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Teachers' Perception of Common Core State Standards on Students with Learning Disabilities

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2019

Abstract

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MS, California Baptist University, 2000

BA, California Baptist University, 1998

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Special Education

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February 2019

Abstract

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were written and implemented to prepare all students for college or career readiness, including students with disabilities. Students with learning disabilities often have significant difficulties and face challenges when the instruction is framed within CCSS. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of special educators on teaching students with learning disabilities using CCSS. The two conceptual frameworks used in this study were the Universal Design for Learning and The Zone of Proximal Development. The research questions focused on teachers' perception regarding students with learning disabilities being instructed with Common Core instructions, how teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness, and what teachers perceived to be the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities. Data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews with 8 participants, who are special education teachers. Additional data to establish trustworthiness of the study was obtained through observations and analysis of artifacts collected during the study. Data were analyzed using thematic coding. The study results revealed that special educators expressed the need for a modified curriculum and do not feel that the CCSS are effective for students with disabilities and will not prepare the students for college or career readiness. The results of the study can lead to improved instructional strategies and more effective testing measurements for students with disabilities which may ultimately pave a way for positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to special educators and to all educators who go above and beyond to ensure that students with disabilities get all the privileges and benefits they are entitled to, and for assisting them in reaching their maximum potential. I also dedicate this study to the students with disabilities who can benefit from the outcome of this study.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were published in June of 2010, at which time 45 of the 50 states adopted the standards and set out to implement them throughout the numerous school districts. Implementation began with staff development, which included teacher acceptance of the impending change as well as the needed training to implement successfully instructions for students with disabilities (SWDs) (Beals, 2014). An abundance of research exists on CCSS and SWDs. However, CCSS are relatively new and consequently there has been very little research based on the outcome of SWDs attaining college or career readiness (Burks, Bezait, Danley, Louery, & Lucus, 2015). No students have been instructed using CCSS from kindergarten to 12th grade to determine a proper outcome (Morningstar, 2017).

The CCSS were written to include SWDs. The CCSS include a two-page document titled Application to Students with Disabilities (ASWDs). The suggestion for providing access for SWDs was not detailed and was vague (Beals, 2014). The author stated, "It appeared to demand extra work for special education teachers to teach impossible skills like reading Tom Sawyer and understanding Shakespeare" (Beals, 2014, p. 4). This statement refers to the students' inability to read the text, yet they are expected to understand the content.

In view of the demands of CCSS charging special educators to meet CCSS's annual goals, the voices of these educators need to be heard who have been providing CCSS instruction to SWD. Because they work closely with these students, they have the

greatest input in their instruction; however, they find a continuous need to make accommodations and modifications to ensure that these students academically grow. Even though the CCSS standards put learning goals in place, they do not suggest or require any specific instructional approach for SWD (Cassidy, Ortliev, & Grote-Garcia, 2016). Useful information can be gained from getting into the classrooms and collaborating with teachers to see how they are implementing the standards and how students are responding to the CCSS (Beals, 2014).

Educators and educational policy makers expect SWD to meet the same rigorous requirements set forth in the CCSS as their counterparts without disabilities, this qualitative case study explored the perceptions of special educators using CCSS to instruct students with learning disabilities. Educational policy makers expect CCSS to prepare all students including SWD for college or career readiness. The insight and experience of special educators are vital components for effective academic instruction and the academic success of SWD. Knowing how special educators perceive the outcomes of CCSS on SWDs can help to plan and develop future instructions for them.

The social implications for this study were to provide beneficial information to educators and administrators to assist them in providing optimal instruction to SWDs. I gathered the information and derived at the results from the data obtained in the study. The data included the most effective strategies used to ensure student success. It also led to mandates that require SWDs to be instructed using specific strategies and teaching methods. I expected the results of the study to assist in the planning of future instruction for SWDs. The focus was on what worked, and what needed to be done to ensure SWDs

can succeed academically as to CCSS's requirements to obtain college and career readiness. The major sections of this chapter are the purpose of the study, the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, and the significance of the study.

Background

CCSS is the most significant education reform initiative in the history of the U.S. educational system (Figueroa & Or, 2016). The CCSS, released in June 2010, are academic standards referred to as the blueprint for instructions (Powell, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2013). The aim was to align kindergarten to 12th grade state standards into one unified set of standards across all states. The intent was for both teachers and students to prepare teachers to teach the CCSS aligned curriculum to special populations (Best & Cohen, 2013), and to prepare students for either college or the workforce. The CCSS were written and implemented to represent the knowledge and skills necessary for all students, including those with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Wakeman, Karvonen, & Ahumada, 2013).

In 1997, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Under Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) required standards-based IEP goals, which have been expected of all kindergarten through 12th-grade students since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 (Caruana, 2015). On December 10, 2015, IDEA was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). It also included the SWD who are expected to take the same assessments as students without disabilities (Hirschfeld-Davis, 2015). The CCSS standards are easily understood and may even help the IDEA program in becoming more

effective (Rust, 2012). Although teachers are a valuable part of education, their perceptions were not given due consideration in the process of creating the CCSS (Matlock et al., 2016). A gap in the literature exists regarding teachers' perceptions on the effects that CCSS has on SWD for college and career readiness. Since CCSS were implemented in 2010, no students have completed education from kindergarten to 12th grade using CCSS. Research is limited on how prepared SWDs are for career and college readiness. This study is needed to help inform educators about what is working and what is not as to how SWD are progressing toward college and career readiness using the CCSS.

Problem Statement

The CCCS were written and implemented to represent the knowledge and skills necessary for all students, including those with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Wakeman et al., 2013). However, students with learning disabilities often have significant literacy difficulties and can face serious challenges when the instruction is framed within CCSS (Haager & Vaughn, 2013). For example, CCSS represents what is to be taught in English Language Arts (ELA), but does not provide guidance on how to teach the content especially for students with severe disabilities (Saunders, Spooner, Browder, Wakeman, & Lee, 2013). To counter the problem of meeting CCSS requirements, most states are beginning to embrace standards-based IEPs as a way to ensure special needs students have access to the general education curriculums for their grade level (Gewertz, 2015).

Policymakers are increasingly presuming that SWD will have college as part of their futures, which means writing has to be included in high school transition for SWD (Gewertz, 2015). Because policymakers assume that SWDs will have college in their future, teachers of SWDs will need to assist in preparing the students for the rigorous writing assignments they will encounter after high school. Students with learning disabilities transitioning to college are expected to meet the CCSS in writing (Graham & Harris, 2013). Smith and Teasley (2014) stated that it is important to be actively involved in the classroom and collaborate with teachers to see how they are implementing the standards within their classrooms and how students are responding to the CCSS. Furthermore, documentation of outcomes for students with special needs is important to facilitate improvement (Smith & Teasley, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of special educators on the efficacy of teaching students with learning disabilities using CCSS. Because CCSS was implemented 7 years ago and no students have completed kindergarten through 12th grade being instructed in CCSS, limited research exists on outcomes for SWD becoming college or career ready after being instructed with the standards. The benefits of CCSS as well as the negative and positive influences have yet to be established for SWD. Educators needed to know how the students benefit and the best way to ensure they were getting the maximum benefit from instruction. To obtain this information, it was vital that researchers gained the perspectives of instructors who worked with this population of students (SWD). The purpose of the CCSS, which was

released in 2010, was to align kindergarten- through 12th-grade state standards into one unified set. The intent was for students to exit high school prepared to enter either college or the workforce (Best & Cohen, 2013).

Research Questions

I formulated the following research questions to determine whether the CCSS were providing the intended outcomes for SWD.

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' views about the benefits that students with learning disabilities derive from Common Core instructions?

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness?

Research Question 3: What do teachers perceive to be the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities?

Conceptual Framework

I used two conceptual frameworks in this study, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Both frameworks are related to providing effective instruction to SWD. These frameworks were appropriate for this study because I investigated effective instructions for SWD. Specific Learning Disability (SLD) refers to deficits in one or more of the basic psychological processes in the comprehensive use of spoken or written language. SLD is an impairment in the ability to listen, read, write, spell, think, or compute mathematical calculations. Dyslexia,

dyscalculia, dysgraphia, brain injury, and developmental aphasia are all included as SLDs (LD On-line, 2017). Students receiving special education services due to learning disabilities were addressed in this study.

The UDL is a valid scientific framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the ways information is presented as to ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge (Hartmann, 2015). UDL is also a guideline for ways to ensure that students are engaged in instruction. UDL reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations and supports, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including SWD (Rao & Meo, 2016). UDL is identified as a tool to advance the curriculum, by presenting academic content that can be taught in varied ways. The three principles of UDL are explained as brain research, cognition, and learning (Caruana, 2015). This framework helped the study because SWD are expected to have complete access to the CCSS and UDL makes the curriculum assessable for SWD. The problem in this study was that SWD are expected to exit high school college or career ready. UDL can be the solution to the problem.

Rao and Meo (2016) explained how general educators and special educators can address the academic standards by applying UDL when developing lesson plans. Using UDL-developed lesson plans allows educators to develop inclusive lesson plans to benefit all students, those with and without disabilities. The UDL is a framework for designing flexible and proactive support for varied learning. Unwrapping the standards consists of identifying two things: the skills within the standard and the concept. This is what the students need to know and how they can go about learning it. Unwrapping the

standards helps the teachers to identify specific knowledge and skills that need to be addressed for the lesson.

The article by Rao and Meo (2016) described the process that teachers can follow to develop standards-based instructions to provide flexible instructions using UDL. Brain research, cognition, and learning are the three principles of UDL. Nine guidelines and 31 checkpoints are related to UDL. The 31 checkpoints describe physical access, cognitive access, and engagement. UDL focuses on reducing barriers to make instruction inclusive for all students. The CCSS refers to UDL in the document under the title Application to Students with Disabilities. CCSS states that promoting a culture of high expectations for students is a fundamental goal of the CCSS. To participate with success in the general curriculum, SWD may receive additional supports and services, such as instructional supports for learning, based on the principles of UDL, which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). The CCSS refers to UDL but does not state that it is required or necessary to ensure adequate education of SWD.

The UDL uses both formative and summative assessments. The UDL checkpoints also provide scaffolding ideas. Scaffolding is an incremental support provided during instruction that gradually fades as students master the concepts. UDL is depicted as being accessible through traditional instruction, also referred to as a *no tech* method or with a *high tech* technique by including technology in the curriculum. The format of UDL is structured to include all learning levels at student capacity to comprehend the material.

Hartmann (2015) explained the UDL framework as a method of understanding how to support access to the curriculum for students with severe disabilities to improve their quality of life. The teacher can modify the curriculum for students to gain greater access. Hartmann (2015) stated that SWD are part of a natural diversity and teachers are expected to embrace and include them in instruction with appropriate accommodations. Further research is needed to help students with severe disabilities reach their highest potential and optimize their learning outcomes. Two questions that need to be addressed are as follows: (a) How is the UDL framework important for learners with severe disabilities? and (b) How can learners with severe disabilities continue to help with the development and implementation of the UDL framework? These articles presented a persuasive argument for the use of UDL (Hartmann, 2015). UDL is described as a beneficial tool for educational instruction in that this system is used when creating lesson plans that will engage all students by using multiple ways to explain the information. The UDL design was created to include the learning limitations for the SWD as well as engage the students who need to be challenged.

UDL is a scientifically proven approach and a framework for providing a structured outline intended for educational instruction for both students with learning disabilities and without (Smith & Lowrey, 2017). The UDL framework is imperative to design comprehensive lesson plans and is identified as a tool to advance the curriculum, by presenting academic content that can be taught in various ways to engage all students, not only SWD. The three principles of UDL is explained as brain research, cognition, and learning. This framework helped me in this study because SWD are expected to

accomplish CCSS requirements, even though they are not fully able to achieve CCSS without support (Application to Students with Disabilities, 2010).

In addition, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), developed by Vygotsky (1978), defined *instructional scaffolding* as a process designed to promote a deeper level of learning. When instruction is scaffolded, some information is provided to the students to assist them in understanding the portion of the assignment that they cannot complete on their own. Working within their ZPD with scaffolding is an effective method of assisting the students to meet the required standards (Least, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding instruction is Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD. ZPD is the difference between what a student can do without help and what the student can do with help. Benson (1997) explained: “If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler" (p. 126). Scaffolding a writing lesson would be easier for SWD because some of the information that they are required to write would be provided for them (Ewoldt & Morgan, 2017). The SWD would have added support by having to insert the missing portion of the writing rather than write the entire assignment. This would assist them in completing the assignments and getting a finished product. SWD would be more successful. As their skills improve, they could provide more of the information independently until they could eventually produce the entire assignment on their own.

Nature of the Study

The rationale for this qualitative study was to gain information on what teachers thought about SWD being instructed using the CCSS. In this qualitative case study, I delved into the insight on educators’ perceptions by allowing them to express their beliefs

regarding SWD using CCSS to become career and college ready. Gaining the perspectives of educators allowed positive change in future instructions to benefit SWD. In this qualitative case study, I used interviews, observations, and work samples as data collecting tools. The phenomenon was the shared experience of special educators teaching SWD using the CCSS to prepare the students for career and college readiness. The participants consisted of eight special educators who resided in the High Desert area of southern California. The participants were experienced teaching the CCSS for 3 or more years to SWD in Grades 4 through 8. The participants played several roles in teaching SWD, including special day class teachers and resource specialists. I collected data from observations while teaching was going on; then coded and analyzed student work specimens and interviews using NVivo. I include details of these in Chapter 3.

Definitions

I used the terms listed below throughout this study. I provided definitions to clarify the words or phrases as they are used in this study.

Close reading: Close reading is the critical analysis of text that focuses on details intended to develop a deep understanding of the meaning of the text. It is used in instruction for Common Core State Standards (Rosenblatt, 1998).

Efficacy: Efficacy is the ability to produce a desired or intended result (Bandura, 1994).

Learning disability: Learning disability is a condition giving rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the level expected of those of the same age, especially when not associated with a physical handicap (IDEA, 2004, para. 23).

Specific learning disability: Specific learning disability (SLD) refers to deficits in one or more of the basic psychological processes in the comprehensive use of spoken or written language. SLD is an impairment in the ability to listen, read, write, spell, think, or compute mathematical calculations (Cole, 1964).

Students with disabilities (*SWD*): Students with disabilities (*SWD*) are between the ages of 3 and 22 years who qualify for special services under Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (Russo, 206).

Students with learning disabilities: Students with learning disabilities are students identified with a specific learning disability (Graham & Harris, 2003).

Universal design for learning: Universal design for learning is a set of principles for curriculum development that gives all individuals equal opportunities to learn (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2015).

Zone of proximal development: Zone of proximal development is the difference between what a student can do without help and what the student can do with help (Knestrick, 2012).

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors in research that are taken for granted (Simmon, 2011). It was necessary to assume certain aspects were present when the research questions were presented to the participants. Key assumptions are described here. First, I assumed that participants were honest and provided truthful answers for each interview question. I made this assumption because the questions were simple and straightforward. I expected the participants give answers related to their actual experiences. The second assumption

was the responses provided by the participants were a representation of the target population. I assumed that because the participants worked in various positions within special education (special day class teachers, resource teachers, educational specialist), their contributions covered aspects of all special educators concerned. Rubin (2005) explained that in qualitative interviewing believability is demonstrating what is said to the interviewer is true. Untrue statements are rare and easily detected.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a study is all the things that I covered in the study. I sought the perceptions of the teachers using the Common Core State to instruct SWD. I chose this specific aspect because current research is needed to provide information on providing the best instructions to SWD so that they have full access to the core curriculum to succeed in gaining career or college readiness. I also intended to identify successful teaching strategies and activities that teachers of SWD develop to enable their students to succeed despite their learning disabilities. The input of special education teachers is valued because they are the primary providers of education for SWD; their perceptions and understanding helps to inform future practices and studies. The delimitations of a study were the parameters that bound the study. In other words, delimitation specified the factors that were included in or related to the study (Simon, 2011). I conducted this study in the High Desert area of Southern California during Academic Year 2017-2018. This qualitative study began immediately after I received the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and I concluded once I collected sufficient interview data from the eight educators in the study and the point of saturation was reached to meet the requirements of

the research questions. I investigated the methods in which instruction were provided and did not look at the state exams results that were used as measurements of students' academic success. I selected a qualitative approach because numerical outcome would not have informed me how students were being taught and what strategies teachers were using to provide instruction. Transferability is when the procedure is fully described and the results of one study can be used with other populations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I expected the results of this study to be appropriate for similar populations especially those who are referred to as special populations, such as low academically functioning students, students who are at risk of failure, or students with severe disabilities. The results may be transferable to other geographical areas, but I cannot be sure.

Limitations

A limitation in a study is a restriction that could affect the results of the study (Simon, 2011). Limitations are out of the control of the researcher and cannot be disregarded. This study was limited to the interpretation of a small sample of participants. The results of the study may not be generalizable to any other school settings because they will be limited to the experiences of the teachers at the schools in the demographic area where I conducted this study. My role as the researcher in this study was bound by the parameters of the study. In the past 20 years, I have worked in two different school districts as a resource specialist. Through the years, I have come to know many people in the same job category. It is possible that I may make inferences during the interviews due to my familiarity with special education. Researcher bias, which can result in biased data

reporting and improper data collection activities, was another possible limitation of the proposed study. To eliminate researcher bias, I used bracketing along with rich descriptions, and reported any discrepant information. I Chapter 3, I provide a detailed explanation of each of these strategies.

A limitation in the case study design was having participants withdraw from the study. When a participant withdrew from the study, I used an alternative participant. I did not use data from a participant who withdrew from the study. I selected the potential replacement participants prior to data collection. I identified four additional participants only to be used if a selected participant withdrew from the study. The alternative participants understood that they were asked to participate only if needed. There were no known threats to the quality of the study.

Significance

Studying the influence of the teachers' perceptions about SWD being instructed with CCSS is significant for several reasons. This study provides data regarding the thoughts and experiences of teachers educating students with learning disabilities using CCSS. The findings from this study could help students with learning disabilities achieve college or career readiness. This study is also significant for special education teachers because it could help them improve their classroom practices and share their expertise with new teachers. The results of the study may benefit educators who provide instruction to SWD. The results may also benefit administrators by giving them insight on the thoughts and perceptions of educators teaching SWD using the CCSS. The greatest benefit can be for the students who will gain improved instruction from the input

provided in the study. This study can help special education teachers by providing them with a better understanding of how they can provide effective instruction to their students with learning disabilities. In addition, the influence of teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of CCSS on SWD is also significant because it analyzes the usefulness of these practices to improve student achievement. It also helps in understanding how teachers implement CCSS practices in their classrooms to promote academic success, which leads to career or college readiness for SWD. Potential implications for positive social change include results that provide effective strategies to support SWD in consistently achieving college or career preparedness.

Summary

Chapter 1 began with an introduction to the study. It included the background of the study, in which I explained the origin of CCSS. In this qualitative case study, I addressed the perceptions of educators on the influence of CCSS on SWD. The results in question was the likeness of SWD to achieve college or career readiness by being instructed in CCSS. The problem statement explained that no students have been full educated with CCSS since it was implemented only 7 years ago and the perceptions of teachers were needed to determine its outcomes. The three research questions were formed to gather insight on the perceptions of educators on the topic. I used two conceptual frameworks, The Universal Design for Learning and Zone of Proximal Development. Both frameworks are related to how SWD learn. Also included was the rationale for the research design, the assumptions, the limitations, and the delimitations. Chapter 2 contains the literature review, which enables me to establish the research gap.

The literature review consists of peer-reviewed journal articles on subject matter related to the dissertation topic. All articles were published within the past 5 years at the writing of my study.

Chapter 2

Introduction

The problem that I examine in this study exists because CCSS are relatively new, established in 2010, and limited research exists on the success for SWD attaining college or career readiness after being instructed with CCSS. In this study, I provide data on the outcome regarding the benefits of CCSS on SWD, and whether teachers perceived the effects as negative or positive. My purpose in this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of special educators on the efficacy of teaching students with learning disabilities using CCSS for career and college readiness. It is useful for educators to know how students are benefiting or not benefiting from CCSS and what is the best way to ensure they are receiving the maximum support from the instructions. To acquire this information, it was vital to understand the perspective of the instructors who work with this population of students (SWD).

The CCSS were implemented for all students including those with learning disabilities. The CCSS were written to represent the knowledge and skills necessary for all students including those with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Wakeman et al., 2013). However, students with learning disabilities often have significant literacy difficulties and can face serious challenges when the instruction is framed with CCSS (Haager & Vaughn, 2013b). For example, CCSS represents what is to be taught in ELA, but does not provide guidance on how to teach the content especially for students with severe disabilities (Saunders, Spooner, et al., 2013b). In addition, students with learning disabilities are expected to meet the CCSS requirements for writing (Graham & Harris).

Because of CCSS hurdles, most states are beginning to embrace standards-based IEPs as a way to ensure special needs students have access to the general education curriculums for their grade level (Gewertz, 2015). In addition, states are increasingly presuming that SWD will have college as part of their future plans, which in turn will bring about a shift in how students are prepared to transition after high school (Gewertz, 2015). Smith and Teasley (2014) stated that it is important to observe classroom instruction and collaborate with teachers to see how they were implementing the standards within their classrooms and how students were responding to the CCSS. Furthermore, documentation of CCSS outcomes for students with special needs is important to facilitate improvement (Smith & Teasley, 2014).

The intent of the CCSS, which was released in 2010, was to align kindergarten-through 12th-grade state standards into one unified set. The intent was for students to exit high school prepared to enter either college or the workforce (Best & Cohen, 2013). This study was needed to determine whether the CCSS were providing the support for SWD to achieve the expected CCSS outcomes. The literature review provides a wide span of information on various topics related to CCSS and students with learning disabilities. There is information on the history of CCSS, CCSS as related to SWD in math and English Language Arts, and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Also included is the use of UDL to instruct SWD, teacher training, and preparedness to teach CCSS. Only a few peer-reviewed articles exist regarding the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness of CCSS for SWD.

In this literature review, I used existing peer reviewed journal articles, which were obtained from sources such as Education Source, PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, SAGE, ProQuest, ERIC, Education Resource Complete, and the Thoreau Multiple Databases tool. Google Scholar was also used to locate the most recent articles and to cross-reference the literature to examine the existing research on educators' perceptions on the use of CCSS (CCSS) on students with learning disabilities and related topics. I selected peer-reviewed articles.

When the CCSS were published in 2010, only 45 of the 50 states adapted the standards and set out to implement the CCSS throughout school districts across the country. The CCSS are academic standards referred to as the blueprint for instructions (Powell et al., 2013). The aim was to align the kindergarten- to 12th-grade state standards into one unified set. The intent was for students to exit high school prepared for either college or the workforce. It was also intended to prepare teachers to teach the CCSS aligned curriculum to special populations (Best & Cohan, 2013). The CCSS were written to represent the knowledge and skills necessary for all students including those with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Wakeman et al., 2013). CCSS is the most influential educational reform initiative in the history of the U.S. educational system (Figueroa & Torff, 2016).

Implementation began with staff development that included teachers' acceptance of the impending change as well as the needed training to implement successfully the instructions. Because CCSS is still relatively new, there has not been much research on the outcome of SWD attaining college or career readiness. The CCSS does contain a two-

page document titled Application to Students with Disabilities, which addresses CCSS instruction to SWD (Appendix C).

The article by Beal (2014) explains that these guidelines to instruct SWD were not detailed and were vague. According to Beal (2014), instruction demands extra work on the part of the teacher. Consequently, one voice that needs to be heard is that of the special educators who have been providing CCSS instruction to SWD. Beal (2014) explained, "It [CCSS] appeared to demand extra work for special education teachers to teach impossible skills like reading Tom Sawyer and understanding Shakespeare" (p. 4).

In 1997 the Elementary as Secondary Education Act under the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) required standards-based IEP goals. IEPs goals have also been in place for all kindergarten- to 12th-grade students since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 (Caruana, 2015). The CCSS standards then added their definitions of what parents and teachers could expect their students to learn. Even though teachers are a valuable part of education, their perceptions were not a part of the process when the CCSS was created (Matlock et al., 2016). However, teachers can use the IDEA program to be more effective in their instruction (Rust, 2012).

The literature review provided a wide span of information on various topics related to CCSS and students with learning disabilities. The major sections of Chapter 2 include The CCSS as related to SWD in math and ELA, and the CCSS in relation to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Also included is the use of UDL to instruct SWD, teacher training, and preparedness to teach CCSS.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a search strategy using several research databases. I retrieved both digital and printed material from the past 5 years. Walden University's Library portal was the main resource used for accessing various databases. During the literature search process, I included changes to expand as to the key words used in the search. Originally, only I only searched *Common Core and Special Education* or *Common Core and learning disabilities*. The available articles were limited as most of the articles were providing information only pertaining to CCSS and were not actual research studies. Teachers' perceptions on Common Core were added to the search as well as Common Core by itself. There were not many articles discussing teacher perceptions as related to Common Core and SWD obtaining career or college readiness. Only a few Common Core articles were used for the purpose of explaining the history and building a connection to SWD. Later after analyzing the articles that were retrieved, it became evident that several of the articles mentioned the Universal Design for Learning and Close Reading. Subtitles were added to include these topics for a further search of articles. Universal Design for Learning was related because it was a framework for providing instruction to SWD. Close Reading was emphasized in the CCSS and was related to SWD because many of the students struggle with reading. After adding these two topics, the literature review expanded significantly. I also used other key words in combination further the search: *Common Core and Learning Disabilities*, *Common Core and Special Education*, *Teachers' Perceptions and Common Core*, and *Universal Design for Learning and Close Reading*.

Conceptual Framework

Specific learning disability (SLD) refers to deficits in one or more of the basic psychological processes in the comprehensive use of spoken or written language. SLD is an impairment in the ability to listen, read, write, spell, think, or compute mathematical calculations. Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, brain injury, and developmental aphasia are all included as SLDs. I addressed students receiving special education services due to learning disabilities in this study. The Universal Design for Learning was a framework used for providing instructions to SWD.

UDL is a scientifically proven approach, developed by Rose, a Harvard graduate, to provide a structured outline intended for educational instruction for students with and without learning disabilities. The UDL framework is imperative to designing comprehensive lesson plans that are flexible and engaging for all students. UDL is identified as a tool to advance the curriculum, by presenting academic content that can be taught in varied ways. The three principles of UDL are explained as brain research, cognition, and learning. This framework helped the study because SWD are expected to master CCSS' requirements. However, SWD are not able to fully master CCSS requirements without support.

Zone of proximal development (ZPD) was developed by Vygotsky, which utilizes instructional scaffolding, a process designed to promote a deeper level of learning. Scaffolding instruction is Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD. ZPD is the difference between what a student can do without help and what the student can do with help. When the instruction is scaffolded, some information is provided to the students to assist them in

understanding the portion of the assignment that they cannot complete on their own. Working within their ZPD with scaffolding is an effective method of assisting the students in gaining full access and in meeting the required standards. Once the students gain more knowledge, less assistance is provided to the students by the teacher. The teacher scaffolds the instruction by helping students get to the next level little by little with additional help.

Recent studies have been conducted using both UDL and ZPD. Al-Azawei, Serenely, and Lundquist (2016) used the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as an effective method of filing the gaps between the ability of the learners and the differences of the individuals. They also stated that UDL is effective for flexible learning for different learners' needs because of background knowledge, abilities, cultural differences, and educational experiences. Rao, Smith, and Lowery (2016) used UDL as an instructional framework design for SWD to support their meaningful inclusion experiences to access the general education curriculum. Additionally, Lowery, Hollinghead, and Howery (2017) explained how teachers discussed UDL and inclusion for SWD. They used seven general education teachers as participants in their study. Furthermore, Hall, Cohen, Vue, and Ganley (2015) did a mixed method study on using UDL and technology to improve reading comprehension levels of students.

Wass and Golding (2014) discussed the usefulness of using ZPD to teach students to do something beyond their ability and how it influenced potential learning. Clapper (2015) did a study on using cooperative-based learning along with ZPD. Using this method they introduced ZPD to a group of individuals on the same level in need of

similar support. Lastly, Smagorinsky, Hansen, and Fink (2013) conducted a study using speech as a tool for utilizing ZPD by doing role playing and viewing situations through the eyes of different characters.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

This literature review was conducted using key words and phrases to gather information related to the study. The researcher used the research questions to focus on how teachers perceived CCSS was working for SWD to achieve college or career readiness. The articles within this section are on CCSS and Math, CCSS and English Language Arts, CCSS and instructions for SWD, CCSS and writing, and CCSS and teacher prep. The reason these topics were used is because they were related to the study. In order to understand teachers' perceptions on how CCSS was working, it was necessary to understand what was being done in the classroom to support, assist, and instruct students to access, master, and achieve success in meeting the CCSS. Therefore, these studies showed how CCSS was related to the various topics and what teachers were doing with it. Additionally, Close Reading and The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) were two strategies that continuously showed up while doing the search. Both of these topics were highly used in the CCSS. Close Reading is a process used by all students for the purpose to gain better understanding of the text and UDL as specific to SWD.

CCSS and Math

Because math is one of the major subjects taught in the CCSS, the researcher wanted to include information on the available data regarding SWD, math, and CCSS. This section explains what types of instructions were available for SWD to support them

to gain access to the CCSS. After reviewing what academic supports were available for teaching math to SWD, it was more appropriate to ask teachers how they perceived instruction was benefiting the students to prepare them for college or career readiness and what they would suggest was missing from the instructions. Several articles were found related to CCSS, mathematics, and SWD. The articles provided instructions for fractions and using graphic organizers to solve one-step equations and six-step approaches to be used by teachers.

Educators have been learning new content and methods to meet the rigorous standards using the CCSS in math (CCSS-M). SWD need intensified instruction. Teachers need a process in place to assess students diagnostically to determine their current level of understanding, determine areas of need, provide instructional tasks, and monitor the progress (Hunt & Little, 2014). The study by Bottge and colleagues (2015) explained the effects of Enhanced Anchored Instruction (EAI) on students with math disabilities. The results showed that students with math disabilities improved their performance on several math standards when taught in the inclusion setting with two teachers (one general and one special education). Teachers should present CCSS instruction in a way that it works on several foundational skills at the same time (Powell et al., 2013).

Rivera and Baker (2013) explained a six-step approach and provided a template for teaching the CCSS skills in a simplistic manner using color coding, manipulatives, and task analysis, so as to have multiple opportunities for usage and generalization. Graphic organizers can be used to teach one-step equations to SWD if teachers use the

six-steps as described and practice them regularly with the students (Rivera & Baker (2013). A study by Shin and Perrott (2015) revealed 10 out of 17 students showed highly positive outcomes when using think-aloud strategies and implicit instructions to teach fractions to low achieving students struggling with math.

Powell and Stecker (2014) explained each tier in full details in a qualitative case study showing the results of fifth-grade students who went through a three-tier program. The study used Data-Based Individualization (DBI), which provides changes to the instruction for the individual student as needed according to the results of the progress accomplished through monitoring assessment data. The students in the study showed slow growth and other interventions were put in place to help the students become more successful. This study was very well written and used charts, graphs, and pictures to provide details about the study. It was beneficial to my study because it highlighted DBI, which is a strategy used to instruct SWD that can benefit students in meeting CCSS goals. DBI is a research-based process used for providing intense instruction. Scaffolding lessons using math frames can lead to steady progress and student success for SWD (Wilson, 2013). Sixth-grade students with intellectual disabilities were the subjects in the study by Hord and Xin (2015). In the study by Hord and Xin all the students were successful in solving problems to find area and volume. Calculators, formula sheets, and visual diagrams were used by all students as supports. The problems were on sixth grade level. The author stated that more complex problem-solving skills would be needed in order for the student to meet CCSS proficiency for higher grades. One of the research questions for the study asked whether or not students would maintain the knowledge after

the intervention ended. There was a large number of references cited for the article. Several tables were used to support the findings.

It is important that interventions are developed for students with mild intellectual disabilities to solve more complex problems and gain a deeper understanding of math as specified by the CCSS (Horn & Xin, 2015). The article by Wilson (2013) introduced and explained the use of math frames. Math frames have been introduced in classrooms to address the need for students to apply their knowledge to real-life situations, which is a main component of the CCSS (Wilson, 2013). Table 1 in Wilson's article explained how each of the standards could be aligned when using the math frames. Mediation, scaffolding, judicious review, and progress monitoring were all explained in Table 2 of Wilson's article. The six necessary steps to implement math frames were explained in detail. Math frame is a strategy that teachers can use to scaffold learning for students, which can lead to steady progress and student success for students for disabilities (Wilson, 2013). There is a gap in the literature explaining how teachers perceive interventions such as math frames being effective for assisting SWD in achieving career and college readiness.

Akkus (2016) stated the CCSS was designed to grant equal opportunity in teaching math to all students. She further stated that deprived students were more likely to have inexperienced and underqualified teachers and were less likely to have the same support and enrichment opportunities as the privileged ones. Rivera and Baker (2013) used six steps to describe how students could practice one-step equations and stated if

teachers practiced these regularly with SWD, the students could follow the steps independently.

Akkus' (2016) eight principles mandated in the CCSS initiative for math are as follows:

- Make sense of problems.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model for mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of the structure.
- Look for express regularity in repeated reasoning.

SWD need intensified instruction (Bottge at el., 2015). The study by Bottge and colleagues assessed the effects of Enhanced Anchored Instruction (EAI) on students with math disabilities. It was a quantitative study with 25 classrooms from 24 different middle schools with students at various levels of disabilities. Bottge and colleagues' study (2015) was implemented using co-teaching with a math teacher and a special education teacher. The results showed that students with math disabilities improved their performance on several math standards when taught in the inclusion setting with two teachers (one general and one special education). This study is related to my own because it provided information on EAI, which is an instructional support provided to SWD to assist them in

accessing the core curriculum. My study is asking if teachers' perceptions as to CCSS are effective and what is working with SWD.

Bryant and Bryant (2016) reported that students usually demonstrate difficulty with mathematics over a span of grades. This is because many of them lack the ability to remember basic facts and effective strategies for solving problems. They strongly agreed that understanding rational numbers, as well as having intensified instruction for students, is crucial to their success in mathematics. Dougherty et al. (2017) encouraged the necessity of using explicit, systematic mathematics instruction for students with math difficulties. They also encouraged scaffolding as an instructional support and the use of graphic organizers, think-alouds (a strategy where the students speak out loud to describe their thought processes as they work through the math problem), and other cognitive strategies.

Flores, Hinton, and Strozier (2014) did a qualitative study on the use of concrete-representational-abstract (CRA) sequences and the strategic instruction model (SIM) to teach math to SWD. Instruction was provided 25 minutes each time four days a week for three months. There were only three students in the study. Flores and colleagues (2014) agreed that the focus on math instructions should have a clear emphasis on understanding all concepts from addition to fluency. In their study, they monitored the instruction of three third-grade students who had failed to respond to intervention before participating in the study. SIM is a research-based intervention that is usually used to teach ELA. The researcher in this study used it successfully for teaching math.

The study by Flores and colleagues (2014) had a very small participant group and the students in the study received 100 minutes of instruction a week for three months. On the other hand the study by Fuchs et al. (2015) was done over a three-year period with a large group of students. It seems that studies that expand over a longer period of time are more likely to have positive results.

Fuchs et al. (2015) conducted a study that was done over a three-year period. CCSS was used for math instruction in Years 2 and 3. Two groups of fourth-grade students received 12 weeks of varied instructions in fractions. All of the students were below grade level and were either learning disabled (LD) or scored similar to students who were not LD. One group of students received specialized fraction instructions or inclusive fraction instructions. The group instructed with specialized instruction made notable progress over the students taught in the inclusive setting. The author mentioned the rationale for having SWD learn in the same setting as their grade level peers, but this study showed that students make better progress when taught with specialized instructions. Ideally, inclusion classrooms consist of both a general and a special education teacher working collaboratively where all students have full access to the curriculum. The authors (Fuchs et al., 2015) suggested that specialized intervention should include fraction tiles, number lines, and fraction bars. Similar to the study by Bottge and colleagues (2015), the study by Fuchs et al. (2015) also used the co-teaching model. Many school districts use the co-teaching model sometimes done in the inclusive setting.

In the study by Hord and Xin (2015) all the students made improvement on the concept of solving problems related to area and volume. Calculators, formula sheets, and visual diagrams were used by all students as supports. The author suggested that interventions were developed for students with mild intellectual disabilities to solve more complex problems and gain a deeper understanding of math as specified by the CCSS (Horn & Xin, 2015). Hunt and Little (2014) has the only article related to RtI. Hunt and Little (2014) explained the three tiers of Response to Intervention (RtI) in detail and then explained how the math standards could be used to provide instruction for students in each tier. The article concentrated on how to provide intense math instructions. It aligned CCSS with lessons and provided websites as resources. This article may be very useful for new teachers but it did not add a wealth of information to my study. The CCSS for Mathematics (CCSS-M) provides a foundation for teachers to design instructional interventions in math.

Van Boxtel (2016) explained that REASON (read, express, answer, share, offer, notice), a mnemonic, is a combination of problem-solving and self-instruction to assist students in using CCSS math. It proved to be an effective method for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The article by Shin and Pedrotty (2015) was the result of a study where they researched 17 articles related to teaching the concept of fractions in mathematics to low functioning students. Peer reviewed journals and dissertations were used. A total of 805 students were included in the 17 studies. The students were in third through 12th grades. Two of the schools were elementary level and the other 15 were middle and high school. The authors' references referred to the article by Bottage et al.

(2015) in regards to Enhanced Anchored Instructions (EAI). The article is timely and worthwhile. It appears to be well structured, unbiased, and reasonable. This article by Shin and Pedrotty (2015) is related to my study because SWD are expected to learn fractions as part of the CCSS-M. The results of this article indicated that students can achieve success in learning fractions.

My study sought to examine how teachers perceived SWD being prepared for career or college with CCSS. Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) sequence and the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) were used for teaching students with learning disabilities (SLD) how to multiply with regrouping in the study by Flores and colleagues (2014). This article was related to my study because it focused on a CCSS method of teaching mathematics to SWD.

Teachers need a process in place to assist students diagnostically to determine the current level of understanding, determine areas of need, provide instructional tasks, and do progress monitoring (Hunt & Little, 2014). Teachers can intensify interventions for students by identifying and remediating the conceptual understanding of mathematics. This article explained the three tiers of Response to Intervention (RtI) in detail and then explained how the math standards can be used to provide instruction for students in each tier. Graphic organizers and manipulatives were strongly suggested for use in math for SWD. Hunt and Little (2014) stated that the CCSS-M provides a foundation for teachers to design instructional interventions in math.

Saunders et al. (2013a) expressed that SWD need many opportunities to practice the skills using different sets of numbers, different story problems, and also across

different subject matters. Students with moderate to severe learning disabilities are capable of learning content that is aligned with grade level standards while simultaneously working on basic numeracy (Saunders et al., 2013a). Watt et al. (2016) investigated the effective interventions for teaching algebra to SWD. There were 825 third through 12th grade students in the quantitative study. They also reviewed the skills needed to align the instruction to the CCSS as well as the complexity of the skills needed. One-on-one tutoring and peer tutoring were both found to be effective methods for providing explicit instruction to SWD. Additionally, Watt and colleagues (2016) agreed that Enhanced Anchored Instruction (EAI) was highly effective when combined with explicit instruction. EAI is a combination of videos and hands-on activities used to reinforce math concepts. The primary reason for their study was to identify effective instruction for teaching algebra to SWD.

The qualitative multi-probe study conducted by Flores and colleagues (2014) had four students. Each student was taught individually 25 minutes, three times a week. The results showed all the students had an increase in computational fluency and were able to maintain and generalize what was learned. Rivera and Baker (2013) explained a six-step approach and provided a template for teaching the CCSS skills in a simplistic manner using color coding, using manipulatives, and task analysis. Graphic organizers can be used to teach one-step equations to SWD if teachers use the six-steps as described and practice them regularly with students (Rivera & Baker, 2013). One of the questions in my study asked if teachers used graphic organizers for instruction and how they utilized them.

Hunt and Little (2014) encouraged the use of graphic organizers for math along with manipulatives. Rivera and Baker (2013) used graphic organizers to teach one-step equations. All the authors expressed the benefit of using graphic organizers although they were for different purposes. Graphic organizers work as a scaffolding tool that assist SWD in accessing CCSS grade level curriculum. There is a gap in the literature on whether or not graphic organizers are helpful enough to assist students in meeting college or career readiness. Although graphic organizers support students in academic tasks, it was not stated if the benefits were lasting and transferable for SWD to continue using on their own in the college or workforce setting. Bottge and colleagues (2015) and Bryant and Bryant (2017) all agreed that intense instruction was beneficial and effective for SWD. Dougherty et al. (2017) also agreed with the others, however, used the words *explicit instruction* rather than *intense instruction.* This collection of articles covered various aspects of math, beginning with numeracy and included addition and multiplication with regrouping, finding area and volume, fractions, ratios, one-step equations, and algebra. The research in place to assist SWD achieve success in math with all the stated concepts may or may not be adequate to ensure they achieve college or career readiness. The perceptions of teachers on the success of such strategies used with SWD remains of interest for the researcher of this study.

All aspects of teaching SWD math have been discussed in the section above. Each of the articles are related to CCSS, mathematics, and SWD, and provided beneficial suggestions on giving effective instructions to students. The majority of the articles were studies, and a few provided activities and resources to assist with instructions. All the

articles that provided strategies for teaching had clear, concise explanations for implementing instructions for the activities. Having access to all the strategies and using them regularly can be beneficial for teachers providing instructions to SWD. After reviewing the various methods available for providing math support to SWD, a better understanding was gained regarding how teachers perceived the instructions as assisting SWD in becoming college or career ready.

As stated above, articles on strategies for all math concepts have been provided in the various articles. It could be very beneficial to SWD if they were taught in a methodical, systematic way that includes all the strategies to be introduced to all SWD to assist them in mastering the concepts chronologically. These articles gave background information on strategies used to scaffold math instruction to SWD. In addition these articles are related to the problem of this study because using these strategies as indicated may be the answer to helping SWD access the general education curriculum well enough to attain college or career readiness.

CCSS and ELA

Like math, ELA is a major subject taught in the CCSS. By being aware of the ELA instructional support available for SWD, it is easier to understand the responses of the participants regarding their perceptions on whether or not students will obtain enough proficiency to exit high school and be college or career ready. The intent of the CCSS document was to outline a rigorous course of study to best prepare American's youth for the global economy. Intensity is an area of serious difficulty for the majority of students with learning disabilities with emphasis on reading a wide range of text (Haager &

Vaughn, 2013). The CCSS in ELA are organized into two sections (one containing the standards for kindergarten through fifth grade and one for Grade 6 through Grade 12) intended to guide learning for all students including those with disabilities. CCSS is a set of content standards that target readiness for college and career participation for all students (Saunders et al., 2013b). The article by Saunders et al. (2013b) offers suggestions on how to align ELA lessons to the CCSS. Another aspect of Haager and Vaughn's study (2013a) is the six steps that are used with the goal of enhancing the long-term quality of life for SWD by providing increased access to general education. Students with learning disabilities often have significant literacy difficulty and can face serious challenges with using CCSS requirements.

The article by Graham and Harris (2013) examined the advantages and challenges of implementing the CCSS to SWD. Many high school graduates are not prepared to read college level text or even the text at the workplace. Over the years kindergarten through 12th grade text has decreased in complexity. However, if text complexity is increased in elementary school, it will help close the gap between high school and college level text (Heibert & Mesmer, 2013). There is somewhat of a controversy on complex text and the expectations of SWD to read it successfully. SWD are expected to read complex text; on the other hand, several authors argue that it cannot be done (Cassidy et al., 2016).

The Digital Media Project (DMP) is the use of graphic organizers, prompts, and multiple meanings of expression and engagement. Using DMP connects technology and literacy across the curriculum for all students. The CCSS establishes high expectations and allows students to gain confidence in their writing (Butler, Monda-Amaya, & Yoon,

2013). There has been very little research done to develop and test various models, learn techniques, and sustain the use of effective practice. It will be years before we know if CCSS has made a difference in writing improvement for SWD (Graham & Harris, 2013).

The article by Boyle, Forchelli, and Cariss (2013) addressed note-taking interventions to assist SWD in content areas. The article discussed the demands made on students and their difficulty with taking notes, accommodations for SWD, and ways teachers can assist them. Because writing across the curriculum is required by the CCSS, SWD are required to write across the curriculum as well, which means they have to do writing assignments in every subject matter. This article is related to this study because it addresses the required aspect of writing for career or college readiness and the challenges SWD are experiencing in achieving writing expectations.

Cassidy and colleagues (2016) authored an article to provide historical content on the results of the CCSS on struggling readers. Their research went back 20 years and included the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery program and its emphasis on individual growth. Between the years 2005 and 2011, literacy coaches and reading specialists were highly used and were popular. Around 2012 schools shifted to paying for the best programs rather than employing additional people. It was also around this time that researchers came to understand that difficulty in reading was not limited to any specific age, gender, or socioeconomic status. With this knowledge, reading instruction for struggling readers in Grade 4 and above became a focus (Cassidy et al., 2016). There were particular concerns as to harmful effects experienced by students, such as homelessness, learning disabilities, or uncaring caretakers. The rigor of CCSS cannot

supersede these things, and such students may be unable to meet the rigorous expectations.

The article by Roberts (2016) was also in response to the article by Cassidy and colleagues (2016). They agreed that the ultimate priority for all educators was to improve the writing and reading ability of children who have a wide range of academic needs. Their article was in response to the main article. Several responses are included in this literature review (Alvermann & Jackson, 2016; Elish-Piper, 2016).

Halladay and Moses (2013) reported that the CCSS has challenges for all students, especially struggling readers. The effect of the CCSS on teaching and learning is not clear. Research on CCSS was still in the beginning stages when the article was written. More information on student achievement will develop over time (Halladay & Moses, 2013). The purpose of this article was to suggest some instructional practices that are evidence based. The focus was on complex text for struggling readers, which begins in elementary school. There were suggestions for teachers to choose text that was motivating and persistent, including connections to cultural diversity. This gives the students a chance to apply their own background knowledge and life experiences (Halladay & Moses, 2013).

Saunders et al. (2013b) discussed the CCSS as to ELA and explained how they were organized into two sections (one containing the standards for kindergarten through Grade 5 and one for Grades 6 through 12) intended to guide learning for all students including those with disabilities. Because CCSS is a set of content standards that target readiness for college and career participation for all students, the article by Saunders and

colleagues (2013b) offered suggestions on how to align ELA lessons to the CCSS. CCSS represents what is to be taught in ELA, but does not provide guidance on how to teach the content especially for students with severe disabilities (Saunders et al., 2013a). Shanahan (2016) explained that the CCSS approach encourages teachers to read text that are beyond the current reading level of the student in an effort to raise student's reading achievement (Shanahan, 2016). Shanahan suggested it was necessary to have students read harder texts to help improve their success in the future. The CCSS standards does not recognize reading as word recognition and comprehension; rather it takes a deeper view and considers reading to be how students analyze challenging and complex levels of text (Shanahan, 2016). CCSS does not require proficiency with any comprehension strategy or goal. The focus is on how well the students read the text and not that students need to be able to read the text (Shanahan, 2016). Heibert and Mesmer (2013) revealed that many high school graduates are not prepared to read college level text or even the text at the workplace. Over the years kindergarten through 12th grade texts have decreased in complexity. If text complexity is increased in elementary school, it will help close the gap between high school and college level text (Heibert & Mesmer, 2013). Text complexity is highly encouraged in the CCSS. Shanahan (2016) agreed that harder text was better for DWS, and Heibert and Mesmer (2013) felt that SWD should began reading complex text while in elementary school.

O'Conner, Beach, Sanchez, Bocain, and Flynn (2015) did a study on the effects of teaching reading using U.S. history content to 8th grade struggling readers. There were 38 students in the quantitative study. The participants had reading levels between second

and fourth grade. Students were taught to decode multi-syllable words, vocabulary, and cause and effect. The Design Based Research (DBR) method was used. The Building Reading Interventions Designed for General Education Subjects (BRIDGES) intervention took place over three weeks. They read easy text and then bridged to more difficult text on the same topic. The students made gains in vocabulary and comprehension. The end results were positive. The students receiving special education services scored similar to the general education students. My study is related to this article because it shows positive growth using a strategy to improve reading for SWD. It does not state, however, how SWD achieved college or career readiness or whether or not the teachers perceived they would.

Coyne and Koriakin (2017) expressed that reading is one of the most important subjects that a teacher can teach because the ability to read is essential to school success. The most recent version of the Teaching Reading Sourcebook (2013b) is aligned with the CCSS in that the teacher must provide explicit code-based and meaning-based intense reading instruction to meet the needs of all students. Samples of explicit decoding and vocabulary lessons were provided within the article. This article is related to my study because decoding and vocabulary are areas of difficulty for many SWD even though the CCSS calls for Close Reading of complex text.

Graham and Harris (2013), Haager and Vaughn (2013b), and Heibert and Mesmer (2013) made references regarding student progress in reading being dependent upon research-based strategies, which include reading and re-reading, explicit instructions, and scaffolding. There was emphasis put on text complexity and Close Reading. Several of

the authors recommended graphic organizers for the development of reading comprehension. They agreed that basic concepts that are not specifically taught in the CCSS, such as word recognition, vocabulary and comprehension, need to be taught to SWD explicitly with intense instructions for optimal effectiveness.

Baker et al. (2015) stated that the word *all* is used throughout the CCSS to indicate including SWD. Students identified with a disability can benefit from the same instructions as English language learners. Teaching vocabulary appears to be effective with all students when the following is used: consistent and clear instructions, allowing additional time on task, scaffolding activities, multiple meaning words, and use of visual gestures. The authors insisted that teachers can provide differential instruction without simplifying the content to ensure all students achieve in CCSS vocabulary. The authors shared four activities that could be used to instruct students in vocabulary. Graham and Harris (2013), Haager and Vaughn (2013b), and Heibert and Mesmer (2013) were all supportive of Baker and colleagues' article, which has suggestions for teaching ELA concepts.

Reading is a necessary skill that must be mastered in order to be successful in college or the workforce. SWD are expected to meet the requirements upon exiting from high school. The perceptions of teachers will assist policymakers and other educators in knowing whether or not they are on the right path to achieve the desired goal of having SWD attain college or career readiness being instructed with CCSS using strategies as explained above.

CCSS Instruction for SWD

Articles in this section were selected because they explain some of the specialized academic instructions that are provided to SWD. Having knowledge of these available strategies helps the reader to have a better understanding of what the participants are aware of when answering questions regarding their perceptions on the efficacy of CCSS for SWD. The article by Smith and Teasley (2014) is about getting into the classrooms and collaborating with teachers to see how they were implementing the standards within their classrooms and how students were responding to the CCSS. The suggestion for providing access to the CCSS for SWD was not detailed in the document and was very vague (Beals, 2014). Because documentation as to outcomes for students with special needs is important to facilitate improvement (Smith & Teasley, 2014), most states are beginning to embrace standards-based IEP as a way to ensure that special needs students have access to the general education curriculum for their grade level.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) utilizes a wide range of strategies to assist students in obtaining success in meeting expectations. UDL supports all students in having meaningful participation in instruction (Kurth, 2013). Students with learning disabilities often have significate literacy difficulty and can face serious challenges when instruction is framed within CCSS (Haager & Vaughn, 2013b). CCSS offer explicit connections from one set of skills to the other. Many teachers feel that SWD must master life skills before moving on into academics. Special education teachers struggle to make sure IEPs are aligned with the CCSS standards (Samuels, 2013).

The article by Bartlett, Otis-Wilborn, and Sim (2015) was not written to defend or support CCSS but rather to support equal access for SWD. Seven special education teachers were interviewed and asked questions regarding CCSS and the development of IEPs. This article is related to the study because it is about the perceptions of teachers on CCSS for SWD, even though the focus was on developing the IEP to be aligned with CCSS. The article by Konrad et al. (2014) described the value of clarifying learning targets, defining types, and providing strategies and resources to help teachers address the standards and develop learning targets. The article also suggested that teachers ensure students make progress toward mastery when writing learning targets aligned with the CCSS. One way of doing this is to develop measurable learning targets and share the learning target with the students. Emergent research suggested that SWD can succeed with content-aligned, grade-level standards if instruction is explicit and evidence based. The CCSS was an attempt to fulfill the need to increase the rigor of U.S. education in a response to the concern that U.S. students lag behind their international counterparts (Konran et al., 2014).

The Theory of Mind (TOM) was explained in detail, which is the ability to recognize and understand the feelings of others. Strategies such as social stories and comic strip conversations were suggested as effective methods of helping students achieve TOM. For a final thought the authors suggested exploring additional resources, getting more sources of information, and providing samples of activities using the standards (Constable, Grossi, Moniz, & Ryan, 2013). Steps have been made to assist SWD in transitioning using the CCSS. SWD continue to need instruction in skills needed

to be successful in life. The research indicated that it is possible to design instruction to help students acquire skills in both academics and transitional areas of life (Bartholonew, Papay, McConnell, & Cease-Cook, 2015). The article by Bartholonew and colleagues is related to my study because it discusses transition, and my study is questioning the preparedness for SWD to enter college or the workforce.

Caruana (2015) explained the steps to align IDEA (2004), the Council for Exceptional Students standards, the CCSS, and standards-based IEPs to meet the needs of students. Self-determination is one transition skill that is easily taught and has lasting effects in school and post-school outcomes for SWD. Teachers are encouraged to identify multiple strategies that will assist SWD in preparing for college and career readiness (Rowe, Mazzotti, & Sinclair, 2015).

Testing to the CCSS standards is another issue altogether. Rowe and colleagues (2015) explained that a teacher in New York stated in the first year of administering the state test his students became overwhelmed, broke into tears, froze up, and ran out of time.

CCSS and Writing

Although writing was slightly covered under ELA, there was a large amount of research specific to writing; therefore this section addresses CCSS and writing for SWD. Hall, Hutchinson, and White (2015) conducted a quantitative study with 250 kindergartens through 12th-grade teachers from eight different states. The study examined the perceptions of the teachers on how prepared they were to teach writing using CCSS, the barriers in implementing the standards, and the negative and positive

effects of CCSS implementation. The study revealed that answers varied with significant differences between geographical areas and schools with a large number of students receiving free or reduced lunch and those with low numbers of receiving free or reduced lunch. This study reported in this article is related to my study because both studies sought the perceptions of teachers. This article was specific to teaching writing using CCSS; whereas, my study was seeking teacher perceptions in general regarding how CCSS helped students be ready for college or a career.

The Digital Media Project (DMP) is the use of graphic organizers, prompts, and multiple meanings of expression and engagement. Using DMP connects technology and literacy across the curriculum for all students. The CCSS establishes high expectations and allows students to gain confidence in their writing (Butler et al., 2013). Digital writing instructions includes writing, listening, reading, and collaborating. DMP uses graphic organizers and other writing strategies to assist SWD to access the writing content and gain confidence in their writing. The article by Butler and colleagues (2013) regarding DMP expressed the uses of graphic organizers like the articles by Ewolt and Morgan (2017) and Sundeen (2014). Butler and colleagues (2013) encouraged the use of technology in instruction as did Coyne, Evan, and Karger (2017), Alnahdi (2014), and Caruana (2015).

Daddona (2013), the author of the article titled “Writing Across the K12 Curriculum” is a previous elementary school principal. She explained her success in implementing a successful writing program. She talked about the importance of vertical planning where the teacher in the grades above and below their own grade communicate

and plan on fluent writing instruction that will allow the students to continue to improve as they advance grades. She also used real-life situations to keep the students motivated. Teachers taught direct writing in the content areas, which helped the students to make the connection rather than write in isolation. The article by Daddona is related to my study because vertical planning is important to ensure SWD are progressing to the next level each year. I am interested in knowing if the participants in my study perceive vertical planning for SWD as a positive step toward obtaining career or college readiness.

Ewoldt and Morgan (2017) explained how important it was for students with learning disabilities (LD) to be able to write a well-structured paragraph. CCSS requires writing in the content areas, as writing is needed for college and career readiness. When students are proficient in written expression, they would have more success in general education classes. For this reason, it is important for students with learning disabilities to have strategies and techniques to assist them with written expression. Students with LD benefit from color-coded graphic organizers, which assist them in making the connection between the prewriting and drafting stages. This scaffolding technique helps students build paragraphs with details and explanations. Written expression is one of the requirements of CCSS, which is related to my study because it is about strategies to help SWD meet CCSS requirements as to writing.

Graham and Harris (2013) suggested four recommendations for writing aligned with the CCSS for SWD. Their recommendations included more training in writing development for both general and special education teachers: (a) having a writing environment that supports the success of SWD, (b) providing evidence-based writing

activities in the general education classrooms where SWD receive instruction, and (c) using evidence-based writing practices that are effective for SWD. The CCSS has new challenges for students with learning disabilities, especially related to writing.

The article by Konrad et al. (2014) described the value of clarifying learning targets by defining types and providing strategies and resources to help teachers address the standards and develop learning targets. The article also suggested that teachers ensure that students make progress toward mastery when writing learning targets are aligned with the CCSS. One way of doing this is to develop measurable learning targets and share the learning target with the students (Konrad et al., 2014). Emergent research suggested that SWD can succeed with content-aligned, grade-level standards if the instruction is explicit and evidence based (Konrad et al., 2014).

The study by Kramer-Vida, Levitt, and Kelly (2012) consisted of nine teachers providing writing workshops to 150 kindergarten students. Anchored standards were used, which are broad college and career ready standards that apply across the grade levels. Using symbols, inventive writing and flexible thinking are developmentally appropriate for new writers. The nine teachers did weekly planning to ensure the kindergarten classes received similar instructions throughout the school year. The writing workshop allowed the teachers to reach the district's writing goal and to implement the CCSS. The year of projected lessons were shown in a table. Sample work of the students was also included. This article supported the idea that SWD can be successful with writing with adequate support.

Students with learning disabilities often struggle with writing. Many of them have difficulty with reading and spelling. The requirement to write makes learning with CCSS more difficult for most students with learning disabilities. Many students have processing deficits, which makes it difficult for them to get their thoughts written down on paper (Wakeman et al., 2013). The article by Boyle and colleagues (2013) addressed note-taking interventions to assist students with learning disabilities (LD) or Educable Mental Retardation (EMR) in content areas. The article discussed the demands made on students and their difficulty with taking notes, accommodations for SWD, and ways teachers can assist them. Nine students in Grades 9 through 12 participated in the AWARE strategy. The results of the study revealed that students who learned to use strategic note-taking skills scored significantly higher than students using the conventional note-taking method. Although improvement was noted, it did not include information on the outcome of improving enough to maintain proficiency for college or career readiness.

The article that addressed writing in kindergarten (Kramer-Vida et al., 2012) was related, because if kindergarten-aged students are able to master a concept, it is very likely that an older student with learning disabilities would be able to master that same concept. The use of graphic organizers and writing about real-life situations were stated as being effective for improving the writing skills of SWD. Color-coded graphic organizers to assist with writing paragraphs was one of the strategies presented. More training for writing development for both general and special education teachers was suggested for continued writing success for students. Explicit anchored instruction and writing across the curriculum were also common writing topics. Teachers were

encouraged to become familiar with standards. Note-taking and vocabulary were other writing concepts discussed.

All aspects of writing have been covered in the various articles beginning with teacher training. If these suggestions are used consistently, SWD may be able to gain useful writing skills to benefit them and help them access the core curriculum to become prepared for career or college. This is related to my study as the various articles addressed the perceptions of teachers as to the actual writing progress of SWD. Because writing is a major part of college curriculum, knowing if SWD are on the right path to achieve academic success is important. Equally important is making the necessary changes and improvements in writing instruction to assist students in being college ready.

CCSS and Teacher Prep

Murphy and Marshall (2015) did a collective case study of pre-service teachers and professors from five colleges and universities located in two southwestern states. In this study, the results showed that one in five teachers felt very prepared to teach CCSS, but only one in 10 felt very prepared to teach CCSS to SWD. Although teachers felt prepared to use the CCSS, they were not as confident with certain student populations, such as SWD or ELL (Burks et al., 2015). In the study by Burks and colleagues, it was determined that less than 50% of all school districts provided professional development in CCSS to the teachers. Although 55% stated that they received insufficient training, 57% of educators stated that they were comfortable to extremely comfortable teaching the CCSS curriculum. Furthermore, it was disclosed that 21% of entry-level college students needed remedial classes and that 75% of all American universities offer remedial

classes. His topic and these articles were included in my study, because of the level of confidence that teachers related as to their ability to provide CCSS instruction, which has an effect on their perceptions.

UDL and SWD

There was a large amount of research related to UDL. It is one of the conceptual frameworks used in this study. A discussion is included here to explain in more details how UDL benefit SWD. Coyne and colleagues (2017) expressed that there was limited research on the effectiveness of the benefits of UDL for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Their experimental study reviewed the benefits of using the UDL framework using Udio for middle school students. Udio is the use of technology for digital literacy. It is intended to improve reading comprehension. Udio has three main parts: dashboard, explore, and create. The dashboard allows students to see immediate feedback on their activities. Under the Explore tab, there are articles with topics related to teen experiences such as being bullied or texting and driving. The create tab is a space for students to write, draw, or use an audio recording about what they read. Udio proved to be an effective method for improving student outcomes using UDL.

Ford (2013) compared and explained three different models of inclusive strategies for students with learning disabilities (LD): the co-teaching model, differential instruction, and peer-mediated instructions. The differential instruction model was consistent with the UDL. Their study further showed that students receiving instruction in the pull-out model who received intensified instruction made more progress toward their

goals than those in the inclusive model. Ford reported that full inclusion does not always provide the desired academic results.

McLaughlin (2012) disclosed that students with learning disabilities have a different set of needs than other students. The best way to meet the needs of the SWD is for teachers to understand and apply the UDL, which emphasizes flexible effective ways that students can successfully meet their goals. The five key principles listed for teachers were (a) specialized individual planning; (b) know the difference between accommodations and modifications; (c) use-evidence based practices; (d) measure progress and growth by aligning IEPs to CCSS; and then (e) hire and support the best special education teachers. The study by Coyne, Evans, and Karger (2017) was a qualitative study with 10 students on Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) with intellectual development disabilities and four teachers, three of whom were teacher assistants. The study researched the Udio program for students ages 3 to 14 years old.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is one of the methods suggested to assist SWD to access fully the CCSS. Like Rao and Meo (2016) and Samuels (2013), UDL suggests unwrapping the standards as a way of making it easier for teachers to show how they were aligned to real-life situations. Bell, Smith, and Basham (2016) stated that the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was used to include SWD in the challenge of meeting the demands of the CCSS. This co-teaching model consisted of a virtual general education teacher along with a face-to-face special education teacher. Aligning instruction to the CCSS was a new experience for many of the special educators working with students on the high school level. The blended learning experience was new to both

educators. The face-to-face teachers were not accustomed to the content, and the virtual teachers were unfamiliar with working with SWD. In an attempt to include SWD in accessing the CCSS, Bell and colleagues (2016) used a blended learning model. This included UDL along with co-teaching and ongoing collaboration between a virtual teacher and a face-to-face special education teacher.

Kurth (2013) explained a unit-based approach for the inclusive classrooms. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) utilizes a wide range of strategies to assist all students in obtaining success in meeting expectations. UDL supports all students in having meaningful participation in instruction (Kurth, 2013). Smith and Lowrey (2017) looked at extending the knowledge of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to include students with intellectual disabilities (ID). Because the promise of full access to the education curriculum has not been met for students with ID, the authors agreed that the use of the UDL framework was a proactive method for assisting students with ID in meeting the requirements of the CCSS. Smith and Lowrey (2017) suggested future research in the area of including UDL. Smith and Lowrey also suggested that UDL will improve both school- and post-school outcomes in employment and community access for SWD.

The UDL appears to be the formula for effective instruction for SWD. It seems to have all the necessary components of the appropriate instruction for SWD: co-teaching, scaffold instructions, intense instruction, and the use of technology. The research is limited on the results of using it. As more time passes, research will be done to determine

the actual full effect of UDL with SWD. Participant teachers in the study did reveal the use of UDL when providing instruction to SWD.

UDL and Technology

Technology is a way of bridging the gap to assist SWD in accessing the curriculum. When participants express their perceptions on the benefits of the CCSS for SWD, they may have knowledge of the technology that is described in this section. This section explains some of the benefits provided to SWD using technology. Alnahdi (2014) presented an article about the benefits of assistive technology in UDL. Technology can assist SWD to improve their independence academically and in employment tasks. The author suggested that it can be more effective to use existing available technology rather than focus on technology that is specific to SWD. For example, the author explained that using an iPad Touch can provide all the same benefits as a SMART Board, the Kursweil 3000 software, a laptop, and a flash drive at a much more economical price.

The use of technology is part of the 21st century skills. Technology can assist SWD in accessing the curriculum in several ways, for example, audio books read from the computer can be manipulated by the user to re-read a portion of the text or explain a vocabulary word. Text-to-speech can be used by students to have any text read to them. Speech-to-text allows a student to speak the text so as to have text written from what is said. There are learning APS and programs to assist students in all content areas. The researcher is interested in knowing how teachers perceive technology as assisting SWD in meeting CCSS.

The researcher focused on this aspect as it will provide a broader base to examine the topic under discussion. Moreover, technology plays a vital role in the current changes taking place in the education sector; and even though there is no direct reference in the research question to technology, finding out whether technology has played any role related to the area under investigation would be helpful in broadening the outlook of the researcher, especially when recommendations are made at the end of the study.

UDL and Transition

Transitioning is part of the process required to support SWD in preparation for life after high school. Implications for A special population included SWD, Native American students, and English Language learners. Bartholomew et al. (2015) expressed the connection between transitioning after high school and having followed CCSS instructions. However, the focus on career and college readiness consists of instructions based on the Universal Design of Learning (UDL), instructional accommodations, and the use of assistive technology. SWD need instruction in secondary transition skills as well as academic skills. Transitional skills include daily living skills self-determination skills, and employment skills.

Caruana (2015) explained that the CCSS is a clear and consistent framework aligned with college and workforce expectations to prepare students for life after high school. One of the guiding principles is instructional support based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Another principle is instructional accommodations, which can include various ways of responding, the use of assistive technology, and various ways to interact with materials.

Bartholomew et al. (2015) referenced Conley et al. (2011) who are also cited in this literature review on career readiness. Alnahdi (2014) focused on the benefits of assistive technology, but the articles by Bartholomew et al. (2015) and Caruana (2015) were more focused on using assistive technology to work towards career and college readiness. One of the research questions asked how teachers perceived CCSS was preparing students for transitioning into college or careers after high school. The UDL is an important part of providing instruction to SWD. The research sought to know how special educators perceived UDL in preparing SWD for college or career readiness.

Close Reading

Like the requirement of writing, it was also imperative to understand what is read when attending college. Close Reading is a method of thoroughly analyzing text to determine the full meaning of it (Fang, 2016). It is a strategy used in CCSS. Close Reading is related to this study because SWD are expected to use Close Reading in their assignments. The perceptions of teachers on Close Reading was sought in this study as it is related to student outcomes for SWD using CCSS. Elish-Piper (2016) responded to the article by Cassidy and colleagues (2016). In their response to the Application to Students with Disabilities, they indicated that that did not agree that SWD should be held to the same high standards as students without disabilities unless the SWD are provided with high support to help them reach the standards. They used the word *absurd* to indicate how unrealistic the expectation for SWD to meet the same exact rigorous standards. They highly supported three main positive supports: (a) having a highly qualified literacy support person in each school to assist teachers with professional development in

providing instructions for SDW; (b) providing early and ongoing interventions as needed; and (c) providing strategic, intrinsic support to help SWD meet the standards. They expressed the need of having highly qualified reading teachers available to teach the students how to read so that they can read complex text.

Alvermann and Jackson (2016) also had a response to the article by Cassidy and colleagues (2016). Alvermann and Jackson agreed that literacy coaches should remain in place as a support in schools. They also supported writing across the disciplines because struggling readers are often also struggling writers. Additionally, they discussed Close Reading. Close Reading is analytical reading. Close Reading is extremely difficult for struggling readers who lack background knowledge and have limited vocabulary needed to be successful with the standards. Alvermann and Jackson were supportive of SWD having professional attention to assist them with their reading deficits.

Fisher and Frey (2012) quoted an article by Alder and Van Doren (1940, 1972) where they described Close Reading as an x-ray of the book or as a skeleton hidden between the corners. Close Reading is an instructional method where students critically examine a text usually through repeated reading. The main objective of closed reading is to give the students the opportunity to compare new textual information with their existing background knowledge. The second purpose of Close Reading is to build the habit of reading complex texts. In Close Reading students read and then reread the text several times. These are the four habits students should engage in regularly: (a) identify the purpose of reading the text; (b) determine the author's purpose; (c) develop a personal schema; and (d) consider a genre. Each of these habits is vital to reading, which habits

elementary teachers routinely teach. Snow (2016), on the other hand, considered Close Reading to be an approach to teaching reading comprehension, which requires the student to get meaning from the text by careful examining the passage. Close Reading came about because students were graduating from high school unable to engage in reading complex text required in the workforce or for college.

Close Reading does not take into consideration the students' background knowledge. It is a long drawn-out process that is very time consuming. It can take up to five or six hours to read one assignment. It is difficult for SWD to understand the text without background knowledge; therefore, they will need to use videos, below-grade level text, PowerPoints, lectures, and other sources to assist them in building the knowledge that is needed. Snow (2016) expressed fear that Close Reading may not be the most beneficial for SWD due to the excessive struggle to access it.

Fang (2016) stated that the CCSS expresses the importance of Close Reading, but it does not specifically explain how to teach it. However, being able to select a method to teach students provides the teachers the flexibility to select a model that works best for them and their students. Reading and rereading is one of the methods used. Traditionally, Close Reading was not taught in middle or high school. Students learned to read in elementary school and after that they would read to learn. Because of this, there was a deficit in college reediness for students exiting high school. Fang (2016) referred to Fisher and Frey (2012) on their method of teaching Close Reading. Fang (2016) also made reference to Shanahan (2016) as to CCSS expecting students to do more than just provide correct answers, but to give a source of evidence to justify the answer. Although

Close Reading was being implemented for rigor and complexity, there is not empirical validated research to back up its effectiveness. More work is needed to ensure all students reach the CCSS goals.

Close Reading is a main focus in the CCSS reading standards. Students are expected to dissect the text to reveal in-depth meaning of the context. This is more than just reading between the lines to infer the unspoken words of what the anther is saying, but to discern the underlying reason for the author's message. The rigor and complexity of the text that the students are expected to achieve seem to be an unachievable feat. The researcher examined the perceptions of teachers on this topic.

CCSS and Teacher Training

Burks et al. (2015) in their study reported the perceptions of 35 6th through 12th grade teachers on the implementation of CCSS. A little more than 50% of the teachers interviewed disclosed that they were comfortable or extremely comfortable implementing the CCSS requirements even though they had received limited training. However, they were not confident with particular groups, including SWD. Still considered a relatively new concept, CCSS is expected to prepare students for career, college, and beyond. Some educators were concerned with the overwhelming changes, but realized that many first-year college students were not prepared using the current system that was in place. In the study by Burks et al. (2015), it was determined that less than 50% of all school districts provided professional development in CCSS to the teachers. In addition, 57% of educators stated that they were comfortable to extremely comfortable as to the level of teaching the CCSS curriculum although 55% stated that they received insufficient

training. Furthermore, it was disclosed that 21% of entry-level college students needed remedial classes and that 75% of all American universities offered remedial classes (Butler et al., 2013).

Gewertz (2013) felt that the CCSS standards required a major shift in instruction; that the needed support was not available. There was a scale of one to five on the survey completed by teachers in the study. *Well prepared* was five and *not prepared at all* was one. Approximately, 49% of the teachers rated themselves with one, two, or three. There was a diverse population of participants, which included kindergarten through 12th grade teachers, instructional coaches, and department leaders in various locations, cities, suburbs, rural areas and small towns. Students with learning disabilities and those with limited English proficiency were the ones that teachers felt the most unprepared to teach. Even teachers who had more professional development on CCSS felt less prepared to teach those students. Approximately 60% of teachers who had more than five days of professional development felt prepared to teach low-income students or students academically at risk. Only 40% of teachers who received more than five days of professional development in CCSS felt prepared to teach SWD.

Matlock et al. (2016) explored teachers' views of the Common Core. The researchers agreed that teachers were very valuable in the education equation, yet the perceptions of teachers were not recognized when creating the CCSS. The focus of the study by Matlock et al. (2016) was to gain a better understanding of teachers' views regarding the implementation of CCSS as related to other aspects of teaching. The other aspects of teaching included grade level taught, years of experience, and thoughts as to

leaving the profession. One thousand, three hundred and three surveys (1, 303) were included in the quantitative study. The survey used in the study had 66 items.

Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, and Kiely (2015) reviewed the most effective framework for preparing special education teachers. The authors agreed that rigorous core instructions were essential to the progress of SWD. They also agreed that special and general education teachers must enter the classroom prepared to provide rigorous instructions to SWD. Some of the effective strategies included scaffolding, structured tutoring, peer coaching, and maximizing the use of technology.

Jenkins and Agamba (2013) focused on six main features to identify quality professional development. The six features are (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) duration, (d) collective participation, (e) coherence, and (f) alignment. The stakes are high for the CCSS. Effective professional development is the key to ensuring learning and achievement for the students. Teacher change has an effect on student learning and student performance. Effective professional development is the precursor for improved student performance. One thing that all of these articles had in common was teachers did not feel prepared for teaching CCSS to SWD even after they had professional development training.

CCSS and Teacher Perception

Murphy and Marshall (2015) did a collective case study of preservice teachers and professors from five colleges and universities located in two southwestern states. In this study the results showed that one in five teachers felt very prepared to teach CCSS, but only one in 10 felt very prepared to teach CCSS to SWD. The article only had four

references listed, but all were within the five-year period from 2011-2016. Although teachers felt prepared to use the CCSS they were not as confident with certain student populations such as SWD or with ELL (Murphy & Marshall, 2015). Focus groups were used. The focus group interviews revealed four main themes for the group. It was suggested that institutes of higher learning that determine if changes need to be made to their programs should include CCSS and barriers in addressing CCSS. Questionnaires and interviews (both face-to-face and telephone) were used to gather information. Coding was used to identify related themes.

Murphy and Torff (2015) stated because tests were recently aligned to the CCSS, it is not known how it affects the performance of teachers and students. Teachers may perceive that they lack the ability to effectively teach SWD x. This study was conducted in 2012 after the first year that CCSS was in place. There were 370 teachers from seven public elementary schools included in the study. One of the questions was related to the perceptions of special education students before and after the implementation of CCSS.

Stern (2016) conducted a qualitative study to make sense out of the CCSS. Stern used the sense of making theory and inquiry as a stance for conceptual frameworks. Inquiry is a grounded theory of action. It has four dimensions: knowledge, practice, inquiry communities, and democratic purposes and social justice. Inquiry as stance is built on the premise that educators are active participants in knowing what to teach and why. Data were collected using observation and interviews. The sense of making theory has three components: individual cognition, situated cognition, and policy representation. Their article researched CCSS, NCLB, and Expeditionary Learning schools. There is

limited empirical research as to educators' responses to the effects of CCSS (Stern, 2016).

Nadelson, Pluska, Moorcroft, Jeffrey, and Woodard (2014) stated that there was a gap in the literature on the knowledge and perceptions of educators as to CCSS. They stated that the knowledge and perceptions of teachers were crucial for successful implementation of CCSS because of educators' level of impact on instruction. The article by Nadelson et al. (2014) told of conducting a quantitative study where they surveyed 323 teachers on their perceptions and knowledge of CCSS using Survey Monkey. All these authors discussed the perceptions of teachers as it related to implementing CCSS, not their perceptions on the outcomes or whether not it was meeting the intended goal of preparing SWD for college or career readiness.

The perception of teachers is important for establishing future guidelines for instruction. None of the articles listed in this section provided the perceptions of the outcomes CCSS has on the learning of SWD after it was implemented and used over time. It is expected that the results of my study will provide information on how teachers perceived the CCSS are working for SWD to prepare them for career or college readiness. The gap in the literature exist because research on the progress of SWD toward reaching career or college readiness in limited. Additionally, the research on the perceptions of teachers as to whether or not SWD is on track to achieve the desired goal of career or college readiness is limited.

Summary and Conclusions

Literature from 2013 to 2018 was collected and reviewed for this literature review. All of the literature was related to CCSS in regards to SWD. A brief history and development of CCSS were also included. There were articles relating to methods and suggestions of how to provide effective instruction to SWD. These articles were included because some of the strategies used may have been experienced by the teachers being interviewed in the study. There were some studies conducted in the later years, but the majority of the articles in the early years were informational in nature rather than the result of a study.

CCSS is still new and in the beginning years of implementation. It was implemented seven years ago, and no student has completed their entire primary and secondary education using CCSS. Articles presented included those on CCSS and mathematic, CCSS with ELA, the Universal Design for Learning, Close Reading, teachers' perceptions, and SWD. There were not any overwhelming results. Nothing provided input on the perceptions of teachers as to the effectiveness of CCSS on SWD for college or career readiness.

This study is a qualitative case study. The participants were selected from schools in the High Desert Section in California. The researcher was interested in knowing if SWD are making adequate progress toward college and career readiness using CCSS. The articles and studies within this literature review did not provide information on the perceptions of the teacher regarding college or career readiness for SWD. Also, there were no articles specifically relating to the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness for college and career readiness using CCSS for SWD. Several of the studies suggested

that students made progress as a result of the various strategies prescribed within the articles. Likewise many of the articles suggested activities and strategies helped SWD make progress when teachers in conjunction used the CCSS. These articles provided background information on several topics related to the CCSS. There is a gap in the literature that answers the question regarding the perceptions of teachers on the college and career readiness for SWD using CCSS.

After a thorough review of the literature related to this study it has been determined that there is a gap in the literature. There were many activities, suggestions, plans, and steps provided for assisting SWD to access the CCSS. However, the outcome for student success as to the CCSS being effective as to helping SWD with career and college readiness remains unanswered. The perceptions of the educators who work with SWD on the effectiveness of CCSS for college and career readiness remain empowered. These are the questions that this study sought to answer.

The majority of the authors of these articles were in agreement on the topics they researched and wrote about. One of the major disagreements was several of the articles stated that the CCSS would be appropriate for SWD to gain access to the CCSS if they received explicit instructions using evidence-based instruction (Bryant & Bryant, 2017; Dougherty et al., 2017) to name a few. Elish-Piper (2016) completely disagreed with the aforementioned authors. She stated that it was unrealistic, even going as far as to use the word *absurd* to expect SWD to fully access CCSS and become college and career ready. She did not feel this was possible even with explicit instructions and evidence-based instruction.

Jimenez and Staples (2015) wrote about the professional development of teachers preparing to teach CCSS. Hall and colleagues (2015) reported that the perceptions of teachers varied according to their geographical location, the grade level being taught, and the socioeconomic level of the students. Gewertz (2013) showed that teachers were unprepared to teach CCSS, especially to SWD even after having extended training on doing so. Cassidy et al. (2016) and Coyne et al. (2017) both advocated for the continued support of struggling readers. That was their focus even though the trend is now more focused on text complexity and Close Reading (Alvermann & Jackson 2016; Fang, 2016; Halladay & Moses, 2013; Heibert & Mesmer, 2013; Shahahan, 2016).

Technology was the focus of the articles by Alnahdi (2014) and Anderson and Anderson (2014). They agreed that the use of existing technology such as laptops and iPads with programs and apps would work well for SWD and that it was not necessary to pay for the more expensive technology items that are made for SWD. Coyne et al. (2017) suggested the Udio program for middle school students with SWD. Fraser (2013) and Alvermann and Jackson (2016) highly recommended the use of literacy coaches to assist teachers with meeting the needs of SWD in the CCSS.

The articles ranged from kindergarten level to high school. The majority of the articles were about elementary school students. There were articles related to reading, writing, transitioning, and math. Writing covered note-taking and planning, using graphic organizers, including color-coded graphic organizers. Graphic organizers were suggested for reading, writing, and math. The Universal Design for Learning was a common thread with many of the articles. In this study, teachers' perceptions were examined relating to

the areas of reading, writing, transitioning, math, note-taking, graphic organizers and the Universal Design for Learning. All of these areas are major issues that are related to teaching SWD.

The topics in Chapter 2 included CCSS and math, CCSS and ELA, and also explained how some teaching methods are provided to SWD. The Universal Design for Learning and Close Reading were also discussed in Chapter 2. Additionally, teacher training and teacher perception were also included. The content in Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology of the study. A qualitative case study was conducted to seek the answers to the research questions. Chapter 3 includes the introduction, the role of the researcher, the rationale for the sample selected, data analyses, and the summary of the chapter.

Chapter 3

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology that I adopted in this study. My purpose in this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of special educators on the efficacy of teaching students with learning disabilities using CCSS. Because CCSS was implemented 7 years ago and no students have completed kindergarten through 12th grade being instructed in CCSS, the research was limited on outcomes for SWD becoming college or career ready being instructed with CCSS standards. The benefits of CCSS as well as the negative and positive influences are yet to be established for SWD. Educators need to know how the students benefit and the best way to ensure they are getting the maximum benefit from instruction. To obtain this information, it is vital that researchers gain the perspectives of instructors who work with this population of students (SWD). The purpose of the CCSS, which was released in 2010, was to align kindergarten- through 12th-grade state standards into one unified set. The intent was for students to exit high school prepared to enter either college or the workforce (Best & Cohen, 2013). This study was needed to determine whether the CCSS were providing the intended outcomes for SWD, which is preparing them for career and college readiness.

The major sections in this chapter include the research design with the rationale for the design, the role of the researcher, measures to protect the participants, and the methodology that explains the recruitment process and the participants. It also includes instrumentation and issues of trustworthiness, and it ends with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

I constructed three research questions to obtain the data I was seeking in the study. Subsequently, I used the research questions to guide the study:

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' views about the benefits that students with learning disabilities derive from Common Core instructions?

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness?

Research Question 3: What do teachers perceive to be the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities?

The central concept of this study was the perception of teachers. I asked for their perception on CCSS and SWD. I conducted this study so that I could determine whether CCSS is serving the purpose of preparing SWD for career or college readiness according to the perceptions of special education teachers. Linking CCSS and SWD was important because knowing and understanding how CCSS works best for SWD is beneficial for providing optimal instruction to SWD in the future. Because special educators provide instruction to SWD, it was practical to obtain their input on the process and gather their views on the potential outcome for SWD achieving career or college readiness. Knowing this information can assist educators to know whether instruction should continue as currently being provided or if making adjustments to instruction was needed.

Qualitative research is used to explore a phenomenon in depth (Patton 2002). In a qualitative study, the researcher looks for the meaning and understanding of the everyday lives of people by collecting data in a natural setting and finding common themes (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002). Within the qualitative framework, various approaches are used to collect data. The qualitative approaches are phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The case study design was selected for this study to understand the perceptions of educators. Yin (2014) stated that case study design allows the researcher to gain meaningful insights as to the perceptions of the participants. Rubin and Rubin (2005) too indicated that case study approach will help to uncover the perceptions of the participants.

An empirical investigation of a phenomenon or case can be conducted within a real-life setting using a case study (Yin, 2014). The case study method studies individuals as a unit and develops rich and comprehensive understandings about people (Stake, 1995). The majority of the data comes from documentation, participant observation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). How and why questions are the type of questions asked when a case study strategy is preferred (Yin, 2014). Interviews are used to gather the most genuine responses from the participants. Case study research can close perceived gaps and provide a better understanding of concerns (Yin, 2014).

The rationale for this qualitative study was to gain information on what teachers thought about students with learning disabilities being instructed using the CCSS. This qualitative case study delved into the insight on educators' perceptions by allowing them

to express their feelings regarding SWD using CCSS to become career and college readiness. Gaining the perspectives of educators allowed positive changes in future instructions to benefit SWD. In this qualitative case study design, I used interviews, observations, work samples, and photographs of projects to understand the perceptions of the participants.

Phenomenology research helps the researcher to identify the essence of meanings related to the way which human beings experience the phenomenon. Phenomenology emphasizes the common experiences for a group of individuals (Creswell, Hanson, & Clark, 2007). Although all the participants in this study will have had experience working with SWD using CCSS their experiences may be very difference and would not be a phenomenon. Phenomenology is not suitable for this study. Narrative research is an approach that typically focuses on the lives of individuals and told through their own stories. It is used when detailed stories are helpful in understanding the problem. The narrative research approach is not suitable for this study, because personal detailed stories of one or two individuals will not provide the information that the researcher is seeking. Grounded theory research is used to generate, create, or develop a theory, a process or an action that is grounded in the data (Creswell et al., 2007). Grounded theory was not suitable for this study because the researcher is not looking to do multiply interview of each participant to generated a theory from the data. In ethnography research, the researcher is immersed into the culture of the participants and their daily lives to get the full experience of the culture (Creswell et al., 2007). This was not an ethnographic study because it is not limited to gathering information on a particular society or culture. The

researcher was not interested in becoming immersed in the daily lives of the participants or spending extended time in the field to get the lived experience of the participants. Therefore, ethnography was not suitable for this study.

Before the qualitative framework and the case study approach were selected for this study, the researcher also considered whether quantitative and mixed methods research designs could be adopted for this study. Quantitative research studies use historical and statistical data (Creswell et al., 2007). Quantitative studies can be experimental or non-experimental and can compare the results of one group to another group with a different variable. Quantitative research can be done with surveys to collect information to get statistical data from a sample of the population being studied. Therefore, using quantitative research was not suitable for this study because there was no interest in gathering statistical data. The researcher is interested in how the participants perceive SWD being instructed with CCSS and this cannot be measured with numbers.

Using both qualitative and quantitative in the mixed methods approach is useful when both numerical and text data are being collected for a better understanding of the concept being studied (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006). A mixed method study was not suitable for this study because quantitative data was not needed for this study. Creswell et al. (2006) stated that mixed methods studies allow the researcher to use varied approaches to putting the research in both social and historical context. Therefore taking into consideration the characteristics of the qualitative research design, it was

selected as the best framework that should be utilized for this study using the case study approach.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher worked closely with the participants in the study to collect qualitative data. Therefore, caution was taken to protect the participants and their rights and to ensure that the study was dependable (Creswell & Miller, 2000). After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted, the superintendents from the selected school districts were contacted by e-mail and asked for permission to contact teachers. After the superintendents returned my e-mail with permission to contact their teachers, the teachers were contacted via e-mail asking them if they were willing to participate in the study. The interview included 11 questions that were related to the study's research questions. The interviewer was an active listener, obtained informed consent from the participants, and ensured that the participants knew that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interview process.

The researcher worked in one of the school districts that participants in the study were recruited from. There were 16 elementary schools in the district with 37 special education teachers. There was nothing more than a professional working relationship with any of the potential participants. There was no direct contact, shared work experiences, or collaborative opportunities existing between the participants and the researcher. Co-workers of the researcher who worked directly with the researcher were not be participants in this study. This prevented the researcher's opinions from being subjected to the study. Researcher bias was limited to the extent that the researcher has

over 20 years of experience working in the field of special education and also had extensive training in the area of special education. Also, even though the researcher had been trained in CCSS, she did not directly instruct SWD using CCSS. Therefore, she did not form an opinion for or against the potential results. There was no power relationships involved because the participants were selected based on the list provided by school administrators. There was no personal involvement or interactions with anyone outside the immediate circle of co-workers; those within this circle did not participate in the study. To prevent any anticipated of foreseen ethical issues biases or preconceptions, the researcher used bracketing by keeping a journal and recording any bias or conflict noted. Bracketing is the process of addressing researcher bias by having the researcher set aside personal experiences, biases, and previous research findings. The researcher used bracketing by discussing the information with fellow researchers, writing memos, and keeping a refection journal, which was used throughout the process and is included in the final research report.

Qualitative interviewing is a process of asking and answering questions, which occur during conversions between the researcher and interviewee. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) explained that the primary purpose of qualitative interviews is to gather interpretations and not to locate facts or laws. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) described the importance of using the perspectives of the participants to understand the process and how it is relevant to qualitative interviewing. By allowing the teachers in this study to express their views and ideas during the interview process, the researcher was able to

gain useful information about the effectiveness of the strategies and instruction used for SWD.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

In this study, the population was special education teachers who instructed students with learning disabilities using the CCSS. The participants were individual teachers who worked with students in various special educational settings such as Special Day Class (SDC), Resource Specialist Program (RSP), and Severe Handicap (SH), and could provide information on their views and explain strategies and ideas that they used to assist SWD in achieving their goals using CCSS. A strategic selection process was used to choose participants because research can be large and complex (Glesne, 2006). Purposive sampling was used because the participants had to meet specific criteria, which was limited to teachers in the area meeting the required criteria. The participants were selected only from the teachers in the area. The High Desert is an urban area of Southern California. All participants had experience teaching SWD using CCSS in fourth through eighth grades. The process of selecting the participants began by requesting a list of special education teachers from the school district administration. The superintendent in each school district was contacted in order to request permission for referrals of approximately eight special education teachers. To avoid bias or coercion all the teachers on the list who taught on the east side of the freeway were sent emails to request their kind participation. Teachers with less than three years of teaching experience were included in the participants because Common Core was adapted in the area three years

ago. The researcher wanted the participants to be familiar with the curriculum before the implementation of Common Core. Also, teachers had to gain enough teaching experience to understand how CCSS impacts SWS. To ensure a richer study, teachers with success in working with SWD were highly preferred. If ample recruits were not obtained through the emailing process, snowball sampling was adopted. Snowball sampling was only done if more participants were needed after getting email responses from willing participants.

The sample selection criteria for this study was as follows: (a) teachers currently teaching in one of the school districts located in the selected area of California, in Grades 4 through 12; (b) teachers who have been identified as being the most successful in working with SWD were preferred; (c) teachers with at least three years of experience and having worked at least one year prior to the implementation of CCSS were preferred. Eight teachers were interviewed. Qualitative sample size should be large enough to obtain a representation of all perceptions. At the point of saturation, all perceptions were expected to be obtained. A study by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggested six interviews may be sufficient to enable meaningful themes and useful interpretations.

This study included eight interviews. Data were collected from the eight interviews with the selected participants. After a brief overview of the data, the researcher conducted a few follow-up discussions to clarify any unclear issues. If a participant withdrew from the study, an alternative participant was used. Data were not used from a participant who withdrew from the study. Potential replacement participants were selected prior to data collection. Four additional participants were identified only to

be used if a selected participant withdrew from the study. The alternative participants understood that they would only be asked to participate if needed.

Once the teacher participants agreed to participate in the study, they were contacted via email or by telephone to schedule a convenient date and time to conduct the interview. A brief overview of the purpose of the study was explained to the participants during the recruitment process. Additionally, the participants were provided a brief overview of the researcher, such as educational background and work experiences in special education. The participants had a chance to ask questions concerning the study and review the informed consent form prior to signing. Furthermore, participants were asked to sign the form for permission to audiotape the interview.

I observed teachers in their regular classroom settings providing instructions to SWD using CCSS. Observing the teachers providing the instruction supported the interview data. It allowed a better understanding of how the instruction was delivered differently to SWD than to general education students (students without learning disabilities). The student work specimens that I collected were a tangible enforcement of how the students were progressing with the various academic concepts specifically writing and math. I heard about the information in the interviews, saw it in the observations, and then both saw as well as felt the tangible result from the student work specimens. Photographs of student work were used when it is was not feasible to collect the actual work sample.

Instrumentation

The interview protocol was developed by the researcher to address the research questions and the gap in the literature. The questions were specific to the information being sought regarding the dissertation topic. The interview protocol was useful in obtaining the requested information. A pilot study was conducted using the interview protocol and was effective in obtaining the desired information. The original interview protocol used in the pilot study had eight questions. Three more questions were added to ensure all aspects of the research questions were covered in the interview protocol.

Data were collected using the interview protocol, which is listed in Appendix A. The questions were field tested through the pilot study. The interviews were audio recorded. When interviews were given, two forms of audio recording were done as well. The Smart Recorder App was used on the smart phone and a digital recorder was the secondary source. The interview protocol was designed to seek the answers needed for the study. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcribed interview for content and accuracy and provide corrections when needed. The interview protocol and a chart explaining how the interview questions were related to the research questions are found in Appendix A and Appendix C.

Observations and field notes are used by qualitative researchers to see and record firsthand information of the activities that the selected participants indulge in (Ravitch et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers often use observation data for triangulation purposes as well. I used observational data to validate information collected from the interviews. Therefore, my observations were mostly in the form of field notes. The observation

document presented in Appendix B is simple and was used by the researcher to observe the teacher participants in their natural setting and to jot down what was observed to transfer them into my field notes. This was done at the end of each day. This helped me to contextualize and understand the teacher activities. I reviewed my field notes over time and it enabled me to gain insight about the exact realities prevailing in the classrooms and the role teachers play.

However, at the same time I was aware of the limitations that the data could derive results because of the possibilities of inferences. Therefore, I recorded my field notes very systematically. The notes were very descriptive with all the details recorded in writing. In addition, I made a list of what I needed to observe with focus on the research questions and the theoretical framework before each observation session. During the observations I captured the social interactions as well. However, as a precautionary measure I practiced my observational skills through practices before I embarked on this study.

Student work samples related to the CCSS instruction were collected to help the analysis of the concepts being taught. After the planned observations were completed, it was easier to determine which samples of student work should have been collected. Because writing is a major component of CCSS, the researcher collected work samples including papers showing students explaining math problems using model drawings and written assignments showing how students explained how they understood a particular concept. Photographs of student projects were taken and used as a data source, because adequate space was not available to store actual projects.

Pilot Study

This instrument was developed specifically by the researcher for educators teaching CCSS to SWD and was used in the pilot study. The interview protocol was designed by the researcher in fall of 2016 and was only used for the mini study (pilot study) at that time. It proved to be very effective for the mini study and was also appropriate for the current study. The researcher designed the interview questionnaire and used it in a mini study in a doctoral class. Recruitment for the pilot study was limited to the students in the qualitative research class at the time, out of which four participants met the criteria of having worked with SWD, using CCSS. One of the participants was an administrator.

Content validity was established during the pilot study based on the responses to the protocol. All of the questions were directly related to working with students. The purpose of the pilot study was to gain experience with email response interviews, telephone interviews, and to monitor the effectiveness of the interview protocol. The pilot study was conducted completely via telephone. The distance ranged from one state to another state and to another country. Based on the time differences and schedules of the participants, Skype interviews were not feasible. The pilot study was related to the actual study because the same information was sought from educators with experience working with SWD using CCSS. One difference was that more participants were used in the actual study and the participants would have had more time to gain experience using CCSS with SWD.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The interviews were conducted using an interview protocol created by the researcher (See Appendix A). Each interview took approximately an hour for each participant. During the interviews, the focus was on getting the participants' perceptions of their students, the students' instruction and progress, their struggles, and their concerns. The participants' responses to the questions provided information as to their perceptions of the effectiveness of CCSS for SWD in their classes. The data received from each interview was reviewed immediately instead of waiting for all interviews to be completed before conducting the analysis. At the conclusion of each interview, the participants were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview for the purpose of member checking. Participants had the opportunity to read the scripted results and agree to the accuracy of their input for validity.

The observations were conducted during regular school hours in the special education classroom setting of each participant. Patton (2015) indicated that reviewing existing, relevant, and contextual documents was another important step in the data collection and analysis process of any study. Researchers (e.g. Patton, 2015) have identified different kinds of documents that could exist in a research context. The documents that are referred to as naturally occurring documents are already there in the research context. In this research context it was my contention that there could be artifacts like teacher notes, student work specimens (e.g. scrapbooks, writings), and even official documents that would be helpful in understanding the context. Details of all these were included at the data analysis.

Data were collected through an in-depth interview process, observations of the participants providing CCSS instructions to SWD, and student work specimens consisting of work samples and photographs of lessons and projects. The interviewees in this study understood that their input had value to the research study. The qualitative interview design allowed questions to be asked to find common traits that revealed important aspects of instruction that occur within special education classrooms across several districts. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated that conversations are used in qualitative interviewing to elicit in-depth information about the research topic. The researcher elaborates and follows up on responses given by the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Gubrium and Holstein (2002) described qualitative case study research as a design with interviewing as the primary method of data collection, which along with observations are the two methods of qualitative inquiry. Weiss (1994) described using interviews in the qualitative case study as a fundamental method for learning about the experiences of others. Interviews remain the most common instrument for collecting date in qualitative research. The strategies commonly used to conduct interviews in case studies are interviewing of participants, peer reviewing, debriefing, member checking, triangulating data, and using rich, thick descriptions to write up the research (Glesne, 2006).

Qualitative interviewing is a process of asking and answering questions, which occur during conversions between the researcher and interviewee. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) explained that the primary purpose of qualitative interviews is to gather interpretations and not to locate facts or laws. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) described the importance of using the perspectives of the participant to understand the process and how

it is relevant to qualitative interviewing. By allowing the teachers in this study to express their views and ideas during the interview process, the researcher gained useful information about the effectiveness of the strategies and instruction used for SWD.

Member checking is a method for participants to validate the data. Member checking was used in this study to increase the credibility and validity of the data. Participants were provided with the transcript and given the opportunity to review it prior to the debriefing session. The participants were asked to confirm and reconfirm the accuracy of their input. The follow-up appointments were tentatively set at the time of the original interview. The researcher explained the importance of ensuring accuracy to the participants.

The researcher collected two to three work samples of each student from each participant to support their perceptions on the outcome CCSS was having on their students. The participants submitted student work samples that they felt supported their perceptions. Work samples were expected to show students' ability, proficiency, and progress in writing assignments and solving math problems. In some cases a reading assignment was being done. Student projects were photographed. The photographs served as a data source. The purpose of collecting the work samples was to have a visible account of the work SWD were producing using CCSS. Seeing samples of the work being produced assisted in determining the possibility of measuring the progress of students becoming career or college ready.

Data Analysis Plan

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described data analysis as the process of moving from the data received in the interviews to evidence-based interpretations. The first phase of data analysis consisted of preparing the transcripts of the interviews, finding common concepts, and investigating themes. In order to obtain conclusions in the second phase, the concepts and themes from the different teachers were compared as they related to the research questions. Data analyses starts with the first interview and continues until the study is completed to ensure the study proceeds correctly (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The data collected were evaluated after each interview to ensure with certainty that the information received was in line with the information that was sought. Glesne (2006) advised beginning data analysis upon collecting data. Therefore, each interview transcript was analyzed with the research questions in mind. The questions were asked as appropriate during the course of the interviews. Participants had the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences and perceptions. Common themes and patterns emerged across the data from the different participants. The data interpretation process began after all interview data were collected.

Creswell et al. (2007) described a process to analyze and interpret collected data, which includes organizing and studying data for possible trends and patterns. The process of coding and arranging data was used for data analysis. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed and the common themes were tracked. The data were compared and analyzed. As previously stated, the data collection and data analysis were conducted simultaneously to allow for redirection of questions if needed for data collection (Merriam, 2002). The

observations were also reviewed and analyzed. Because additional parental permission is needed to video tape the students in the classroom, no video recordings were done. The observation focused on the teacher.

The responses were examined and considered for common themes and concepts discovered in the interview responses and the literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Questions on the interview protocol reflected the information sought for from the study's research questions. The individual interviews and audio voice recordings were transcribed. The field notes for both the interviews and the observations taken by the researcher were transcribed. After the data were collected, arranged, and organized, coding was done using the NVivo qualitative data analyses system. Descriptive coding was used to give detailed explanations. Triangulation was used to cross check or verify the truth using two or more sources. Triangulation was used in this study to determine consistency across the data sources and to increase validity. A deeper meaning of the data was gained by using multiple perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Discrepant data was reviewed, considered, and disclosed in the findings. Data collected from all sources were triangulated in order to establish and check the credibility of the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Strategies such as triangulation, member checking, discussing negative cases, presenting thick descriptions, and peer debriefing were utilized. After the transcription was completed, the participants had the opportunity to review the written transcripts. Common ideas, themes, and concepts across all interviews were sorted, compared, and analyzed using NVivo. Concepts and themes across the interviews were compared using

the research questions. Data that did not fit any of the common themes or concepts were also studied to understand if such data, as outliers, were of importance to the study. Follow-up interviews were conducted for the purpose of member checking. Copies of the data were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Data that were kept electronically were passcode protected. All information was confidential. Data were only viewed by the research and the dissertation committee. Names or any other identifying information was not used. All data will be kept for a minimum of five years after the publishing of the dissertation.

Participants were in the local and surrounding school districts. There was no conflict of interest because those working directly with the researcher were not selected as participants in the study. A potential risk included finding adequate time to conduct the interviews and observations without schedule conflicts. An additional risk was the difficulty in gathering an adequate number of student work specimens for the study. Potential benefits included useful data as a result of the study, which benefits will drive future teacher training resulting in better and beneficial instruction to SDWs.

Transferability is when the procedure is fully described and the results of one study can be used with other populations (Miles et al., 2014). The results of this study were expected to be appropriate for similar populations, especially those who are referred to as special populations, such as low academically functioning students, students who are at risk of failure, or students with severe disabilities. The content must be relevant for transferability to occur.

Dependability describes how well the research questions and the study design are aligned (Miles et al., 2014). Dependability is how stable the data is over time with various conditions. Dependability is the ability of the researcher to record accurately the data that are collected and how well the research study can be replicated. Dependability occurs when there is stability and consistency. Detailed notes and quality checks were important to ensure accuracy and were strictly enforced in this study.

Confirmability is the process of explicitly describing the methods and procedures of the study in full details and having the data available for review (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), confirmability needs to be accurate and thorough. To reduce bias in this study, the questions were open-ended and the researcher did not provide her opinions to the participants. The participants were asked to clarify their responses and then check them for accuracy once the researcher had transcribed their responses. Additionally, the researcher used bracketing by keeping a journal and recording any bias or conflict noted.

Reflexivity is the ability to evaluate oneself to prevent bias interpretations. Bracketing is the process of addressing researcher bias by having the researcher set aside personal experiences, bias, and previous research findings. The researcher used bracketing by discussing the information with fellow researchers, writing memos, and keeping a bracketing journal, which was used throughout the process and was included in the final research report.

Ethical Procedures

The agreement to gain access to participants was included in the IRB application. All participants were treated with respect and were informed of all procedures and expectations. The researcher maintained a research diary where memos were kept to note accurate data for each interview. According to Creswell et al. (2007), ethical issues may arise during qualitative data collection and analysis, and also during the dissemination of reports. Creswell et al. (2007) also stated that a researcher must protect the confidentiality of the participants at all times by using numbers or aliases instead of names. Furthermore, Creswell et al. (2007) explained that a qualitative researcher must explain the purpose of the study to the interviewee, and must not deceive the participants in regards to the nature of the study. The researcher was transparent and disclosed all procedures and expectations prior to the interview questioning.

Data were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic data was passcode protected. All information was confidential. Data were only viewed by the research and the dissertation committee. Precautions to hide personal information of the participants were strictly adhered to. All data will be kept for a minimum of five years after the publishing of the dissertation. To ensure all procedures were ethical and the participants were protected, all participants, their school, and school districts were provided with pseudonyms. Only information related to the study was collected from the participants during the interviews. Each school was listed with a pseudo name, and pseudo names were also assigned to all participants and places identified in this study. The participants

were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and their data would not be included in the study and would be destroyed.

Summary

In summary, this was a qualitative case study with eight participants involved in face-to-face interviews, where the researcher asked open-ended questions. The researcher used two forms of audio recording, the smart Recorder App and a digital recorder. The smart Reorder App was used on the cell phone along with a digital recorder, which served as the secondary recording instrument. I also observed the participants in the classroom setting and gathered student work specimens. The participants were professional educators working in the capacity of providing instruction to SWD using the CCSS. This study was important because the findings can influence future instruction for SWD. Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and colleges can benefit from the results by knowing how to change or improve instruction for SWD for optimal success. This chapter, Chapter 3, explains the methodology. The next chapter, Chapter 4, is the step-by-step written explanation of the study's findings.

Chapter 4

Introduction

My purpose in conducting this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of special education teachers regarding the outcomes of CCSS on students with learning disabilities. CCSS were developed to prepare all students including students with SWD, to become career or college ready upon exiting high school (Beals, 2014). I conducted this study to explore teachers' perceptions on SWD meeting CCSS criteria to become college or career ready. This study is important because CCSS has not been around long enough to show if the intended outcome is plausible. Teachers' perceptions on the outcomes of CCSS for SWD are an important part of obtaining current data.

The following research questions guided the study.

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' views about the benefits that students with learning disabilities derive from Common Core instructions?

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities in preparing them for college and career readiness?

Question 3: What do teachers perceive to be the missing components when providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities?

Interview Questions 1 through 3 were all relating to information such as the subject matter the participants taught and their years of teaching experience. This information is displayed in Table 2.

Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview questions that align with research questions	Themes
Research Question 1 What are the teachers' views about the benefit that SWD derive from Common Core instructions.	5) Do you think providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities assist them in reaching grade level proficiency? (6) Do you instruct your students to use Close Reading? What kind of growth have you witnessed in this area?	CCSS Close reading
Research Question 2 How do teachers feel Providing CCSS instruction to SWD is preparing them for college and career readiness?	(4) What specific teaching model or strategies do you use for your instruction? Are you familiar with the Universal Design for Learning? (8) Do you feel that the strategies you adopted using CCSS ae effective with the students? What are your reasons for saying these are effective/not effective?	Teaching models and Strategies Universal design for Learning Effectiveness
Research Question 3 What do teachers feel are the missing components for providing specialized instructions using CCSS to SWD	(9) Do you feel that CCSS is helping all students to reach college or career readiness? Can you please explain the reason for your standing on this issue? (7) What strategies have you used for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities? Do you use graphic organizers or technology? Please explain. (10) Do you have any suggestions which you think would improve CCSS when providing instructions to SWD?	Instructions to students with disabilities Impact of CCSS to reach College and career levels

To address these research questions, I collected data by conducting individual face-to-face interviews, observing teachers while giving instruction, and collecting student work samples from eight special education teachers who had experience with

teaching SWD using CCSS. I then analyzed the data using two conceptual frameworks: the universal design for learning and the zone of proximal development. The rest of this chapter consists of details of the pilot study, setting of the study, participant demographics, data collection strategies, data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and the summary.

Pilot Study

My purpose in this study was to gain experience with email response interviews, telephone interviews, and to monitor the effectiveness of the interview protocol. I designed the interview protocol in fall of 2016 (see Appendix E). All of the questions in the pilot study were related to working with students. Recruitment for the pilot study was limited to the four participants meeting the criteria of having worked with SWD, using CCSS. One of the participants was an administrator. The administrator gave his perspective from the angle of an administrator being trained to implement CCSS with his teachers. The interview protocol was effective for gathering the needed data for the pilot study and it was also appropriate for the final study. The pilot study was conducted via e-mail and telephone interviews. The distances among the participants ranged from one state to several states and as far as to another country. Based on the time differences and schedule of the participants, Skype interviews were not feasible. The pilot study was closely related to the actual study because both studies sought the same information from educators with experience working with SWD using CCSS.

Setting

I conducted the study using teachers from six schools located in the High Desert Area of Southern California. The schools were in two different school districts. I included four participants from each district. I interviewed four elementary school teachers, two junior high school teachers, and two high school teachers. I interviewed each teacher in their individual classrooms except one teacher who was interviewed at a local coffee shop. The classroom settings where the interviews were conducted were quiet and free from distractions. The coffee shop had music playing in the background and occasionally other noises, like the sound of a blender could be heard. The participant who was interviewed at the coffee shop had previously provided student work samples and I had observed her teaching, but she was not available for the interview while school was in session due to her schedule.

Demographics

All eight participants who volunteered for the study met the criteria for selection of the participants as described in the email invite. The teachers had between 5 and 26 years of teaching experience. Seven of the participants were female and one was a male. There were two African Americans, two Hispanics, and four White teachers. There were three resource specialist program (RSP) teachers and five special day class (SDC) teachers (Table 2).

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

No.	Gender	School level	ToC	Grade	Subject	YT
1	Female	Elementary	SDC	4	Reading	10
2	Female	Elementary	RSP	5 & 6	Reading	26
3	Female	Elementary	SDC	5 & 6	Math	16
4	Female	Elementary	RSP	4-6	Math	6
5	Female	Jr. high	SDC	7 & 8	Math	5
6	Female	Jr. high	RSP	8 & 9	English	10
7	Male	High school	SDC	11	English	22
8	Female	High school	SDC	9-11	English	5

Note. Participants are listed in order of grade level. ToC indicated the type of class. YT is the number of the years the participant has been teaching.

Data Collection

I received the approval to conduct the research on Tuesday, May 22, 2018. The assigned IRB number is 05-17-180036760. After obtaining the approval of the IRB, participants selected for the study were observed in the classrooms when providing instructions to students with learning disabilities. I interviewed the participants during the same period. The study included eight participants. Four participants were interviewed in one day whereas three were observed and interviewed on another day. The other

participant was interviewed a few weeks later due to her busy schedule. The interviews and observations had to be conducted in a flexible manner as the participants had a busy schedule. I was therefore flexible when the observations and interviews were conducted.

Observations lasted between 30 and 45 minutes depending upon the grade level of the students. I collected student work samples from only six of the eight teachers. Two participants did not have any work samples available to give or to take pictures of. Most of their instructions were verbal with oral responses from the students; the students did their assignments on their Chromebooks. After the completion of the interviews, I gave each participant a Starbucks gift card in appreciation of the time they gave despite their busy schedules.

After obtaining permission from the interviewees, I used two forms of audio recording. When the observations were undertaken I took great care to record everything I saw on the observation form, which was what I created (see Appendix B).

I met with each of the teachers in their classroom. Each participant signed a copy of the consent form before the interview began. After completing the first interview, I used the transcription feature on the recording app and transcribed the data. I analyzed the transcribed data as well as the observation notes.

Data Analysis

I began data analysis immediately after collecting the data. First the recording app transcribed the data, then I reviewed transcribed data for accuracy along with both the written interview and the audio recording. I read each transcript several times, which allowed me to get a thorough knowledge and understanding of the data collected from the

interviews. After completing the transcribing, I coded the data and identified the reflected themes. These themes were grouped together based on the commonalities and patterns in the data. I looked at how the themes were related to the research questions and listed each theme under the appropriate research question. At the time of reading the transcripts, I only read Question 1 of each interview and took notes. I followed the same pattern with the rest of the questions as well. I decoded the data to dissect the meaning and useful information from the participants transcribed interviews. I used descriptive coding and highlighted the common themes and sub themes using different colored highlighters. Then I used NVivo to identify the themes. The themes derived from NVivo were similar and consistent with the themes identified from the hand coding. Discrepant cases were analyzed the information was considered and included in the study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness by addressing credibility, confirmability, transferability and flexibility. For credibility, member checking, peer review, and thick rich description were used (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2014). The transcribed interviews were emailed to the participants for review. My dissertation committee conducted my peer review. All data were collected in an ethical manner (Yin, 2014).

I used member checking in this study to increase the credibility and validity of the data. Prior to the debriefing session, the participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts. This procedure allowed the participants to confirm and reconfirm the accuracy of their input. A follow-up appointment took place if the participant had

concerns or changes regarding the transcribed interview. I explained the importance of ensuring accuracy to the participants.

Dependability shows how stable the data is over time with various conditions. Dependability shows because (a) the data collected were recorded accurately; (b) because the study could be replicated easily (c) because there was stability and consistency throughout the data collection process; (d) of the use of detailed notes and quality checks to ensure accuracy; and (e) strictly enforcing consistency throughout the study.

Confirmability is the process of explicitly describing the methods and procedures of the study in full details and having the data available for review (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), confirmability needs to be accurate and thorough. To reduce bias in this study, open-ended questions were asked; and as the researcher, I refrained from providing my opinions to the participants. I asked the participants to clarify their responses and then check them for accuracy after I transcribed the interview. Additionally, I used bracketing by keeping a journal and recording any bias or conflict that I noted.

Transferability is present in this study because I described the process fully and the results of this study are transferable to other populations (Miles et al., 2014). The results of this study are appropriate for similar populations, especially those referred to as special populations, such as low academically functioning students, students who are at risk of failure, or students with severe disabilities. The results may also be transferable to other geographical areas.

I used reflexivity to evaluate myself to prevent bias interpretations. I used bracketing to address any researcher bias I had by setting aside my personal experiences, background in special education, and previous research findings, and not provide my own input. Bracketing allowed the ability to reflect deeply after each interview. I also used bracketing by discussing the information with fellow researchers, writing memos, and keeping a bracketing journal, which I used throughout the process and are included in the final research report.

I ensured confidentiality by interviewing each teacher in private. I assigned a pseudonym and a number to each participant. I collected the consent forms, interview protocol and answers, observation forms, and student work samples of each observation and placed them in a 9 x 12 white envelope identified only with a number. I wrote the pseudonym for the participant, school, and school district for each corresponding number. The white envelopes were stored in a locking filing cabinet when not in use. The laptop, which stored the data, is passcode protected. No one has access to the data other than me.

Results

Research Question 1 ask, What are the teachers' views about the benefits that students with learning disabilities derive from Common Core instructions? The two interview questions below examined the aspects embedded in research question one.

(5) Do you think providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities assist them in reaching grade level proficiency?

(6) Do you instruct your students to use Close reading? What kind of growth have you witness in this area?

Several themes emerged from the responses of the participants in the study and are discussed in the following section.

Theme 1: CCSS

Regarding reaching grade level proficiency in reading, the majority of the participants did not feel CCSS is helping SWD achieve grade level proficiency. P1 stated: "I do not think CCSS instructions to students with learning disabilities is helping them reach grade level proficiency."

However, P2, P4, and P6, all of whom are RSP teachers who generally instruct the higher functioning students were all in agreement that the students are making progress using CCSS, but also stated that they would not reach grade level proficiency. The observations of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8 were all similar in the way the instruction was lead and supported by the teachers. For instance, P3 taught a lesson on word problems to a group of five students. I observed the participant reading the problems with the students, then asking the student to think about the problem and explain it back to her. She then had the students to draw a picture to represent the word problem. The whole time the teacher was walking from student to student asking them question to ensure they were on track and understanding the task. Also, P6 did a guided lesson while instructing the students to take notes on a book they were reading. The teacher allowed each group of students to write one part of the notes and share with the other students.

The second theme that was derived from the data was close reading. Close reading is the detailed dissecting of the text to get an in-depth understanding of the purpose and meaning of the text being read.

Theme 2: Close Reading

When I observed the participants, I did not see any of them using close reading when instructing their students. I did see participant explaining vocabulary and providing examples of background knowledge in an effort to assist the students in understanding the text. The work samples collected did not indicate any complex text or the use of close reading.

P4 stated: "I teach context clue, main ideal and phonemic awareness if I need to. I teach students about finding context clues and keywords in text and they have done very well with that."

In response to Question 6 on the interview protocol which coincided with research question number one, the responses indicated that most teachers break the instructions down for the students to understand the text. Three teachers stated that they do not use close reading. Two of the teachers are math teachers, one teacher stated that the students are too low of the expected standard to understand the concept. Two other participants did not provide any explanation other than stating a definite "No" to the question.

P1 stated:

> We do use Close reading and I have seen some progress with my students with Disabilities with this reading strategy. The repetition of the skill helps them to be able to perform better as well as the reading skills

needed. It also helps because we analyze the book for meaning and reading comprehension is a struggle for children with learning disabilities. The aspect of Close reading where we focus on the writer's purpose, form or craft is not an aspect that we use or that seems beneficial for our students. We tend to stay at analyzing the text for understanding.

P3 stated:

No. Well, for some students with teaching the vocabulary and dissecting the text. I have in the past, but I am not able to with the group of students I have this year. This year has been the worst.

P5 stated:

In the past**,** when I taught reading we broke the text down sentence by sentence and explained unknown words, but now I only teach math.

P6 stated:

No, A little in reading, not in science, it depends on the students. I teach context clues, main idea and phonemic awareness if I need to. The biggest thing is using context clues for reading comprehension in science. I teach the students about finding context clues and keywords in text and they have done very well with that.

P7 stated:

No, I do not use Close reading. I do not think common core is effective for students with disabilities. It is hopeful wishing, for example to expect the kids to learn algebra and Shakespeare.

P8 answered:

No, not in my classroom.

There is a difference in close reading, which is a thorough analysis of the text and simplifying the text so that students can understand the basic meaning. The method of dissecting the text for SWD allows the students to get the basic understanding of the text whereas close reading provided the deeper underlying meaning of the text such as why it was written and the author's purpose. The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) as mentioned by P4 was developed by Norman Webb in 1997 and is related to text complexity and the ability to reach higher level of thinking. The levels are, DOK 1 which is recalling information provided within the text. DOK 2 is basic mental processing such as making inferences. DOK 3 is complex thinking and requires strategic planning, and DOK 4 is extended knowledge which includes analysis and synthesizing. Close reading requires utilizing DOK 3 and DOK 4 levels of thinking. P4 explained, "Most SWD cannot process beyond DOK 1 or 2 due to processing deficit."

Close reading in part of CCSS, but according to the teachers who work with SWD do not use Close reading with their students because the students are not on the ability level to adequately understand or use Close reading properly. Teachers who taught RSP were able to use some Close reading strategies with their student but not to use it to the full extent.

The second research question address the teachers' perception of SWD being prepared for college and careers.

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness?

The two interview questions used to answer research question 2 are below.

(4) What specific teaching model or strategies do you use for your instruction? Are you familiar with the Universal Design for Learning?

(8) Do you feel that the strategies you adopted using CCSS are effective with the students?

The responses to the two interview questions used to collect data to answer research question 2 are written below. Three themes were derived from the responses provided by the participants. The third theme was teaching modes and strategies.

Theme 3 : Teaching models and strategies

The participants had different suggestions regarding what the SWD needed to do to be academically successful, not only with regards to CCSS.

P3 stated:

> In our classroom we use graphic organizers and Technology every day. For most learners, technology is another tool for learning that makes things easier, but for students with learning disabilities, technology makes it possible. It also gives even the quietest students a voice. The graphic organizers that we use help them to organize their thoughts for their writing. This seems to help a lot of them and their paragraphs are written

write off the map. Students with learning disabilities need help with what

goes inside these maps and usually modeling and guidance.

P4 shared:

> I use everything that I have been taught, differential instructions, collaboration with Kagan strategies, small groups, cooperative groups and a lot of independent work.

The fourth theme derived from the data was the UDL. Teachers use the UDL to

P5 explained:

> I use graphic organizers to a certain extent, more in science than math. I make my own worksheet and I might ask the students to give three examples of definition from assigned website. For example, I use technology a lot for math to show videos on two step equations. I make PowerPoints to teach the definitions.

P6 said:

> I use lots of graphic organizers in scaffolding information and helping students learn to write what they are thinking (thinking maps, compare/contrast maps, etc.). I also use technology, PowerPoint with pictures for reteach or test prep, videos to teach, jeopardy, games, reading (Newsela), Google classroom assignments, Go!Math, students on Chrome books online and more.

P6 also shared:

> I scaffold the information, check for understanding as students progress through the CCSS encouraging reflection and getting feedback from students in various ways. I use direct instruction, facilitate peer collaboration, use AVID tools (gallery walk, marking the text, Levels of thinking, Inquiry in a Bag), problem solving techniques, and review games. I encourage flexibility in learning and teaching.

P7 stated:

> I use graphic organizers and technology for my students. I also provide reading material that is of interest to them on a reading level that they are able to read. I provide reading material that is related to the everyday lives of teens, as they deal with gangs, teen pregnancy, drive-bys, girlfriends and boyfriends, things like that. This is something that they can relate too. They are interested and ask me if they can read.

The answers to this question supported the findings that teachers use many different strategies to support the needs of their students to ensure the instruction is presented in a way that the students can grasp the concepts being taught.

Interview question 8 asked if the teachers felt that the CCSS instructions are effective for SWD.

P1 stated:

> Unfortunately, I do not feel that the strategies we adopted from CCSS are effective with our special needs population. I believe that CCSS was developed to have students think more abstractly about their learning, why they are learning it, how it crosses over into different areas of academics and life skills. Our students are just needing to learn as much as they can through simple basic ways so that as adults they can get jobs and become a contributing part of society. For example, our students may understand an algorithm to a math problem and they understand the steps needed and even understand how to use it within a life situation word problem. But if you ask them to solve it a different way or explain why our students generally are unable to complete the task.

P3 revealed:

> I think the strategies I use, do work, because the students get better at solving certain math word problems. However, for some of my

> students, they have to see the same types of math problems several times, before mastering them.

P4 explained:

> I use anything a help them access the information they need in the curriculum. We might study the food web. I would use videos to view and discuss to explain. We don't just go into heavy science and expect them to grasp it". "Sometimes it is effective, but not as effective as it should be. In an ideal classroom maybe it would be effective. Many of the students are overstimulated, they are more successful with small groups, leveling and getting information in small chunks. When I have a classroom of kids who can do those things, it is great.

P5 stated:

> The strategies I use are effective but not really related to CCSS. The students have gaps in the basic foundation. They are expected to know grade level goals, What we need to do is work on the gaps. I have seen CCSS working effectively for SWD.

P6 disclosed:

> My instructions are effective, but I cannot confirm that they are CCSS strategies. I feel I am always making changes in my curriculum and the strategies I use as my students learn in so many diverse ways. I try to reach all my students to the best of my

ability, by using many different strategies to help them be more prepared for the state tests, using CCSS. I do use UDL.

Interview question 9 asked if the teacher feel CCSS is preparing SWD to become college or career ready.

P1 answered:

> I do not think that CCSS is challenging our students to become college or career ready. CCSS is causing special education to focus on aspects of teaching and education that are not pertinent to the learning disabled. Class and School time is used "exposing" them to different things but they aren't able to master much. Special education teachers are expected to teach the CCSS curriculum but the students in the SDC classroom are not benefiting from this. For example: The CC Curriculum maps are supposed to include ELA for CCSS. However, they spend little to no time on grammar, sentence structure, and writing strategies. These are things our students need a lot of time on. Another example would be the Pearson Envision Math Curriculum for CCSS. Although 2nd grade is when we used to spend a lot of time teaching money and time… it has now been condensed down into two very short eight day lessons. These are life skills that our learning disabled students need to know and need a lot of repetition with.

P2 agreed:

> No, not right now. I don't think so. They are so far from where they need to be. They don't have the skills or the drive. Some of the students are motivated. Some of them are fantastic, but

The responses revealed that the teachers feel like they are providing effective instructions and that the students are making some progress, but the progress the students are making is not sufficient for the students to obtain college or career readiness.

Interview question 10 asked the participant to provide input on what they felt would be their suggestion for improvement to the curriculum for SWD. P1 responded:

> I think that students with disabilities need a different curriculum. As a society we have established and accepted that this population has different needs and services. We make IEP's so that they are given the tools and supports to help them access learning. But we fail our students when we attempt to teach them the same curriculum as the other students. They have special needs and deserve a special curriculum that teaches them the standards that they as a population need to grow and be successful adults.

P2 said:

> I think there needs to be a way to differentiate the standards to allow the students to meet them. They need twice as much time to

> grasp the information. It would be great if they could have two days to allow them to have the same instructions."

When I ask, "Two school days? P2 replied:

> I don't actually want two school days but, for instance it would help if the kids had one day with core curriculum to work on getting up to grade level and to continue being on grade level. The second day would be for remedial time so that they don't miss anything. What we are doing right now is not working.

I asked P2 how much time she gives her students now, she replied:

"Right now they are being pulled out for one hour a day to get the extra assistance they need."

P7 did not feel that the students need a different curriculum, but rather vocational instructions to prepare them for the future.

P7 stated:

> "They (school districts) need to bring in trades, carpentry, mechanics, plumbing and things like that. I think the best thing they can do with Common Core is throw it away."

P6 explained:

> "Many of the students are lacking the drive to go to college. They can't fill out an application".

P3 stated:

> "No, I think that the common core reading and math standards are too difficult for students. Most students don't have the foundational reading and math skills to master the common core standards."

P4 explained:

> The difference is more depth of knowledge is expected with higher levels of thinking, when they can't. They are just getting further behind. They are missing the boat completely. Looking at the levels of kids going to junior high for instance. Our kids are not even world ready, definitely not college or career ready. I know what it says on papers, but if you look at levels across the board you will see that magazines are said to be written on a fourth grade level, but some of them are barely reading second grade level. We need to focus on the foundation and get them to get really strong and be abstract thinkers, and then when they get older they can become abstract thinkers.

The fourth theme derived from the data was the UDL. Teachers use the UDL to teach students using different modalities and strategies to allow all students to access the instructional information on their own level with needed resources and support.

Theme 4: Universal Design for Learning

P6 explained:

> I use lots of graphic organizers in scaffolding information and helping students learn to write what they are thinking (thinking maps,

> compare/contrast maps, etc.). I also use technology, PowerPoint with pictures for reteach or test prep, videos to teach, jeopardy, games, reading (Newsela), Google classroom assignments, Go!Math, students on Chromebooks online and more.

P6 had a lot to share on the question:

> I learned about the UDL approach in my educational process and have implemented it throughout all my case studies. I have the UDL goal in mind daily, as I strive to meet the needs of every one of my diverse students. I definitely use the UDL strategies, such as starting with a goal. I always post the daily agenda on the board, and talk about my expectations and their goals for the lesson. I use lots of re-teach strategies.

The participants used modeling and direct instructions often. They all used technology and graphic organizers daily. The participants all used scaffolding by making the needed provisions and accommodation to get their students to learn. Although they were not all familiar with the term universal design for learning, they all used it by adapting the instructions and utilizing several modalities of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.

The fifth theme derived from the data is the effectiveness of the strategies used. The teachers explained how they perceived to effectiveness of the strategies they use with their students.

Theme 5: Effectiveness of Strategies

Upon observing the participants providing instructions to their SWD, I witnessed the students being engaged in the instructions being provided. Engaged means the students were interested and paying attention to the instructions. All of the instructions were on the remedial level compared to the instructions expected to be provided to students in the indicated grades. The work that was produced by the students was not on the level of general education students in elementary, junior high or high school. I observed that the instructions provided by the teacher, the responses of the students, as well as the work samples provided are not in line or consistent with college or career readiness. All of the lessons and work samples were below grade level expectations of students in the general education population.

For example, P1 provided a group activity where the students were assisted by the teacher or one of the aides to measure themselves and make a "person" using a colored construction paper circle for the head and string for the body. The students were in grades 4^{th} – 6^{th} but were not able to complete the assignment without guidance and support from beginning to end. Comparably the work samples of the assignments by the junior high school teachers were also completely guided and supported by the teachers. The high school students instructed by both P7 and P8 were correcting capitalization and punctuation of a passage and taking guided notes which are both concepts that are far below that of high school students' required academic level.

All of the teachers stated that they used graphic organizers and technology in the classroom daily regardless of the grade level or ability level of the students they taught.

Teachers in both districts had been trained in and had the material used in a graphic organizing program called Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps is a set of eight visual tools used to organize thought before writing. The various maps are used for defining different things. The circle map helps define context. The bubble map describes adjectives. The flow map is for ordering and sequencing events. The double bubble map is for comparing and contrasting. The tree map is for grouping or classifying things. The flow map is for ordering and sequencing. The teachers usually do guided writing with the students. Some teachers project their sample on the board for the students to see. Many times the teachers and the students in the class worked together with the teacher to create the map. After the students created the map, they used the information on the map to write sentences, paragraphs, or multiple paragraphs. Although the majority of the teachers used Thinking Maps, one teacher explained that she used AVID strategies with her students.

P6 stated:

> Technology is amazing and the new apps break things down and make it easy for the student to access it. The various forms of technology used daily for SWD to help them access the curriculum included (a) PowerPoint with pictures for reteach or test prep, (b) videos to teach, (c) jeopardy games, (d) reading ebooks, (e) Newsela, leveled readers, (f) Google classroom assignments, (g) Go!Math, and (h) Chromebooks online. Technology helps the teachers know right away if the students understand the contents. Special educators use technology across the curriculum to teach in all content areas: reading, math, science,

vocabulary, and more. Technology is a tool for learning that makes things easier for SWD; and for some students, technology makes it possible for them to learn.

P1 stated:

> Unfortunately, I do not feel that the strategies we adopted from CCSS are effective with our special needs population. I believe that CCSS was developed to have students think more abstractly about their learning, why they are learning it, how it crosses over into different areas of academics and life skills. Our students are just needing to learn as much as they can through simple basic ways so that as adults they can get jobs and become a contributing part of society. For example, our students may understand an algorithm to a math problem and they understand the steps needed and even understand how to use it within a life situation word problem. But if you ask them to solve it a different way or explain why our students generally are unable to complete the task.

P3 explained:

> I think the strategies I use, do work, because the students get better at solving certain math word problems. However, for some of my students, they have to see the same types of math problems several times, before mastering them.

P4 explained:

> I use anything a help them access the information they need in the curriculum. We might study the food web. I would use videos to view and discuss to explain. We don't just go into heavy science and expect them to grasp it". "Sometimes it is effective, but not as effective as it should be. In an ideal classroom maybe it would be effective. Many of the students are overstimulated, they are more successful with small groups, leveling and getting information in small chunks. When I have a classroom of kids who can do those things, it is great.

P5 stated:

> The strategies I use are effective but not really related to CCSS. The students have gaps in the basic foundation. They are expected to know grade level goals, What we need to do is work on the gaps. I have not seen CCSS working effectively for SWD.

P6 disclosed:

> My instructions are effective, but I cannot confirm that they are CCSS strategies. I feel I am always making changes in my curriculum and the strategies I use as my students learn in so many diverse ways. I try to reach all my students to the best of my ability, by using many different strategies to help them be more prepared for the state tests, using CCSS. I do use UDL.

Research Question 3: What do teachers perceive to be the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities?

(7)What strategies have you used for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities? Do you use graphic organizers or technology? Please explain.

(9)Do you think that CCSS is helping all students to reach college and career readiness? Can you please explain the reason on your standing on this issue?

(10)Do you have any suggestions which you think would improve CCSS when providing instructions to SWD?

Theme 6 is the instructions that are provided to SWD. The theme was derived from the responses below.

Theme 6: Instructions for students with disabilities

P 3 stated:

> You want to know what I don't like? I have a problem with the SBAAC. The problem I have is the students with disabilities are being measured the same as their well-abled counterparts. It is not an accurate measurement of their growth. P3 further stated that she felt it was not right to measure SWD on writing when they cannot write, reading when they cannot read, and math when they cannot do math. She also explained that the percentage of students allowed to take the modified test is not fair. She

> stated, “It does not reflect or consider accommodations. It is unfair and ineffective.”

The participants had many suggestions on their ideals regarding the needs of the students.

P4 stated:

> The students have no need for algebra, statistics and higher learning skills. They (SWD) are executed to master many skills and they should focus more on strong foundational skills and getting the students to become better problem solvers.

P5 stated:

> I think students should be taught vocational classes. At our campus we have vocational medical classes that are taught to Jr. high school students, and also at the high school level and at the college. The same teacher teaches all three levels and the students can prepare for a career over time. I think more vocational classes would be good for the students.

The list of suggested needs to be included in instruction for SWD was taken from the direct responses to the interview protocol questions:

- specific guidelines and instructions
- different curriculum
- a lot of repetition
- different everything
- lot of structure and modeling

- twice as much time to learn a concept
- to receive information in small chunks
- to have structured learning

The participants expressed their thought on the needs of the SWD with very specific strategies to use in order to improve the instruction.

Theme 7: Impact of CCSS to reach College and Career levels

As stated above by P2, P4, and P7 they all agreed that SWD do not have the drive or the skills needed to attend college and therefore will not be college or career ready upon graduating from high school. All three of the participants also agreed that the students are in need of foundational skills such as basic addition and subtraction, which the students have not mastered yet. Being unable to compute basic addition and subtraction is a clear indicator that the students are not on track to be college or career ready upon exiting high school.

P1 answered:

> I do not think that CCSS is challenging our students to become college or career ready. CCSS is causing special education to focus on aspects of teaching and education that are not pertinent to the learning disabled. Class and School time is used "exposing" them to different things but they aren't able to master much. Special education teachers are expected to teach the CCSS curriculum but the students in the SDC classroom are not benefiting from this. For example: The CC Curriculum maps are supposed to include ELA for CCSS. However, they spend little to no time on grammar, sentence structure, and writing strategies. These are

> things our students need a lot of time on. Another example would be the Pearson Envision Math Curriculum for CCSS. Although 2nd grade is when we used to spend a lot of time teaching money and time… it has now been condensed down into two very short eight day lessons. These are life skills that our learning disabled students need to know and need a lot of repetition with.

Additionally, P2 agreed when answering the question she stated:

> No, not right now. I don't think so. They are so far from where they need to be. They don't have the skills or the drive. Some of the students are motivated. Some of them are fantastic, but many are lacking the drive to go to college. They can't fill out an application". P3 stated. "No, I think that the common core reading and math standards are too difficult for students. Most students don't have the foundational reading and math skills to master the common core standards.

P4 explained:

> Our kids are not even world ready, definitely not college or career ready. I know what it says on papers, but if you look at levels across the board you will see that magazines are said to be written on a fourth grade level, but some of them are barely reading second grade level. We need to focus on the foundation and get them to get really strong and be abstract thinkers, and then when they get older they can become abstract thinkers. The difference is more depth of knowledge is expected with higher levels of thinking, when they can't. They are just getting further behind. They are

> missing the boat completely. Looking at the levels of kids going to junior high for instance.

P7 said:

> Hell no! They need to master the foundations and learn to add and subtract. The policymakers need to realize that a high percentage of students with disabilities will never go to college.

Table 3

Responses to Research Question 3

No.	Level	Strategy	Suggestions	Results	Subject	Type
1	Elem	G.O. & Tech	Diff. Curr	4	Reading	SDC
2	Elem	G.O. Guided Writing	Diff. Stan	5 & 6	Reading	RSP
3	Elem	G. O. & Tech	-----	5 & 6	Math	RSP
4	Elem	G.O., Tech, Modeling	Mod. & Stru	4-6	Math	SDC
5	J.H.	G. O.& Tech	Basic Skills	7 & 8	Math	SDC
6	J.H.	G.O. & Scaffolding	-----	8 & 9	English	RSP
7	H.S.	G. O. & Tech	Trades	11	English	SDC
8	H.S.	G.O. & Tech	Need based	9-11	English	SDC

Summary

The first research question asked, "What were the teachers' views about the benefits that SWD derive from CCSS?" Teachers did not feel that students were

benefiting enough from CCSS. Some teachers felt that students were making minimal progress, but not enough to be effective. Other teachers felt that it was not benefiting the students at all, because the SWD that they teach were too low academically to grasp the concepts and were only getting further behind. The second research question asked, How do teachers perceive providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness? The participants did not feel that CCSS is preparing students for career or college readiness.

Five of the eight participants stated that the students are struggling with basic concepts and are too far behind to achieve the level of proficiency needed to be college or career ready. The third research question is, What do teachers perceive to be the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities? The participants responded with a variety of answers to this question. Two of the participants chose not to answer this question. Of the answers received, the responses varied from SWD having their own set of standards, a fair measurement to test the growth of SWD, allowing SWD to learn concentrate on mastering foundational skills, and providing training in vocational and trades for SWD.

I began with the following themes that were created based on the research questions: (a) teachers' perception on the impact of CCSS on SWD, (b) teachers' perception on students being college and or career ready and (c) teachers' input on making the CCSS more beneficial to students. The data that was grouped under the initial themes and were then analyzed and coded into the following sub groups:

- inability to meet standards (frustration and shutting down)

- students' needs (foundational and basic skills)
- scaffolding (UDL, graphic organizers and technology)
- state testing.

The observations revealed that many of the teachers used the same strategies with their students. For example, three participants had the students stop during instructions to ensure everyone was following along and in the right place. Several of the participants used Socratic questioning to assist the students in deriving at their own answers. They did a lot of connecting to background knowledge when explaining vocabulary words. They also taught concepts over time. It usually took several days to a week with multiple chances for repetition for the students to learn one concept. The teachers used modeling and direct instructions often. They all used technology and graphic organizers daily. The participants all used scaffolding by making the needed provisions and accommodations to get their students to learn. Although they were not all familiar with the term universal design for learning, they all used it.

Seven of the eight participants provided student work samples. I took a picture of the scripted manual and student book that the seventh teacher used, and the eighth teacher did not use anything in her instructions that I was able to collect or take a picture of. The work samples did not have anything in common with each other. All work samples supported the instruction provided by the participant. One common trend was all of the assignments were teacher guided and the students did not complete the work on their own.

I used NVivo 12 after I completed hand-coding. I uploaded all the interview transcripts, observation transcripts, and student work samples into files under the classifications of interviews, observations, and work samples. Then I coded the data using NVivo. The hand coding and the NVivo had closely related results. As I read the transcripts, I determined the following codes after noticing repeated words. There is a total number of three themes that were established after combining the ideas which appeared repeatedly throughout the eight interviews and observations. Chapter 5 begins with an introduction and includes interpretations as to the findings of the study. I explain the limitations of the study. Recommendations for further research are made and implications for social change are disclosed. Chapter 5 ends with a conclusion statement.

Chapter 5

Introduction

My purpose in this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of special educators on the efficacy of using CCSS to teach SWD. Because CCSS was implemented 8 years ago and no students have completed kindergarten through 12th grade being instructed with CCSS, limited research on outcomes for SWD becoming college or career ready after being instructed with the standards. The benefits of CCSS as well as the negative and positive influences have not been established yet for SWD. Educators will benefit from the results of my study by understanding how the students are affected so they can ensure SWD are getting the maximum benefit from instruction. To obtain this information, it is vital that researchers gain the perspectives of instructors who work with this population of students. The purpose of the CCSS, which was released in 2010, was to align K-12 state standards into one unified set. The intent was for students to exit high school prepared to enter either college or the workforce (Best & Cohen, 2013).

After conducting the literature review, I formed three research questions, which will enable me to close the gap in the literature regarding how CCSS affects SWD. It was my opinion that addressing the three research questions will help educators and policymakers improve the outcomes of CCSS on SWD. Having this information can help students to achieve a more suitable education so that they can reach their highest potential and become productive adults. It was important to obtain the perception of educators because they are the individuals who interact with students using CCSS on a regular

basis. As professionals, educators attempt to understand their students' needs including how they learn best, and their academic needs and pursuits.

The key findings in this study revealed that the majority of special education teachers in the study did not find that CCSS is having positive outcomes on SWD. The participants asserted that policymakers should consider specific disabilities and needs that SWD have, and create curricula and assessments that support and meet the needs of SWD. The few participants who thought CCSS was beneficial for SWD posited that it was beneficial because CCSS pushed the students to think and write more. However, these participants also asserted that their positive assessment of CCSS was not because the students were reaching grade level proficiency or because they would be college or career ready. Rather, these participants stated their support for using CCSS with SWD was because the higher functioning students were making some progress. The participants explained that some students could identify the answers to questions and knew how to find the answers. This was helpful because multiple choice is not an option in CCSS.

Interpretation of the Findings

Themes emerged as a result of answers to the research questions. The major themes in this study were (a) inability to meet standards, (b) foundational and basic skills, (c) frustration and shutting down, (d) student needs, (e) scaffolding, (f) graphic organizers, (g) technology, and (h) state testing. The findings indicated that some students according to the participants do not have the cognitive ability to meet the CCSS standards as they are presently written. The CCSS calls for critical thinking, using depth

of knowledge, and detailed writing to explain learning (Heibert & Mesmer, 2013). All the teachers agreed that the SWD in their classrooms needed foundational and basic skills which is not a component of CCSS. Study participants asserted that CCSS was difficult for SWD and the main implication of this difficulty was a lack of understanding the concepts, becoming frustrated and shutting down.

According to the participants, many adjustments and additions can be made to the CCSS to make them more appropriate to SWD. One strategy that is supportive for SWD is scaffolding instructions (Vygotsky,1978; Least, 2014), which gives students the opportunity to start with a basic concept and gradually increase their knowledge base with support until they are able to master the concept. Another adjustment participants mentioned was that graphic organizers and technology are used daily to support instruction for SWD. Finally the participants agreed that the state test should be adjusted to effectively and fairly measure the academic growth of SWD.

I used two conceptual frameworks in this study: UDL and ZPD. Both frameworks are related to teaching SWD. Teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience were not familiar with the term *universal design for learning*. However, the explanations that they gave regarding how they provided instructions to their students was evidence of them using the UDL. They all used several modes of instruction and included strategies that allowed the students to see and hear the content for extra support. Also, none of the teachers used the term *zone of proximal development*, but two of the teachers explained that they scaffolded instructions for their students. Scaffolding is an element of ZPD.

The information provided by the participants are supported by some of the research findings in discussed chapter 2. Rowe, Mazzotti, and Sinclair (2015) stated that teachers are encouraged to identify multiple strategies that will assist SWD in preparing for college and career readiness. Smith and Lowrey (2017) suggested that UDL will improve both school- and post-school outcomes in employment and community access for SWD. The participants were supportive of the idea that UDL benefits SWD in academic instructions, but did not agree that UDL is enough to ensure that SWD will be college or career ready or that UDL is preparing SWD for college or the workforce.

According to Caruana (2015), one of the guiding principles of CCSS for SWD is instructional support based on the UDL. Another principle is instructional accommodations, which can include various ways of responding, the use of assistive technology, and various ways to interact with materials. The finding confirmed that the participants use UDL daily and agree that it is beneficial for instructing SWD. The findings also confirms Kurt's (2013) statement that UDL supports all students in having meaningful participation in instruction. The participants explained as well as displayed during their observation that they use technology and graphic organizers consistently to assist SWD with accessing the curriculum.

Likewise, Alnahdi (2014) explained that technology can assist SWD to improve their independence academically and in employment tasks. Amnahdi also suggested that it can be more effective to use existing available technology rather than focus on technology that is specific to SWD. The participants in the study used existing technology available through the schools.

The findings of the study did not confirm Caruana's (2015) statement that the CCSS was a clear and consistent framework aligned with college and workforce expectations to prepare students for life after high school. The participants in the study did not agree that CCSS is effectively preparing SWD for college or the workforce. The results of the study extends the knowledge regarding SWD having significant difficulties and serious challenges with CCSS instructions. According to Haager and Vaughn (2013b), students with learning disabilities often have significant literacy difficulties and can face serious challenges when instruction is framed within CCSS.

Many of the participants feel that SWD must master life skills before moving on into academics SWD continue to need instruction in skills needed to be successful in life. The research indicated that it is possible to design instruction to help students acquire skills in both academics and transitional areas of life (Bartholonew, Papay, McConnell, & Cease-Cook, 2015). Several of the participants in the study expressed their concern for SWD needing life skills and basic skills to prepare them for adulthood. The findings of Bartholonew et al. (2015) tallies with my study findings about the tradition into adulthood after high school and one of my research questions asked about the preparedness for SWD to enter college or the workforce.

Rowe et al. (2015) described testing to the CCSS standards as another major issue. They explained that, in the first year of administering the state test, teachers reported that SWD became overwhelmed, broke into tears, froze up, and ran out of time. My study confirms Rowe, et al.'s findings. Several participants stated that the test is overwhelming for SWD and is not an accurate or fair measure of their academic growth.

The second conceptual framework used in this study was the zone of proximal development which is the difference between what a student can do without help and what the student can do with help (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding instruction is an element of Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD. If scaffolding is administered properly, it will serve as an enabler, rather than a disabler (Benson, 1997). Scaffolding a writing lesson would make a lesson easier for SWD because some of the information that they are required to write would be provided for them (Ewoldt & Morgan, 2017). During the interview process several of the participants in my study explained that they scaffold instructions for SWD to help the students gain understanding of the concepts they are learning. I also saw the participants scaffolding instruction during the observations.

The findings of my study supported a number of other findings by several researchers on ZPD. Wass and Golding (2014) discussed the usefulness of using ZPD to teach students to do something beyond their ability and how it influences potential learning. Clapper (2015) conducted a study on using cooperative-based learning along with ZPD. Using the cooperative-based learning method Clapper introduced ZPD to a group of individuals on the same level in need of similar support. All of the aforementioned ideas were supported by the revelations in my study.

Limitation of the Study

An unexpected limitation in this study was the time of year that the study was conducted. I did not receive clearance to conduct the study until the very end of the school year. At that time of the year most instructional activities have been completed and teachers and students are enjoying fun activities. This limited the available

participants for the study. One of the superintendents and several of the potential participants suggested for me to conduct the study during summer school, but only the students with severe disabilities usually attend summer school and I thought that would affect the outcome of the study. One potential participant offered to participate if I would wait until fall to conduct the study, but this would have caused me to go the entire summer without making progress on the study while I had time off from work and would push data collection back until September when teachers began instruction again. The time and cost associated with this option were not feasible.

One limitation listed in Chapter 1 was the potential of participants withdrawing from the study. This did not occur, but it came close to happening at one point in the study. One of the participants had allowed me to observe her class and provided me with student work samples. After I observed her teaching her class and collected the student work samples she was not available for an interview. She did not answer my emails. Then, school was out for summer vacation. After 2 weeks I began looking for a replacement, but then I received an email from the original participant, stating that she was still interested in being in the study.

Recommendations

The findings in this study are important for educational policymakers; school administrators; educators on elementary, middle school, and high school levels; community colleges; vocational/trade schools; test and textbook publishers; and other stakeholders. Recommendations that could be included here derived from the study data and are as follows:

- Instruct SWD on the basic foundational skills, social skills, and real-life skills until they reach mastery in order to prepare them for adulthood.
- Appeal to educational policymakers to change the CCSS to include a special version of the CCSS designed specifically for SWD.
- Allow all SWD to be tested using a measurement that will accurately measure their progress regardless of the number of students that need alternative testing.
- Begin preparing students for vocational trades while they are in middle school to allow them time to become career ready upon graduating from high school.

Recommendations for practice includes a more extensive study with a broader participant base. The study can be conducted in other geographical areas to verify whether more teachers of SWD are in agreement with the results of this study. A separate study can be conducted to find out what kind of social change will benefit SWD in regards to annual state testing. A separate study can be conducted to gather more information about the teachers' perceptions on annual state testing and SWD. Additionally, each of the themes found in this study can be expanded on with a study to collect more data per theme.

Implications

The social implications of the study are that implementation of the recommendations would result in an improvement of educational outcomes for SWD and prepare them for transitioning into adulthood in a manner that is appropriate and possible. The results of this study can have a positive social impact for educators, students, and

society. Educators can achieve satisfaction and peace of mind knowing students are learning and being assessed effectively in a manner through which SWD can thrive and reach their maximum potential. Students can learn in an environment that is conducive to immediate and future success. Students could have less stress and frustration. Society can benefit because SWD would be trained in trades and vocational skills to contribute to society with gainful employment. The most important element found in the data was the participants' plea to allow SWD to learn what they need to know at their own pace and to be assessed in a manner that will show their actual growth.

Conclusion

I conducted this study to answer three research questions. The data that I collected allowed me to answer the three research questions. It was found that the teachers intended teachers do not feel that the CCSS is benefiting SWD as it is intended. Based on the data derived for question two it was revealed that teachers do not feel that CCSS is preparing SWD to be college or career ready upon finishing high school. The findings that emerged from question three indicated that teachers had different perceptions of the missing component for providing instructions using the CCSS for SWD. The answers varied from a different set of standards to training in trades and vocational skills.

The finding in the study strengthened the fact that the participants did not feel that CCSS was benefiting the students. It was evident that it was felt that the students were not prepared for college or careers using CCSS and that they were far behind and are not on a level to perform the tasks CCSS expect of them. The participants wanted SWD to have a different curriculum that would support their needs. They also wanted SWD to

have an accurate measurement for assessing their annual growth. Additionally, they wanted the students to be prepared for adulthood by being trained in trades and vocations that they were able to do, because college was not an option for the majority of SWD. It is my hope that the data resulting from this study is used to benefit SWD and provide a more equitable educational experience for SWD to help them reach their highest potential. Additionally, I am hoping that the educational policy makers take the results of the study into consideration and make the effective changes to support SWD in gaining better access the education.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Developed by Sarah ShaBazz

Good morning. My name is Sarah ShaBazz I am a doctoral candidate. I have created an interview protocol, and will give a copy to you in writing. Please feel free to review the questions prior to our scheduled interview. I realize impromptu questions sometimes require time to process. (If the interview is by e-mail, you may of course, take as long as you wish to review the prompt and the questions.) These questions are not a test nor will this interview be used for any other purpose except to produce results from this study. I will provide my e-mail and phone number if you should have any questions with regard to the interview, process or anything which may come to mind after you have answered the questions. This interview will consist of only ten questions, but additional questions may be asked for clarification purposes. You may expand your answers to any of the questions if you wish. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions or you do not wish to participate further, we can terminate the interview. In addition to the informed consent form, your signature is required to authorize me to conduct this short interview:

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

Questions:

1. Please indicate how long you have been teaching and the grade levels you taught. What type pf children did you teach? Have you taught disabled children before?
2. How long have you been working with the Common Core State Standards? Please provide your experience with implementing CCSS.
3. When, where and how were you trained in using the Common Core State Standards?
4. What specific teaching model or strategies do you use for you instruction? Are you familiar with the Universal Design for Learning?
5. Do you think providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities assist them in reaching grade level proficiency?
6. Do you instruct your students to use Close reading? What kind of growth have you witness in this area?

7. What strategies have you used for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities? Do you use graphic organizers or technology? Please explain.
8. Do you feel that the strategies you adopted using CCSS are effective with the students? What are your reasons for saying that these are effective/not effective?
9. Do you think that CCSS is helping all students to reach college and career readiness? Can you please explain the reason on your standing on this issue?
10. Do you have any suggestions which you think would improve CCSS when providing instructions to SWD?

I appreciate your time today for participating in this interview for my doctoral study

My e-mail is: sarah.shabazz@waldenu.edu and my phone number is:

(760) 900-5850 (PST) should you have any questions or need any clarifications.

Sarah ShaBazz, Principal Researcher

Appendix B: Observation Form

Teacher Participant Name: _____

School District: _____

School Site: _____

Type of Class (SDC), (RSP), (ED), (Other _____)

Grade level: (4-6) _____ (7-9) _____ (9-12) _____

Subject matter: _____ Concept: _____

Number of students: _____ M___ F___

Number of adults: ____ Teachers ___ Aides ____ Other ____

Explain: _____

Start time: _____ End time: _____

Observational

Notes: _____

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Draw diagram of classroom here

Appendix C: Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions

General Background Info	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
(1) Please indicate how long you have been teaching and the grade levels you taught. What type of students did you teach? Have you taught disabled students?	A. RQ1. What are the teachers' views about the benefit that students with learning disabilities derive from Common Core instructions?	B. RQ2. How do teachers feel providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities is preparing them for college and career readiness?	C. RQ3. What do teachers feel are the missing components for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities?
(2) How long have you been working with the Common Core State Standards? Please provide your experience with implementing CCSS.	(5) Do you think providing Common Core instructions to students with learning disabilities assist them in reaching grade level proficiency?	(4) What specific teaching model or strategies do you use for your instruction? Are you familiar with the Universal Design for Learning?	(7) What strategies have you used for providing specialized instructions using Common Core to students with learning disabilities? Do you use graphic organizers or technology? Please explain. which you think would improve CCSS when providing instructions to SWD?
(3) When, where and how were you trained in using the Common Core State Standards?	(6) Do you instruct your students to use Close Reading? What kind of growth have you witness in this area?	(8) Do you feel that the strategies you adopted using CCSS are effective with the students? What are your reasons for saying these are effective/not effective?	(10) Do you have any suggestions which you think would improve CCSS when providing instructions to SWD?
		(9) Do you feel that CCSS is helping all students to reach college or career readiness? Can you please explain the reason for your standing on this issue?	

Appendix D: Application to Student With Disabilities

The Common Core State Standards articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of mathematics and English language arts.. These standards identify the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in college and careers

Students with disabilities ―students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)―must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities. The continued development of understanding about research-based instructional practices and a focus on their effective implementation will help improve access to mathematics and English language arts (ELA) standards for all students, including those with disabilities.

Students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group with one common characteristic: the presence of disabling conditions that significantly hinder their abilities to benefit from general education (IDEA 34 CFR §300.39, 2004). Therefore, *how* these high standards are taught and assessed is of the utmost importance in reaching this diverse group of students.

In order for students with disabilities to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening (English language arts), their instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations, including:

- supports and related services designed to meet the unique needs of these students and to enable their access to the general education curriculum (IDEA 34 CFR §300.34, 2004).

- An Individualized Education Program (IEP)[1] which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate their attainment of grade-level academic standards.

- Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.

Promoting a culture of high expectations for all students is a fundamental goal of the Common Core State Standards. In order to participate with success in the general

[1] According to IDEA, an IEP includes appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the individual achievement and functional performance of a child

curriculum, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided additional supports and services, such as:

- Instructional supports for learning— based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[2] —which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.

- Instructional accommodations (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall, 2005) —changes in materials or procedures— which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core.

- Assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.

Some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will require substantial supports and accommodations to have meaningful access to certain standards in both instruction and assessment, based on their communication and academic needs. These supports and accommodations should ensure that students receive access to multiple means of learning and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, but retain the rigor and high expectations of the Common Core State Standards.

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[2] UDL is defined as "a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains