRESS THEMSELVES:

(7) Does the activity provide options that help all students act strategically?

(8) Does the activity provide options that help all learners express themselves fluently?

(9) Does the activity provide options that help all learners physically respond (through speaking and writing)?

Appendix F: Classroom Observation Checklist

School:	Teacher Number:
Date:	Time Start: Time End:
Class/Grade:	Number of Students:
Lesson/Topic:	Agenda/Objective:
Documented Agenda Topics Instructed by Professional Development on CCSS for ELA with Noted Area and Standard Numbers (List all Applicable): **Reading: Literature (Grade 7 & 8):** **Reading Informational Text (Grade 7 & 8)** **Writing (Grade 7 & 8):** **Speaking and Listening (Grade 7 & 8):** **Language (Grade 7 & 8):**	Interviewed Agenda Topics Acknowledged by Site Educators for Professional Development on CCSS for ELA (List all Applicable: **Reading: Literature (Grade 7 & 8):** **Reading Informational Text (Grade 7 & 8):** **Writing (Grade 7 & 8):** **Speaking and Listening (Grade 7 & 8):** **Language (Grade 7 & 8):**
Observed Documented Agenda Topics Instructed (Circle and Describe Use): **Reading: Literature (Grade 7 & 8):** -Key Ideas and Details -Craft and Structure -Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	**Observed Interviewed Agenda Topics (Circle and Describe Use):** **Reading: Literature (Grade 7 & 8):** -Key Ideas and Details -Craft and Structure -Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Reading Informational Text (Grade 7 & 8): -Key Ideas and Details	**Reading Informational Text (Grade 7 & 8):** -Key Ideas and Details
-Craft and Structure	-Craft and Structure
-Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	-Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
-Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	-Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
Writing (Grade 7 & 8): -Text Types and Purposes	**Writing (Grade 7 & 8):** -Text Types and Purposes
-Production and Distribution of Writing	-Production and Distribution of Writing
-Research to Build and Present Knowledge	-Research to Build and Present Knowledge
-Range of Writing	-Range of Writing
Speaking and Listening (Grade 7 & 8): -Comprehension and Collaboration	**Speaking and Listening (Grade 7 & 8):** -Comprehension and Collaboration
-Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	-Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
Language (Grade 7 & 8): -Conventions of Standard English	**Language (Grade 7 & 8):** -Conventions of Standard English

-Knowledge of Language -Vocabulary Acquisition and Use **Miscellaneous Notes**	-Knowledge of Language -Vocabulary Acquisition and Use **Miscellaneous Notes**

FOCUS ON LEARNERS AND RELEVANCE:

-Student Engagement: (Check what is applicable):

Authentically on Task ☐ Passive/Compliant ☐ Disengaged/Disruptive ☐

-How are students working: (Check what is applicable):

Whole Class ☐ Individual ☐ Paired ☐ Small Group ☐

-Level(s) of student work: (Check what is applicable):

Remembering ☐ Understanding ☐ Applying ☐ Analyzing ☐ Evaluating ☐ Creating ☐

-Is the teacher using technology for instructional purposes? If yes, what is being used and how is it being used?

_____

_____

_____

-Are the students using technology? If yes, what is being used and how is it being used?

_____

_____

_____

- FOCUS ON INSTRUCTION AND RIGOR: ***(Check what is applicable):***

-Standards-Based Learning Objectives (posted/written) ☐
-Evidence of Lesson Plan ☐
-Fidelity of Core Programs ☐

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES:

-Differentiation: (Check what is applicable):

Content ☐ Learning Process ☐ Student Product ☐ Skill Development ☐ Support ☐
Learning Time ☐ Flexible, Fluid Groupings ☐

-Lesson Design: (Check what is applicable):

Alternating Whole & Small Group Activity ☐ Equitable Student Participation ☐
Efficient Transitions ☐

-Direct Instruction: (Check what is applicable):

Modeling ☐ Think-Alouds ☐ Re-Teaching ☐ "I do, we do, you do" ☐ Scaffolding ☐
Mini-Lessons/Focus Lessons (5-7 mins) ☐ Guided Practice ☐ Lecture/Presentation ☐
Visual Aids ☐

-Classroom Discussion: (Check what is applicable):

Student-Led Discussion/Presentation ☐ Teacher-Directed Q & A ☐

-Check for Learning/Understanding: (Check what is applicable):

Verbal Questioning ☐ Monitoring Student Practice ☐ Writing to Learn Activity ☐
Total Group Response (e.g., White Boards, Show of Hands, Choral Response) ☐
Formative Assessments (e.g., quizzes—oral/written) ☐

-Research-based Strategies: (Check what is applicable):

Cooperative Learning ☐ Vocabulary Instruction (Six-Step Model) ☐ Think-Pair Share ☐

GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) □ Reciprocal Teaching □ SDAIE Strategies □ Thinking Maps □ Write from the Beginning □ Teach for Success Techniques □

--Embedded Literacy: (Check what is applicable):

Writing Across the Curriculum □ Reading in Content Areas □ Evidence of Writing Process □

-Instructional Materials/Technology: (Check what is applicable):

Manipulatives/Hands-on Materials Used □ Other Technology Resources Used by Teacher to Enhance Teaching and Learning □ Technology Resources from Adopted Programs Used □ Technology Equipment Used by Teacher to Enhance Lesson Delivery (e.g., computer, document camera, projector, audio, Smartboard) □ Technology Used by Students to Master Grade-Level Content Standards (computer, online, resources, podcasting)

UDL CHECKLIST

Consider the following checkpoints in giving all learners access to the general education curriculum (goals, methods, assessment and materials). The more UDL features that are included in the curriculum, the greater the chances are for making the curriculum accessible to a broader range of students.			
Recognition Networks – the "what" of learning			
	Included	**Not Included**	**Barrier**
Provide multiple examples, Show the range of examples, and provide examples and counter-examples.			
Represent information in multiple media and formats (e.g., text version of book, online or digital resources)			
Highlights critical features (e.g., teacher tone of voice, marker underline, etc.)			

Provide supports for limited background knowledge, and establish a context for learning			
Strategic Networks – the "how" of learning			
	Included	**Not Included**	**Barrier**
Provide flexible models of skilled performance			
Provide ongoing, relevant feedback (e.g., questions and answers in classroom)			
Provide multiple media and formats for delivering feedback			
Provide flexible opportunities for demonstrating skill. (e.g., written, oral , or visual presentation, explanations, word process)			
Provide novel problems to solve (e.g., unique problems outside the initial instructional set to promote generalization and transfer)			
Affective Networks – the "why" of learning			
	Included	Not Included	**Barrier**
Offer choices of content and tools (e.g., choice of books to study literature)			
Provide adjustable levels of challenge: (e.g., range of materials at different reading difficulties)			
Offer choices of rewards			
Offer choices of learning context (option to work in study carrel v. open classroom, student use headphones)			
Miscellaneous Notes			

Appendix G: Key Questions to Consider How Teachers are Using Instructional Training from Professional Development on CCSS for ELA to Enhance Learning

1. How would you describe your perspective of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance student learning?
2. How would you describe your perspective of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students?
3. What is your perspective about the status of the professional development program on CCSS for ELA among site teachers?
4. How is the professional development program on CCSS for ELA developing and maintaining instructions for all teachers to enhance student learning?
5. Describe particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for all students?
6. How effective are the particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for regular education students?
7. How effective are the particular practices and strategies you learned from the professional development program on CCSS for ELA that you use in the classroom to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students?
8. What kinds of professional development instructional practices involving CCSS for ELA are currently in place at this school?

9. What is your perspective about the professional development instructional practices involving CCSS for ELA that are currently in place at this school?
10. What is your perspective about the practices and strategies your school employs to encourage professional development on CCSS for ELA?
11. Do you think your measures positively influence the professional development program on CCSS for ELA to enhance learning for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students? Explain why or why not.

Appendix H: From Basic to Organizing to Global Themes (Non-Teachers)

Themes as Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
1) Teacher awareness 2) Need to examine CCSS more 3) Limited forms of PD 4) PD Knowledge	Unfamiliarity	1) Obstacles
5) Online search for planning material 6) Rural living impacts outside forms of PD 7) Summer training is optional (outside of school year)	Personal Time Investment	
8) Age group/level goals 9) Potential cultural barriers 10) Potential cultural blindness 12) Expected group increase of performance 13) Many subgroup gaps	Growth Goals	
14) AVID program 15) ELA Department 16) Schools to Watch (teachers visit schools) 17) PD: Walk throughs (teachers visit teachers)	Collaborative Program	2) Collaboration
18) Teacher rapport 19) Informal dialogue among teachers 20) Departments citing evidence 21) Departments sharing 22) Examining SBAC scores 23) Helping new teachers (team/department leaders) 24) Team PBL (project-	Group Cooperation	

based learning activities)

25) Department meetings 26) Full day PDs 27) Late-start day meetings 28) Optional PDs 29) Staff meetings 30) Team meetings	PD Forms	3) Supports (Individuals or Groups)
31) AVID program 32) Measurements of growth 33) Publisher support (ELA) 34) Race strategy 35) Social media communication	Assisting Tools	
36) At-risk students 37) ELL students 38) SPED students 39) Department data analysis 40) Two elective teachers getting credentialed in ELA 41) Reclassified ELL students 42) Department data analysis of student results 43) Site provided PD activities	Inclusive Groups	4) Inclusionary Practice
44) Pinterest 45) Renaissance program 46) PD Book for training activities: *Teach Like a Champion* 47) PD Book for training activities: *Teach Like a Pirate*	Inclusive Instruments	
48) Age/level-appropriate books	Challenging the Subgroups	5) Rigor

49) Closer examination of CCSS for ELA 50) Star 360 51) Step up to Writing 52) Stimulating interest in books 53) Attending Optional/Outside PDs 54) CCSS reading standards 55) Finding CCSS curriculum	Situational Strategies	6) Flexible Learning Environments
56) Cite textual evidence 57) How to annotate 58) Using content to elaborate 59) Using content to explain 60) WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, Reading—AVID)	Situational Techniques	
61) ASL (AVID, STEAM, Leadership) Committee 62) Assessment 63) County Office of Education 64) Curriculum publishing company trainers 65) ELA benchmarks 66) More on classroom management 67) ELA teachers sharing 68) PD data analysis 69) Research-based practices 70) Selected PD training books 71) SPSA (Single Plan for Student Achievement) 72) Week-long PD 73) Yearly PD Plan	PD Planning	7) Instructional Policies
74) Data analysis talks	Communication	

75) Discuss monitoring growth 76) ELA goal setting 77) Looking in-depth at CCSS for ELA 78) Star 360 79) Talking with successful SBAC students	
80) Budget for outside PD 81) District office mandate some PD 82) New curriculum adoption 83) Optional summer PD training	Varied Forms of PD

Appendix I: From Basic to Organizing to Global Themes (Teachers)

Themes as Basic Themes	**Organizing Themes**	**Global Themes**
1) Teacher awareness 2) Need to examine CCSS more 3) Not enough differentiation 4) How to be guided by predictors	Unfamiliarity	1) Obstacles
5) Individual pursuit 6) Following textbook suggestions 7) Seek out own trainings 8) Attending trainings outside of work	Personal Time Investment	
9) Lacking week-long trainings on CCSS for ELA (for newer hires) 10) Teachers stuck in old ways 11) Various mix of students in all classes 12) Student behavior and discipline problems 13) Too many agendas lead to cutting corners 14) Multiple roles of teachers 15) Not much to offer non-college going students 16) Non-motivated students 17) Lack of parental support 18) Quote, “Maybe we are somewhere in the middle with it [PD]. There can be improvements.” 19) Lack of follow through on some PD implementations 20) Much of CCSS for ELA	Interferences with Enhancing Learning	

PD training is embedded and is not in-depth 21) Site does not have enough independence to create its own PD 22) No resource teachers to help out mixed regular education classes		
23) ELA collaborates at late-start days with staff 24) PD embeds a lot of CCSS for ELA within its agenda 25) School Site Council has more students on it 26) AVID program	Collaborative Program	2) Collaboration
27) Much positive collaboration among teachers 28) Attentive PD 29) Sharing of ideas across all levels of PD meetings 30) Review data and how to meet next-level SBAC goals discussions 31) New information from recent hires (some younger staff members) 32) Informal dialogue	Group Cooperation	
33) Team meetings 34) Adding PD days 35) Department meetings 36) School network includes shared PD materials 37) Union announced PDs 38) Summer provided PDs by district (optional)	PD Forms	3) Supports (Individuals or Groups)
39) Socratic seminars 40) Encouragement	Affective Networks	

41) IAN (interactive notebook)		
42) AVID program 43) Close readings 44) Informational texts 45) Essay test writing (open-ended blue books) 46) Restate objective several times	Recognition Networks	
47) Technical writing 48) Data analysis of ELA 49) SBAC scores site-wide 50) Star testing results as a guide 51) Race strategy (restate question, answer question, cite evidence) 52) How to search for evidence in readings	Strategic Networks	
53) At-risk students 54) ELL students 55) SPED students 56) School Site Council (SSC) students 57) Individualized Education Plan (IEP) students	Inclusive Groups	4) Inclusionary Practice
58) PD Books for training activities: *Teach Like a Champion* and *Teach Like a Pirate* 59) Race strategy (restate question, answer question, cite evidence) 60) Step up to Writing 61) Technology 62) Timer 63) Color Zones 64) Cornell Notes 65) Writing measures	Inclusive Instruments	

66) Labs conducting investigations 67) Six Traits of Writing		
68) AVID program 69) ELA Department (searching and sharing alignment methods) 70) PBIS (alleviate behavior to focus on instructions and organize)	Inclusive Programs	
71) Routine changes for improvement 72) Have empathy for diverse and struggling students 73) Modifying lessons 74) How to meet CCSS expectations (content area) 75) Differentiating instructions (universal learning) 76) Teach to the student	Inclusive Reflections	
77) Appealing to competitive nature 78) Speaking activities 79) Renaissance program 80) Monitoring and elevating project-based learning (PBL) strategies	Challenging the Subgroups	5) Rigor
81) Individual learning by teacher 82) Pushing students harder with PD strategies 83) Growth across the board being detected with continued guidance 84) Personal measures used to check on enhanced learning	Expanding Efforts	

85) Breaking down CCSS for ELA for all groups to comprehend and apply		
86) Allowing students to take ownership of work 87) Developing rapport with students 88) Developing relationships with students 89) Providing various forms of engagement for students 90) Providing various forms of representation for students 91) Providing various forms of action and expression for students 92) Applying AVID strategies 93) Enabling students to break down information	Situational Strategies	6) Flexible Learning Environments
94) Instructional differences 95) Modified forms of writing 96) Cornell Notes 97) Socratic seminars 98) Interactive notebook (IAN) 99) Opinion-oriented notebook comments and arrangements (variations) 100) Verbal questioning	Situational Techniques	
101) Creating familiarity with speaking standards 102) Creating familiarity with writing standards 103) Creating familiarity with reading standards 104) Creating familiarity with listening standards 105) Creating familiarity	Workable Planning	

with universal forms of learning 106) Implementing PD training activities 107) Employing creativity 108) Be inspiring 109) Using informal dialogue for learning 110) Utilizing available resources		
111) Assessment 112) Administration 113) Growth mindset 114) PD data	PD Planning	7) Instructional Policies
115) PD department meetings 116) PD is part district directed 117) PD is part site directed 118) PD is part state directed 119) PD becoming more departmentalized 120) Less parent conferences for more PD time 121) PD Books for training activities: *Teach Like a Champion* and *Teach Like a Pirate*		
122) State tests are disadvantageous for SPED and ELL subgroups 123) Need to continue monitoring with PD measures and PD training 124) Lacking complete site independence to create own PD plan 125) Employing more strategies across the board	Communication	

126) Less time for parent conferences now
127) Need to focus on combination-style teaching
128) PD trainings still lack specifics for SPED, ELL, and at-risk students
129) Need to differentiate instructions more
130) Too many agendas compel shortcuts to be taken

131) Limited forms of PD across styles of CCSS training
132) PBIS/behavioral management
133) Loose forms of CCSS for ELA (embedded)
134) Union-offered PD
135) Rick Morris styles of teaching
136) Reading 360 activities

Varied Forms of PD

Appendix J: From Basic to Organizing to Global Themes (Observation Follow-Up Questions)

Themes as Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
1) Visually impaired difficulties with laptop Smart Board alternations 2) Writing activities exclude speaking skills 3) Cross-curricular involving math causes disinterests	Interferences with Enhancing Learning	1) Obstacles
4) Higher learning students bored in mixed class 5) Students ignore key prompt words in instruction	Student Focus	
6) Prepare for team debates 7) Collaborating in groups of 3 for effectiveness 8) Establishing parameters for group projects	Group Cooperation	2) Collaboration
9) Pairing students up to support each other with PCs 10) Sustaining motivation with PC grouping 11) Students help and share ideas in computer labs	Technology Cooperation	
12) Choice project (own direction for research) 13) Provide sample writings 14) Taking notes with breaks 15) Extended time 16) Reference notes for writing 17) Fostering choices provides for ownership	Affective Networks	3) Supports (Individuals or Groups)

18) Fostering choices enables motivation		
19) Building on foundations to create new starting points 20) Prewriting activity with drawn pictures 21) YouTube tutorials 22) Scoring rubric 23) Checklist for understanding 24) ELA feedback symbol sheet 25) Clarifying work expectations 26) Opportunities for student training 27) Noticing short-term and long-term situations 28) Communicating with written feedback and hand signals	Recognition Networks	
29) Writing about topic-related interests 30) Speech to text/text to speech programs 31) Color Zones for strategic teaching 32) Speaking and writing activities for expression 33) Underlining and highlighting 34) Using AVID techniques 35) PC vocabulary learning program	Strategic Networks	
36) Comparing concepts with brainstorming, scaffolding, and technology 37) Multi-sensory	Inclusive Instruments	4) Inclusionary Practice

instructions with cues 38) Verbal questioning 39) Rehearsing skits based on examples 40) Motivation through team participation		
41) Student writing motivators with folded-paper accordions 42) Open-ended story writing		
43) Changing forms of engagement 44) Setting choices up for problem solving 45) Creating in-depth learning activities 46) Assigning activities based on learning modalities 47) Sharing parts of a group presentation creates comfort	Inclusive Reflections	
48) Making more technical Excel spreadsheets 49) Moby Max challenge levels	Challenging the Subgroups	5) Rigor
50) Preparing by writing questions for debate (higher-level questions) 51) Employing DOK level questioning 52) Letting students struggle without providing answers	Expanding Efforts	
53) Narrative writing about students' own lives 54) Making texts accessible for tests (values of texts)	Situational Strategies	6) Flexible Learning Environments

55) Writing difficulties made easy with Word 56) Voluntary speaking 57) PowerPoint presentation with options		
58) Google Classroom guiding activities with timeline (self-monitoring) 59) Public speaking activity with group and PC support 60) Talk or write options for team effort participation 61) Annotated notes for test usage 62) Self-expression based on team decisions	Situational Techniques	
63) Monitoring ELA growth based on PD data 64) District purchased keyboard typing program	PD Planning	7) Instructional Policies