A case study of the interactions amongst the elements of an elementary teacher's educational belief system, goals, enactment, and reflection

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A Case Study of the Interactions Amongst the Elements of an Elementary Teacher’s Educational Belief System, Goals, Enactment, and Reflection

by

Phillip Pittman

Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Education Leadership

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February 16, 2017

Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

To Kristina, Kyle, and Stephanie

for your unwavering support, steadfast belief, continual encouragement, and unconditional love
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for seeing me through this process. To my wife Kristina—Thank you for your endless love, your buoyant energy, your keen insight, your bold commitment, your high expectations, and your fierce drive. Thank you for taking such good care of me, our children, and our home. You are my hero, my motivation, my ideal reader. I could not have managed the demands of my career and this dissertation without your unbelievable ability to prioritize and organize, which helped me maintain a semblance of balance as a husband and a father amidst what has been an unsustainable schedule. To my son Kyle—Thank you for giving me the strength and courage to overcome any adversity and to push through to the finish. To my daughter Stephanie—Thank you for your extraordinary enthusiasm and for helping me to better understand myself through understanding you as we share so much in common. I am humbled by the sacrifices you have all made on my behalf over these past several years in order to provide the time and space for me to complete such a monumental project. To my extended family and friends—Thank you for your interest in my work along with your patience and understanding even when it seemed like I declined every invitation with the same refrain, “I won’t be able to join in because I am working on my dissertation.” Needless to say, I am looking forward to having my Saturdays back!

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giving me the kind of feedback that generally encouraged reflection, that occasionally prompted revision, yet that always gave me confidence I could succeed. Dr. Marx, thank you for investing so fully in me as your mentorship will stay with me for life. Next, I would like to thank Dr. David Anderson for taking the baton from Dr. Marx to become my dissertation chair for the final leg of the journey and helping me sift through the remaining details to reach the finish line. I marvel at Dr. Anderson’s base of knowledge, his penchant for conceptualization, and his far-reaching perspective. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Bleyaert for placing great value on the meeting point of practice and theory, for being able to distinguish and clarify concepts in a nuanced way, and for her love of the English language. And, I would like to thank Dr. Ethan Lowenstein for being able to immediately recognize the applicability of various concepts to novel situations and for steering me towards several theories that influenced this work.

Finally, I would like to give a rousing thank you to the fifth grade teacher Ben (whose name has been changed to preserve the integrity of this research) and his amazing students for being the centerpieces of this dissertation. I owe you a debt of gratitude for providing me this rare opportunity to learn so much about what I believe are vital elements to the teaching and learning process. It was truly a privilege to be a guest in your world for a semester. Ben, you are a world-class educator who has been called to teach. I will forever be inspired by your deep commitment to your students and to ensuring they ALL achieved at the highest levels. Your openness, your honesty, and your authenticity illuminated the pathway towards a more enlightened understanding.

This dissertation is Ben’s story, a story I am honored to tell.
Abstract

Contemporary educational reform has attempted to improve teaching quality and raise student achievement through high-stakes teacher evaluation and through the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). However, to advance teaching and learning, instructional leaders must shift their focus from teacher evaluation and the CCSS themselves to how teachers attempt to meet the CCSS in their classrooms through decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment and why they make those decisions. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a deep understanding about the elements of, and interactions between, a fifth grade teacher’s educational belief system (consisting of his central beliefs, his values, his attitudes, and his opinions), goals (primary and secondary), enactment of the English Language Arts (ELA) CCSS, and his reflection.

This dissertation utilized a grounded theory approach and a single-case study design that consisted of pre-observation interviews, three-hour classroom observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions in four cycles over the course of a semester, along with a final philosophical interview that occurred after the final observation cycle. The findings were derived from an extensive analysis of the interview transcripts, the field notes and video footage from the classroom observations, the artifacts that were collected, and the pictures that were taken.

The findings include a detailed description of the contents of the teacher’s educational belief system, his goals, his enactment, and his reflection, and the grounded theory is represented by a culminating model, which visually depicts the interaction among those constructs. This was a remarkable case in which the teacher’s educational belief system, goals, enactment, and reflection were congruent, and the findings were consistent with Rokeach (1968) and Pajares’ (1992) theories about beliefs, Argyris and Schon’s (1974) action theory, Bandura’s (1986) theories about self-efficacy, Locke and Latham’s (1990) goal theory, and Doolittle’s (1999)
theories about constructivist learning. A key finding that emerged was the importance of the teacher’s goals, which were vital to inferring the contents of his educational belief system and to better understanding his decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment during the enactment process. Furthermore, the teacher’s goals were at the center of his reflective process as he evaluated how effective the enactment was in achieving his goals and the resulting plans he made to maintain his instructional plan or to adjust it to better meet his goals.

While not generalizable beyond this case, the results of this study could have implications for instructional leaders who work with similar teachers in hopes of improving the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms. If this was a representative case that exemplifies the extant literature, the recommendations would be to seek a deep understanding, apart from the teacher evaluation process, regarding the interactions amongst the teacher’s educational belief systems, goals, enactment, and reflection, and to use the deep understanding acquired by engaging the teacher in a highly reflective process to help him or her obtain tighter congruence, or recognize the existing congruence, amongst the elements of his or her educational belief systems, goals, and enactment.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The National Commission on Excellence in Education’s (1983) report *A Nation at Risk* presented the American public with a grim picture of the state of the educational system of the time. The report states,

The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (p. 9)

*A Nation at Risk* helped generate a fear of a failing educational system that has been a catalyst for educational reform ever since. Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), federal funding incentives such as Race to the Top (2009), documentaries such as *Waiting for Superman* (2010), and consistent media attention have kept education at the forefront of the public consciousness in an era of increased accountability despite dwindling resources. In 2010, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a rigorous, comprehensive international assessment of student learning, which tested approximately 500,000 fifteen year olds from the seventy countries that account for 90% of the world economy. The PISA indicated the United States was ranked 14th in reading, 17th in science, and 25th in mathematics. As a result, Block (2010) immediately reported on National Public Radio, “Study Confirms U.S. Falling Behind in Education,” a notion foreshadowed by *A Nation at Risk* and a sentiment to which many Americans still ascribe.

With this increase in negative attention, policy-makers have continued to seek ways to reform American education. The two most notable areas of current educational reform include the development of new curriculum expectations, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS),
and an emphasis on teacher effectiveness, both of which have major implications for practitioners, including teachers, administrators, and other instructional leaders.

To emphasize the impact teachers have on student learning, the report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future* by the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (1996) espoused, “What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn” (p. 10). Because teachers are crucial to student success, legislators are trying to find ways to ensure the most effective teachers are in classrooms. To do so, one approach is to eliminate the least effective teachers. Through legislative changes, teacher evaluation in Michigan is becoming more rigorous at the same time tenure protection is weakening, making it easier to dismiss or non-renew ineffective teachers (Michigan.gov, 2011). Furthermore, teacher lay off and recall is no longer primarily based on seniority, but rather on the teacher evaluation ratings given by administrators. Therefore, the lowest performing teachers are now the first to be laid off and the last to be called back.

While ridding the educational system of the lowest performing teachers has become a priority through policies that increase accountability, the profession has responded by developing school improvement models that seek to improve teacher and student performance by promoting continual growth in teaching and learning (State of Michigan Department of Education, 2011). As one of six domains of an administrator’s influence, Marzano (2013) calls for administrators to be evaluated on their ability to lead the continual improvement of instruction (p. 82). Therefore, beyond evaluating teachers in this high-stakes environment, administrators and instructional leaders have the additional responsibility of facilitating the professional growth of their teaching staff.
Statement of the Problem

The logic underlying contemporary educational reform is that by increasing rigor, standardizing learning standards, intensifying accountability, and expanding teachers’ instructional capacity, students will gain a greater level of knowledge and skills that will propel them to more success in the workplace and catapult the United States to higher levels of achievement in comparison to other nations. Reform such as the creation of the CCSS focuses on what students should learn and be able to do. However, the success of educational reform will not be predicated by the standards as they are written; rather, success will hinge on how the curriculum is enacted in the classroom (Lumpe, Haney, & Czerniak, 1998).

To better understand how teachers enact the CCSS and to increase teaching effectiveness, researchers and practicing instructional leaders must attend to why teachers behave the way they do. As such, in the 1980’s and 1990’s, educational researchers began to examine teachers’ thinking about their behaviors (Thompson, 1992). The link between teachers’ thinking and their behaviors can be found in the things and ways teachers believe (Clark, 1988; Nespor, 1987). The underlying assumption is that beliefs provide the best indication of individuals’ decisions over the course of their lifetimes (Bandura, 1986; Rokeach, 1968). Teachers’ beliefs influence their perceptions and judgments, which affect their behavior (Clark, 1988; Nespor, 1987). The way teachers enact the CCSS is reflected in their belief systems. Thus, understanding teachers’ belief systems is tantamount to improving their teaching practices (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Fenstermacher, 1979).

Stanford researcher and author Carol Dweck (2000) asserted, “People’s beliefs about themselves (their self-theories) can create different psychological worlds, leading them to think, feel, and act differently in identical situations” (p. xi). Thus, as teachers are equipped with identical curriculum standards, their beliefs can offer tremendous insight into the different ways
they enact the standards in their classrooms. This should come as no surprise as Fenstermacher (1979) predicted that beliefs would be the most important construct of educational research. Likewise, Pintrich (1990) described beliefs as the most valuable psychological construct to teacher education. Numerous research findings “suggest a strong relationship between teachers’ educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices” (Pajares, 1992, p. 326). As Kagan (1992) stated, “The more one reads studies of teacher belief, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching” (p. 85). According to Richardson (1996), “Teacher attitudes and beliefs…are important considerations in understanding classroom practices” (p. 102). Teachers’ beliefs, particularly those beliefs about how students learn, about students’ abilities, and about the teacher’s role in the learning process, undergird their decisions about the most effective ways to teach students (Brownell, Jordan, & Klingner, 2005). While much of this research came to prominence in previous decades, the implications are particularly important in today’s educational climate, which is characterized by such a strong focus on teacher effectiveness.

In addition to understanding a teacher’s beliefs and belief systems, it is also important to develop an understanding of a teacher’s reflection on their instructional practices. According to Schon (1983),

Through reflection, [a practitioner] can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience. (p. 61)

Likewise, Clough (2003) suggested “from these rich reflection-on-action episodes come more meaningful and productive action plans for improvement that, in time, make for better reflection-
in-action” (p. 17). Accurate reflection-on-action is needed to assess one’s teaching and its effectiveness. Madsen (2005) helped connect teacher reflection to improvement by stating, “As a teacher learns more about what needs to be improved and how he or she might proceed, this knowledge can impact further reflection in the midst of teaching, thus improving teaching practices” (p. 3).

At this point, researchers and educational leaders do not have a deep understanding of how a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection influence the teacher’s enactment of the Common Core State Standards. With a greater understanding in these vital areas, educational leaders can be more effective in facilitating a reflective process that promotes teacher learning and growth, which can lead to more effective instructional practices and higher levels of student achievement.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this single-case, qualitative research study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA Common Core State Standards in his classroom.

**Justification and Significance of the Study**

This research study follows decades of research on the influence of teacher beliefs on teaching practices. Although many important findings precede this study, my research contributes to what is already known about the topic by exploring how a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection appear to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS in his classroom, which has yet to be studied. As 45 states have adopted the CCSS to date, this study can have wide-ranging implications for instructional leaders across the nation who seek to understand the influence of teacher beliefs and reflection on their instructional practices. As Nespor (1987)
stated, “To understand teaching from teachers’ perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work” (p. 323). This understanding takes on increased importance as teacher evaluation and teacher effectiveness are primary responsibilities of administrators in this era of high-stakes accountability. Teaching can take on completely different meanings for different teachers, and recognizing this will help educational leaders to make sense of what teachers do and why they do it (Nespor, 1987). It would be difficult for instructional leaders to supervise and guide teachers “with such different orientations using the same methods and expect similar results, or any results at all” (Nespor, 1987, p.323). Furthermore, Trigwell, Prosser, and Taylor (1994) emphasized the mounting consensus that educational innovation and reform are doomed to failure if the focus is merely developing new teacher skills without attending to teachers’ beliefs, intentions, and attitudes. This “implies that if an attempt is made to change teachers’ practice, it is necessary to know and address their existing beliefs” (Van Driel, Bulte, & Verloop, 2007, p. 158).

This qualitative case study provided an opportunity to contribute to the literature by examining how a teacher’s beliefs and reflection influence the teacher’s instructional practices in a contemporary context, through the enactment of the ELA CCSS, which has yet to be studied in this way. Furthermore, through this study, the researcher facilitated a reflective process on several levels. The teacher was prompted to reflect during interviews and post-observation debriefing sessions. Similarly, the researcher had opportunities to reflect following the interviews, observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions in an effort to help the researcher gain an understanding of how the teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection influences his enactment of the ELA CCSS. In so doing, the researcher gained insight into how to facilitate a level of reflection that could increase teacher learning and, therefore,
teacher effectiveness. Although every individual teacher has a unique composition of educational beliefs/belief systems and enacts the CCSS in a unique way, this study, when viewed as a process of examining teacher behaviors and responses and facilitating reflection, provides a platform to benefit the researcher and other educational leaders in promoting teacher learning, growth, and effectiveness.

Research Questions

This qualitative research case study sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What educational beliefs appear to be central to the teacher’s belief system(s)?
2. What are the teacher’s theories-in-use related to the ELA CCSS?
3. How are the ELA CCSS enacted in this teacher’s classroom?
4. How do the teacher’s beliefs/belief systems appear to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS?
5. How does the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action appear to influence his educational beliefs and behaviors?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were the most germane to the findings of this study. As such, the terms were operationally defined as follows:

Assumption: Diekar (2007) defined an assumption as an assertion or thought about some characteristic of the future that underlies one’s current operations or plans (p. 79).

Attitude: Rokeach (1968) defined an attitude as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner” (p. 112).

Beliefs: Pajares (1992) defined a “belief” as “an individual’s judgment of the truth or
falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do” (p. 316).

**Belief System:** Pajares (1992) stated a belief system “is composed of beliefs connected to one another and to other cognitive/affective structures” (p. 316).

**Enactment:** The interactive instructional process amongst the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards.

**Goals:** The results or outcomes individuals strive to achieve. Goals may be inferred or precise, conscious or unconscious (Schoenfeld, 2011).

**Opinion:** Rokeach (1968) defined an opinion “as a verbal expression of some belief, attitude, or value…. An opinion typically represents a public belief, attitude, or value, but may come closer to private ones when verbally expressed under increasing conditions of privacy” (p. 125).

**Reflection:** According to Garman (1996), reflection is an active process in which teachers consider their actions and the resulting consequences of their teaching.

**Reflection-in-action:** According to Schon (1983), reflection-in-action occurs when practitioners reflect on their “practice while they are in the midst of it” (p. 61-62).

**Reflection-on-action:** Schon (1983) described reflection-on-action as the reflection that occurs after a particular activity has taken place when one thinks back over what happened, evaluates one’s actions along with the success of the activity, and considers whether changes could have resulted in different outcomes.

**Theory of Action:** “A full schema for a theory of action” can be represented as follows: “in situation $S$, if you want to achieve consequence $C$, under assumptions $a_1…a_n$, do $A$” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 6).
**Values:** Rokeach (1968) suggested values are an individual’s disposition that underlies one’s attitudes. In this sense, a value is a type of belief, centrally located with one’s total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining. Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals. (p. 124)

**Organization of Chapters**

This qualitative dissertation is organized according to five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introductory material that establishes the problem with contemporary educational reform and explains the significance of developing a deep understanding about the influence of the teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS. Chapter 2 explores the key concepts that would be likely to provide the greatest value at the onset of the study. Chapter 3 details the qualitative methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 contains the findings that were derived from an extensive analysis of the data set, including the emergence of the teacher’s goals as an important construct that was not originally anticipated, as well as an evolution of the purpose of the study to investigate the interactions amongst the teacher’s educational belief system, goals, enactment of the ELA CCSS, and reflection. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a series of conclusions that connect the findings to theory, the tentative recommendations for instructional leaders that are qualified by the fact that this was a single-case study, and the implications for future research that could help build our understanding about the relationships amongst the underlying and observable aspects of teachers’ practices.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction to Beliefs

According to Hirsh, Psencik, and Brown (2014), “Beliefs are what we hold to be true. They endure over time. They drive what we say, think, and do. Our words and actions convey how deeply held our beliefs are” (p. 12). Pajares (1992) defined “belief” as “an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do” (p. 316). Nespor (1987) asserted our beliefs are shaped by experience and culture. Previous episodes help determine beliefs, and beliefs, in turn, affect the comprehension of subsequent events. Similarly, Goodman (1988) noted how guiding images of past events create intuitive screens that filter new information, and Pajares (1992) suggested that “learning and inquiry are dependent on prior beliefs that not only make current phenomena intelligible but also organize and define new information” (p. 320).

Belief as Distinct from Knowledge

Belief and knowledge are similar constructs. However, Nespor (1987) identified four features that distinguish beliefs from knowledge: existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure.

1. Unlike knowledge systems, belief systems can contain assumptions or propositions, known as existential presumptions, about entities’ existence or nonexistence (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987). The process involved in existential presumption includes regarding transitory or abstract characteristics into stable, well-defined, concrete entities, which takes on importance in the classroom because teachers tend to think of such entities as immutable, beyond their control or influence (Nespor, 1987). For example, a teacher
may believe a student as “smart,” conceptualizing intelligence as a trait this student possesses.

2. The term *alternativity* refers to conceptualizations of ideal situations differing significantly from present realities. In this respect, beliefs serve as means of defining goals and tasks, whereas knowledge systems come into play where goals and the paths to their attainment are well-defined (Nespor, 1987, p. 319).

   A teacher could believe in his or her own version of an ideal classroom environment, and in trying to fulfill that vision, no matter how far removed it is from the reality of the classroom environment, ignores or deprioritizes all other concerns.

3. Beliefs are subjective to the beholder’s feelings and evaluations, which includes the *affective and evaluative* aspects of beliefs. A teacher’s feelings about a student or subject matter influence his or her beliefs about the student or subject. Nespor (1987) stated how “affect and evaluation can thus be important regulators of the amount of energy teachers will put into activities and how they will expend energy on an activity” (p. 320).

4. Abelson (1979) and Nespor (1987) contended knowledge is stored semantically while beliefs are stored episodically. Semantic storage involves categorizing information into lists or networks; conversely, *episodic storage* involves organizing personal experiences or episodes (Nespor, 1987; Schank & Abelson, 1977). The subjective power, authority, and legitimacy of beliefs derive from critical episodes or events, which influence comprehension of future events (Ayeroff & Abelson, 1976; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett, Borgida, Crandall, & Reed, 1976; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Teachers’ previous experiences influence their beliefs, which in turn, influence their professional practice and shape how the teacher perceives future experiences.
Beyond Nespor’s (1987) dichotomy distinguishing beliefs from knowledge, Rokeach (1968) considered knowledge to be a component of belief. He conceptualized belief as consisting of three components: cognitive, based on knowledge; affective, able to arouse emotion; and, behavioral, activated when action is necessary. Pajares (1992) argued that “belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is based on objective fact” (p. 313). Richardson (1996) proposed that “knowledge has epistemic standing; that is, there is some evidence to back up the claim. Beliefs, however, do not require a truth condition” (p. 104).

Educational Beliefs

Although beliefs encompass a broad spectrum, “when researchers speak of teachers’ beliefs, …they seldom refer to the teachers’ broader, general belief system, of which educational beliefs are but a part, but to teachers’ educational beliefs” (Pajares, 1992, p. 316). Even teachers’ educational beliefs can be overly broad and context-free to be useful to research, so it is important to acknowledge and identify key educational beliefs

about confidence to affect students’ performance (teacher efficacy), about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), about the causes of teachers’ or students’ performance (attributions, locus of control, motivations, writing apprehension, math anxiety), about perceptions of self and feeling of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem), about confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy). There are also educational beliefs about specific subjects or disciplines (reading instruction, the nature of reading, whole language). (Pajares, 1992, p. 316)

Implicit theories of intelligence. Implicit theories of intelligence have significant implications for education and are based on theories or beliefs one possesses regarding intelligence. According to Dweck (2000), “Implicit theories represent assumptions about the self
that have cognitive, motivational, emotional, and behavioral consequences, but they are distinct from other cognitive and motivational constructs” (p. 176). The implicit theories that focus on differing conceptions about the nature of intelligence include the incremental theory of intelligence and the entity theory of intelligence. Dweck and Leggett (1988) postulated that people with an incremental theory of intelligence “believe that intelligence is a malleable, increasable, controllable quality” (p. 262). Conversely, people with an entity theory of intelligence “believe that intelligence is a fixed or uncontrollable trait” (p. 262). According to Dweck (2006), a growth mindset accompanies an incremental theory of intelligence in which one believes one’s ability is changeable and “can be developed through learning,” whereas a fixed mindset is associated with an entity theory of intelligence in which one believes one’s ability is fixed and “needs to be proven” (p. 15).

Dweck’s (2000) meaning system approach of “how people’s beliefs, values, and goals set up a meaning system within which they define themselves and operate” fits within the framework of social-cognitive theory” of motivation, personality, and the self. Through the theory of personal constructs, George Kelly (1955) theorized that we constantly attempt to make sense of our world, which influences our construct systems we observe, draw conclusions about cause and effect, and make behavioral decisions according to those conclusions. Thus, how we construct meaning predicts behavior.

Dweck’s findings incorporate significant elements of attribution theory. In their work, Jones et al. (1972) focused on how people make sense of their observations and experiences. Weiner (1984) went further by connecting how the attributions people use to explain their successes and failures determine the effects of the successes and failures. Thus, if one attributes failure to a variable factor such as effort, one will be more optimistic about the possibility of
future success. Conversely, attributing failure to a more stable factor such as ability leaves one more pessimistic about future successes.

The state of “learned helplessness” occurs “when one believes that one’s outcomes or reinforcements are not contingent on one’s actions, that is, are beyond one’s personal control. Two of the major symptoms of this state are decreased motivation and negative affect” (Rholes, Blackwell, Jordan, & Walters, 1980, p. 616).

While attribution theory is integral to Dweck’s research, Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, and Wan (1999) stated,

The attributional approach is incomplete in two ways. One is that implicit in these formulations is the notion that motivational processes (and important individual differences in motivational processes) begin only when the individual has encountered an outcome, such as a failure. Issues of why people are in a particular situation in the first place and what they hope to achieve there (aside from "success") are not dealt with. The second way in which attribution-based formulations are incomplete is that they do not address the theories, belief systems, or conceptual frameworks people bring with them to a situation that can foster particular attributions. According to the attributional formulations, outcomes occur and attributions (whether previously learned or formulated at that time) are made. Little else about the person’s belief systems or goals is seen as relevant.

To address the issues with motivational process being linked only to outcomes and with the lack of consideration of how beliefs undergird attributions, Dweck and her colleagues (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) developed a new model. According to Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, and Wan (1999),
People's implicit theories and goals create a motivational framework that (a) guides the individual's strivings prior to an outcome and (b) creates a meaning system within which attributions occur. The model identifies two implicit self-theories (such as theories of intelligence) that people can hold: an *entity* theory that portrays a personal attribute as relatively fixed or an *incremental* theory that portrays the attribute as relatively malleable. According to this model, an entity versus an incremental theory of intelligence orients an individual to focus on different goals and on different internal factors in explaining performance. When individuals hold an entity theory of their intelligence, they tend to orient more toward performance goals, the goal of gaining favorable judgments of their attributes and avoiding negative ones. That is, when a valuable personal attribute is seen as fixed, people become very concerned with demonstrating that they have a sufficient amount of it and with avoiding a demonstration of deficiencies. Attributions as well as goals may be organized around fixed ability. That is, in understanding performance outcomes, entity theorists may be more focused on their fixed ability than on the malleable aspects of themselves. Thus, people holding an entity theory (entity theorists) may explain negative performance more in terms of their lack of ability than effort, which would render them vulnerable to helpless responses in the face of failure.

The development of entity and incremental theories in relation to attributions such as intelligence or ability have had tremendous influence in the educational community as Dweck (1986) established a framework for how motivation affects learning in children, which may also be applicable to adults, including teachers.
According to Dweck (1986), achievement motivation revolves around competence. Children develop theories about their competence. Some believe their competence (intelligence) is a fixed trait, represented by the entity theory. Others believe their competence (intelligence) can be increased, which is represented by the incremental theory. One’s notion of competence determines which of two types of goals one is likely to pursue: performance goals or learning goals. Individuals who pursue performance goals attempt to gain affirmation of their competence or avoid denial of their competence. Conversely, individuals who pursue learning goals attempt to increase competence and understanding. Achievement behavior can be characterized by adaptive (mastery-oriented) or maladaptive (helpless) behavior. Those who are mastery-oriented thrive on challenge and persist despite struggle. Those who maintain a helpless orientation avoid challenge and exhibit minimal persistence when confronted by difficulty.

Children who adopt an entity theory that intelligence is a fixed trait are more likely to develop performance goals that verify their competence, whereas children who adopt an incremental theory that intelligence is malleable are more likely to develop learning goals that increase their competence. Entity theorists with performance goals will only attempt a challenging task if they perceive themselves to have high ability in that area. They will avoid the challenging task if they perceive themselves to have low ability in that area. Incremental theorists will universally attempt a challenging task regardless of their perception of their ability level.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is another important construct in the realm of teacher beliefs. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). “Self-beliefs of efficacy have diverse psychological effects that can facilitate or impair complex
decision making” (Bandura & Jourden, 1991, p. 942) by regulating motivation levels through the 
implications on effort and the impacts on goal setting (Bandura, 1988; Bandura & Cervone, 
1983, 1986; Cervone & Peake, 1986). Ross, Cousins, and Gadall (1996) reported that self-
efficacy is one of the most important factors regarding teaching quality, effort, and motivation. 
Plus, Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy (1990) identified the correlation between a teacher’s self-
efficacy and student achievement in that students whose teachers with high self-efficacy perform 
at higher levels than those who have a teacher who reports low self-efficacy. According to 
Bandura (1993), teachers’ self-efficacy impacts their behavior in terms of their cognitive 
processes, motivational processes, affective processes, and selection processes. Teachers who 
have high self-efficacy adopt cognitive processes in which they set rigorous goals they commit to 
and persevere through despite challenges and barriers (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Marinez-Pons, 
1992, p. 664). Teachers with high self-efficacy display motivational processes in which they 
accept responsibility for student achievement and attribute failure to a lack of effort rather than 
ability. In addition, teachers with high self-efficacy show an affective resilience in the face of 
stress and setbacks and report more satisfaction in their jobs. Lastly, teachers with high self-
efficacy select a high level of involvement in school improvement initiatives and choose to teach 
classes or grades they believe are important.

Values

According to Pajares (1992), “beliefs may also become values, which house the 
evaluative, comparative, and judgmental functions of beliefs and replace predisposition with an 
imperative to action” (p. 314). Rokeach (1968) suggested values are an individual’s disposition 
that underlies one’s attitudes. In this sense, a value is
A type of belief, centrally located with one’s total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining. Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals. (Rokeach, 1968, p. 124)

Ideal modes of conduct can include being organized and efficient, being honest, or being generous. Ideal terminal goals are the end-states people seek, such as freedom, happiness, and success. Rokeach (1968) stated, “A person’s values, like all beliefs, may be consciously conceived or unconsciously held, and must be inferred from what a person says or does” (p. 124).

Additionally, “A value system is a hierarchical organization—a rank ordering—of ideals or values in terms of importance” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 124). For instance, a teacher may rank student responsibility ahead of content mastery; therefore, the teacher may put more emphasis on meeting deadlines rather than increasing competence. Recognizing teachers’ ranking systems in relation to their values can help instructional leaders better understand teachers’ instructional choices, particularly when the teacher’s values are in conflict with one another.

**Attitudes**

Lewis (1938) defined an attitude as “an interrelated set of opinions organized around a point of reference” (p. 65). In response, Rokeach (1968) substituted “constructs” for Lewis’s “point[s] of reference,” when he defined attitudes as beliefs about constructs—beliefs about politics or beliefs about power, for example. Rokeach (1968) viewed attitudes as “underlying beliefs…rather than expressed opinions” (p. 112). Teachers’ beliefs are composed of their “attitudes about education—about schooling, teaching, learning, and students” (Pajares, 1992,
Fishbein (1967) conceived attitudes as being affective in nature and defined them as “learned predispositions to respond to an object or class of objects in a favorable or unfavorable way” (p. 257). Richardson (1996) considered attitudes to be predispositions that affect actions. Putting these notions together into a composite, Rokeach (1968) defined an attitude as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner” (p. 112). Krech and Crutchfield (1948) helped distinguish attitudes from beliefs with the view that all attitudes include beliefs, but not all beliefs incorporate attitudes. Rokeach (1968) conceptualized an attitude as “one type of subsystem of beliefs, organized around an object or situation, which is, in turn embedded within a larger subsystem, and so on” (p. 123). Understanding a teacher’s attitudes and predispositions can help instructional leaders better understand the teacher’s behavioral tendencies in a more general way compared to an understanding of the teacher’s beliefs or values.

**Opinions**

Rokeach (1968) defined an opinion “as a verbal expression of some belief, attitude, or value….” An opinion typically represents a public belief, attitude, or value, but may come closer to private ones when verbally expressed under increasing conditions of privacy” (p. 125). A teacher’s opinions are the least important aspect of a teacher’s educational belief system but may still provide implications for educational leaders to attend to for developing a deeper understanding of why teachers make certain choices.

**Theories of Action**

Argyris and Schon (1974), attempting to integrate thought with action, introduced the idea of theories of action, which include espoused theories and theories-in-use. In many ways, Argyris and Schon’s (1974) use of the word “theory” is analogous to “belief.” Their work is
rooted in the notion that individuals are designers of action “in order to achieve intended consequences and monitor to learn if their actions are effective” (Anderson, 1997). According to Argyris and Schon (1974), “A full schema for a theory of action” can be represented as follows: “in situation S, if you want to achieve consequence C, under assumptions \( a_1 \ldots a_n \), do A” (p. 6). In fact, people develop mental maps that guide their planning, implementation, and review of their actions (Anderson, 1997). According to Argyris and Schon (1974), people rarely recognize that their mental maps for taking action do not match the theories they espouse explicitly. Furthermore, even fewer people have an awareness of the maps they actually use (Argyris, 1980). Interestingly, this is not a schism between “theory and action but between two different theories of action” (Argyris, Putnam & McLain Smith, 1985, p.82), which include espoused theory and theory-in-use. Understanding a teacher’s theories of action can help educational leaders to make connections between the teacher’s observable actions and the theories/beliefs that undergird those actions.

**Espoused theory.** According to Anderson (1997), an espoused theory is “the world view and values people believe their behaviour is based on.” Espoused theory then is the explicit explanation one gives to explain his or her behavior.

**Theory-in-use.** Anderson (1997) defined a theory-in-use as “the world view and values implied by their behaviour, or the maps they use to take action.” Argyris and Schon (1974) argued that “theories-in-use…include assumptions about the self, others, the situation, and the connections among action, consequence, and situation” (p. 7). As many people lack an awareness of their theories-in-use, this knowledge is often implicit or tacit. Therefore, “if we know our theories-in-use tacitly, they exist even when we cannot state them and when we are somehow prevented from behaving according to them” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 11).
**Congruence.** According to Argyris and Schon (1974), “congruence means that one’s espoused theory matches his theory-in-use—that is, that one’s behavior fits his espoused theory of action” (p. 23). Congruence can also refer to the match between one’s feelings and actions (Argyris & Schon, 1974). The purpose of this study was not to test whether the teacher’s actions were congruent with his espoused theory. However, this type of congruence can make it easier for researchers and instructional leaders who work with teachers to infer beliefs from words and actions.

**Assumptions**

Diekar (2007) defined assumptions as assertions or thoughts about some characteristic of the future that underlies one’s current operations or plans (p. 79). Hirsh et al. (2014) identified how assumptions are foundational to one’s beliefs:

- Assumptions are the logic behind our beliefs and signal the reasons for those beliefs.
- Assumptions guide how we behave, what we plan, and what we execute. They provide the rationale for our intended outcomes, our best-laid plans, and our expectations for success. Assumptions are deemed accurate when we achieve our intended outcomes; they are questioned when results differ from expectations. Assumptions are the basis for our beliefs, behaviors, theories of action, and change strategy. (p. 14)

Thus, assumptions undergird the outcomes one seeks and the action plans one develops for achieving the desired results. Extending the connection among assumptions, perceptions, and actions, Boyd (1992) asserted:

- Behind each of our acts we can find the assumptions we are making about the particular situation to which we are responding. Change our assumptions and our view of the
situation, and the way we respond also changes. Our assumptions shape our perceptions and behavioral responses. (p. 18)

Therefore, as our assumptions influence our actions, one way to change behavior is through the alteration of one’s assumptions.

Beliefs Affect Behavior

As assumptions underlie beliefs and influence behaviors, logic dictates that beliefs also impact behavior. Beliefs play a vital role in how individuals define tasks and select the cognitive tools in which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding the tasks. As such, beliefs are instrumental in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information. In short, Individuals’ beliefs strongly affect their behavior (Bandura, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968).

Pajares (1992) offered the following explanation as to how beliefs affect behavior:

Clusters of beliefs around a particular object or situation form attitudes that become action agendas. Beliefs within attitudes have connections to one another and to beliefs in other attitudes, so that a teacher’s attitude about a particular educational issue may include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, the community, race, and even family. These connections create the values that guide one’s life, develop and maintain other attitudes, interpret information, and determine behavior. (p. 319)

Beliefs and behavior have a reciprocal effect on one another in that beliefs influence behavior, and behavior influences beliefs. Richardson (1996) declared “the perceived relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive. Beliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to changes in and/or additions to beliefs” (p. 104). Argyris and Schon (1974) explained the interactive nature of beliefs and actions, while
also asserting our beliefs influence our perception of reality, through their concept of theories-in-use:

Theory-building is reality building, not only because our theories-in-use help determine the characteristics of the behavioral world but because our theories-in-use determine our actions, which in turn help to determine the characteristics of the behavioral world, which in turn feed into our theories-in-use. (p. 18)

In terms of the connection of a teacher’s beliefs to teaching practices, Green (1971) contended that

Teaching has to do, in part at least, with the formation of beliefs, and that means that it has to do not simply with what we shall believe, but with how we shall believe it.

Teaching is an activity which has to do, among other things, with the modification and formation of belief systems. (p. 48)

As Rokeach (1968) asserted attitudes are a subset of beliefs, then attitudes also affect behavior. He postulated “that a person’s social behavior must always be mediated by at least two types of attitudes—one activated by the object, the other activated by the situation” (p. 126).

Thus, one’s behavior will be guided by the relative importance one places on each type of attitude in a given context.

Beliefs Influence Teaching Practices

Several studies have shown ways in which teachers’ beliefs affect their teaching practices. Nespor (1984) conducted the Teacher Beliefs Study (TBS), which helped provide a conceptual framework for belief systems and helped differentiate beliefs from knowledge.

Carter and Norwood’s (1997) study of seven math teachers suggested that the teachers’ beliefs were consistent with their teaching practices. Their findings were derived from two
different data collection instruments that were specifically designed to measure belief systems about mathematics in both the teachers and the students in their classes. In order to understand the connection between teacher beliefs and teaching practices in reading comprehension, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) analyzed extensive interviews centering on the teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning. In doing so, Richardson et al. (1991) were able to predict how the teachers taught reading comprehension. Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter, and Loef (1989) studied math teachers whose beliefs spanned a range of emphasizing cognition to greater or lesser degrees. They found that those teachers who had more of a cognitive perspective taught more word problems and their students performed better on achievement tests than those teachers with less of a cognitive perspective. Wilson and Wineburg’s (1988) study of four history teachers showed their beliefs regarding the nature of history had a significant impact on how they taught history. Wilkins (2008) found that in comparison to mathematical content knowledge, attitudes towards mathematics, beliefs about the effectiveness, and use of inquiry-based instruction, teacher beliefs have the strongest effect on teachers’ practice.

Belief Systems

According to Pajares (1992), “Conceptualizing a belief system involves the understanding that this system is composed of beliefs connected to one another and to other cognitive/affective structures, complex and intricate though these connections may be, that form beliefs about constructs” (p. 316). In short, “Beliefs, attitudes, and values form an individual’s belief system” (Pajares, 1992, p. 314). Nespor (1987) suggested “belief systems consist of propositions, concepts, arguments, or whatever that are recognized—by those who them or by outsiders—as being in dispute or as in principle disputable (p. 321). Therefore, the elements of one’s belief system are not comprised of absolute truths, but rather are comprised of one’s
notions, which are disputable. Rokeach (1968) characterized a belief system “as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every one of a person’s countless beliefs about physical and social reality” (p. 2). Adding to Rokeach’s sentiment about belief systems’ lack of a logical organizational structure, Nespor (1987) commented, “There are no clear logical rules for determining the relevance of beliefs to real-world events and situations” (p. 321). Nonetheless, belief systems encapsulate all beliefs as beliefs do not exist outside of the belief system just as stars do not exist outside of the universe (Rokeach, 1968).

While all beliefs are found within belief systems, not all beliefs take on the same level of importance. Connections among, and relationships between, beliefs or other cognitive and affective structures determine which beliefs are prioritized (Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968). Rokeach (1968) discussed several studies he conducted that increased the “understanding of the internal architecture of belief systems and the conditions for their modification” (p. 21). Furthermore, in collaboration with Joseph Reyher and Richard Wiseman, Rokeach (1968) designed “an experimental approach to the determination of the importance of belief” (p. 22). Through this study, Rokeach (1968) found

1. Types of belief located along a central-peripheral dimension are functionally distinct.
2. The more central a belief the more it will resist change.
3. Changes in central beliefs will produce greater changes in the rest of the belief system than changes in less central beliefs. (p. 22)

Rokeach (1968) used the structure of an atom as an analogy for the structure of a belief system in that the particles in the nucleus are relatively stable, and the nucleus is the most central (important) aspect of the atom. Certain central beliefs, then, form the “nucleus” as the most
important beliefs within the system and the most resistant to change. Rokeach (1968)
determined the importance of beliefs “solely in terms of connectedness: the more a given belief
is functionally connected or in communication with other beliefs, the more implications and
consequences it has for other beliefs and, therefore, the more central the belief” (p. 5).

Rokeach (1968) proposed the following four assumptions as the criteria of
connectedness:

1. *Existential versus nonexistential beliefs.* Beliefs directly concerning one’s own
existence and identity in the physical and social world are assumed to have more
functional connections and consequences for other beliefs than those which less
directly concern one’s existence and identity.

2. *Shared versus unshared beliefs about existence and identity.* Beliefs concerning
existence and self-identity may be shared or not shared with others. Those shared
with others are assumed to have more functional connections and consequences for
other beliefs than those not shared with others.

3. *Derived versus underived beliefs.* Many beliefs are learned not by direct encounter
with the object of belief but, indirectly, from reference persons and groups. We refer
to such beliefs as “derived” beliefs. Derived beliefs are assumed to have fewer
functional connections and consequences for other beliefs than the beliefs from which
they are derived.

4. *Beliefs concerning and not concerning matters of taste.* Many beliefs represent more
or less arbitrary matters of taste and are often so perceived by the individual holding
them. Such beliefs are assumed to have relatively fewer functional connections and
consequences for other beliefs than beliefs that do not represent arbitrary measures of
taste.  (p. 5-6)

As attitudes and values are considered to be substructures of beliefs, they too are a part of the
web-like network of the belief system. Therefore, attitudes and values can have an inferred
functional connectedness to other beliefs and structures, which determines their importance and
predisposition to action (Pajares, 1992). In short, “human beings have differing beliefs of
differing intensity and complex connections that determine their importance” (Pajares, 1992, p.
318). In this way, each teacher’s actions are unique because each teacher has a unique set of
beliefs that interact with the other belief structures within his or her belief system in unique
ways. Therefore, it is important for researchers and instructional leaders to attend to the complex
interactions between an individual teacher’s beliefs and actions as these are not uniform from
one teacher to the next.

According to Schultz (1970), beliefs are often contradictory, nebulous, or even
incoherent:

One may consider statements as equally valid which in fact are incompatible with one
another[, but]…this inconsistency does not necessarily originate in a logical fallacy.

Men’s thought is just spread out over subject matters located within different and
differently relevant levels, and they are not aware of the modifications they would have
to make in passing from one level to another. (p. 76)

Rokeach’s (1968) model proposed that attempts to recognize and comprehend the functional
connections along the four dimensions can offer possibilities for determining the centrality or
importance of individual beliefs or attitudes. Pajares (1992) suggested “these efforts are akin to
navigating among relevant levels for the purpose of discovering the relevant structure
responsible for housing the belief-laden values that trigger specific behaviors. Inconsistencies are then seen in clearer perspective” (p. 319). Green (1971) advocated beliefs are organized into clusters, and incompatible beliefs are held in different clusters. The incompatibility may remain until individuals encounter instances in which they must act in the face of incompatible beliefs. In such situations, individuals “must behave in a manner consistent with only one of these beliefs. It is at this point that connections are discovered or created and the centrality of a belief comes to prominence” (Pajares, 1992, p. 319).

The concept of compatibility relates to Argyris and Schon’s (1974) notion of internal consistency in which the “consistency lies not between propositions in the theory (‘This man is generous,’ ‘This man is stingy’) but among the governing variables of the theory that are related to assumptions about self, others, and the behavioral setting” (p. 20). Argyris and Schon (1974) maintained that each variable has a range of acceptability for the individual, with the individual’s preference found somewhere within the range:

If two or more governing variables in a theory-in-use are internally inconsistent, then, for given sets of ranges, arrays of strategies, assumptions about the situation, constraining variables, and influences of action on the behavioral world there is no way of falling into the acceptable range for one value without falling out of the acceptable range for the other. (p. 22)

**Ideology**

In order to differentiate between the similar concepts of *ideology* and *belief systems*, Rokeach (1968) stated:

The concept of belief system is broader than ideology, containing pre-ideological as well as ideological beliefs. An *ideology* is an organization of beliefs and attitudes—religious,
political or philosophical in nature—that is more or less institutionalized or shared with others, deriving from external authority. (p. 123-124)

Thus, an ideology is an organized, institutionalized set of beliefs and attitudes that is espoused by an authoritative body. This study did not include ideologies as part of the teacher’s belief system, but the teacher’s opinions of the ELA CCSS included shades of somewhat common educational ideologies.

The Origins of Teachers’ Beliefs

To better understand a teacher’s beliefs, it is helpful to understand where the beliefs came from. Pajares (1992) summarized that “theorists generally agree that beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction” (p. 316). Using Melville Herskovits’s *Cultural Anthropology* and *Man and His Works* as guiding texts, VanFleet (1979) proposed that cultural transmission consists of three components:

*Enculturation.* A learning process that continues throughout the life of an individual. It not only includes the training he received at the hands of others, but also the assimilation of elements in his culture that he acquires without direction, through his own powers of observation and by imitation.

*Education.* Directed learning, with an ascribed purpose, “a buffer that polishes the rough surface of untutored behavior,” can be informal or formal. The function of education is to bring individual behavior in line with specific requirements of the culture.

*Schooling.* The processes of teaching and learning carried on at specific times in particular places outside the home, for definite periods, by persons especially prepared for the task. (p. 282)
Similarly, Richardson (1996) suggested that teachers’ beliefs are developed from three categories of experience: personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge.

As a teacher’s personal experiences shape his or her beliefs, they also affect the teacher’s professional practice. Clandinin (1986) suggested a teacher’s personal experience is encapsulated in enduring images that influence the teacher’s behavior. In Clandinin and Connelly’s (1991) case study, a principal’s experience growing up in a tight-knit community created an image of community that guided his approach to involve the community in his school. Similar to the idea of the enduring image, Bullogh and Knowles’ (1991) emphasized the importance of metaphors from one’s personal experience that translate to teaching through their case study of a parent who became a teacher. Through her previous parenting experience, she developed the metaphor of teaching as nurturing, which guided her practice as a teacher.

A teacher’s experience during his or her formative years as a student, what Lortie (1975) described as the “apprenticeship of observation,” has a profound impact on his or her beliefs about teaching. These beliefs can include ideas about effective teaching and student behavior (Clark, 1988; Nespor, 1987), and they are well established by the time the prospective teacher enters college (Buchmann, 1987; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Wilson, 1990). In addition, Anning (1988) found the six teachers in her study had developed their beliefs about children’s learning from “their own previous experiences of teaching and learning” (p. 131). Britzman (1991) found, in his case studies of two student teachers, that they developed beliefs about the role of the teacher from observing teaching, which strongly influenced their own classroom practices.
Teachers’ beliefs are also formed by their experiences with formal knowledge, which (Richardson, 1996) defined as “understandings that have been agreed on within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid” (p. 106). Of specific interest in the formal knowledge domain are teachers’ beliefs about the subjects they teach and how students learn those subjects along with their pedagogical beliefs. Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman (1989) stated, “Teachers’ beliefs about the subject matter, including orientation toward the subject matter, contribute to the ways in which teachers think about their subject matter and the choices they make in their teaching” (p. 27). Leinhardt (1988) found a teacher’s experiences with math texts both as a student and teacher influenced her beliefs about the nature of mathematics and impacted her classroom instruction. Clift’s (1987) findings about English majors who were not interested in teaching in comparison to those who were preparing to teach showed major differences in their beliefs about teaching and learning. English majors viewed the teacher as the singular authoritative figure in the classroom on matters of interpreting literature. On the other hand, the prospective teachers’ beliefs were significantly more constructivist in nature.

**Beliefs and Memory**

The affective and emotional components of beliefs can influence the ways events and elements in memory are indexed and retrieved and how they are reconstructed during recall. Emotion and affect thus have important implications for how teachers learn and use what they learn (Nespor, 1987, p. 324). According to Pajares (1992), “beliefs color not only what individuals recall but how they recall it, if necessary completely distorting the event recalled in order to sustain the belief” (p. 317). Echoing Nespor’s (1987) framework, Pajares (1992) stated, The affective components of beliefs…facilitate their storage in long-term memory and become gestalts that are efficiently represented and retrieved and acquire a signature
feeling. This signature feeling serves three functions: It facilitates recall by improving access to memory files due to the coloration of the feeling, it acts as the glue that holds elements of memory together for long periods (perhaps indefinitely), and its serves a constructive and reconstructive memory function by filling in incomplete memory gaps during recall and/or filtering information that conflicts with the signature feeling. (p. 322)

Both Nespor (1987) and Pajares (1992) identified connections between emotions and memories, and they also established how one’s beliefs can alter memories in order to preserve beliefs. Thus, attending to a teacher’s emotions and recollections can lend insight into his or her beliefs.

**Perseverance and Changes in Beliefs**

Once individuals have adopted and integrated beliefs, the beliefs generally endure, in their original form, unless they are intentionally challenged (Lasley, 1980). Pajares (1992) suggested the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, for these beliefs subsequently affect perception and strongly influence the processing of new information. It is for this reason that newly acquired beliefs are the most vulnerable. (p. 317)

The hold beliefs have on an individual’s judgment are profound and can overshadow even the clearest and most robust contradictory evidence (Munby, 1982). Nisbett and Ross (1980) referenced the perseverance phenomena of beliefs in which individuals find ways to use conflicting evidence to support the beliefs they possess. Likewise, Schommer (1990) found a belief will alter information to maintain self-consistency. Pajares (1992) proposed that
once beliefs are formed, individuals have a tendency to build causal explanations surrounding the aspects of those beliefs, whether these explanations are accurate or mere invention. Finally, there is the self-fulfilling prophecy—beliefs influence behaviors that are consistent with, and that reinforce, the original beliefs. (p. 317)

Beliefs form mental representations, which are incorporated into an individual’s existing schemata, giving rise to three assumptions: beliefs configure a schema-like network, conflicting beliefs are housed into differing domains of the network, and “core” beliefs are the most difficult to change (Abelson, 1979; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Peterman, 1991; Rokeach, 1960, 1968; Sigel, 1985).

Piaget’s theories of assimilation and accommodation can help explain how individuals manage new phenomena:

Assimilation is the process whereby new information is incorporated into existing beliefs…; accommodation takes place when new information is such that it cannot be assimilated and existing beliefs must be replaced or reorganized. Both result in belief change, but accommodation requires a more radical alteration. When metaphysical and epistemological beliefs are deep and strong, an individual is more likely to assimilate new information than to accommodate it. (Pajares, 1992, p. 320).

Therefore, the depth and strength of a belief can help determine whether one assimilates or accommodates new information. For accommodation to commence, Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) proposed that individuals must feel a level of dissatisfaction with current beliefs and that new beliefs must be intelligible and plausible. Or, as in Rokeach’s (1968) terms, these new beliefs would require a functional connectedness to other beliefs in the system. In their study, Posner et al. (1982) found that participants attempted a series of options prior to
accommodation, as belief change became their last alternative. In that way, a change in beliefs is an anomaly. The anomalies must create enough dissonance for an individual to accommodate information that conflicts with their existing beliefs. In order for this to occur, several conditions must be in place:

First, they must understand that new information represents an anomaly. Second, they must believe that the information should be reconciled with existing beliefs. Third, they must want to reduce the inconsistencies among the beliefs. And last, effort at assimilation must be perceived as unsuccessful. (Pajares, 1992, p. 321)

According to Nespor (1987), “when beliefs change, it is more likely to be a matter of a conversion or gestalt shift than the result of argumentation or a marshaling of evidence” (p. 321). While it is rare for a teacher to change his or her beliefs, this study did provide a glimpse into a situation in which the teacher appeared to experience a type of dissonance that could lead to accommodation in the future. For the researcher, this opportunity provided insight into the functional connectedness amongst inferred beliefs and showcased the strong desire to for the teacher to maintain consistency among his beliefs, even at a subconscious level.

**The Functions of Beliefs**

Perhaps counter to what one might expect, research-based theory or practices are not what teachers often use to approach tasks. Instead, beliefs have a significant role in how teachers define tasks and organize the relevant knowledge and information for those tasks because the “the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled, and that beliefs are peculiarly suited for making sense of such contexts” (Nespor, 1987). A teacher’s goal(s) take(s) on critical importance when a teacher must make a decision or when confronting a problem. As such, with
an interest “in why teachers organize and run classrooms as they do,” attention must be paid “to the goals they pursue” (Nespor, 1987, p.325).

**Connection among Teaching Beliefs and Curricular Beliefs**

Van Driel, Bulte, and Verloop (2007) found, through a questionnaire survey of Dutch (n=966) chemistry teachers, that two distinct belief structures emerged. One group of teachers possessed

a subject-matter oriented educational belief combined with a curricular belief focusing on the teaching of the fundamental, theoretical concepts of chemistry, and another which combined a learner-centred [sic] educational belief with a curricular belief emphasising [sic] that chemical knowledge should be learned in relation to societal issues. (p. 156)

This study, through quantitative research methodology, showed two primary connections of belief systems that combine general teaching orientations with curricular beliefs.

**Behaviorism and Constructivism**

Behaviorism and constructivism are two theories of learning that continue to affect educational policy and practice. In contrasting the two theories, Bichelmeyer and Hsu (1999) asserted,

Where behaviorism views knowledge as resulting from a finding process, constructivism views knowledge as the natural consequence of a constructive process. Where behaviorism views learning as an active process of acquiring knowledge, constructivism views learning as an active process of constructing knowledge. Finally, where behaviorism views instruction as the process of providing knowledge, constructivism views instruction as the process of supporting construction of knowledge. (p. 4)
**Behaviorism.** According to Blackbourn (2007),

Behaviorism emphasizes observable and measurable operant behavior (behavior under conscious control by which an individual “operates” on and within the environment), its relation to stimuli (events or conditions immediately preceding a behavior), and consequences (events or conditions immediately following a behavior).

According to the theory of behaviorism, stimuli (antecedents) signal a behavior or range of behaviors (behavioral repertoire) that an organism…could produce (emit) to bring about a specific consequence. Following the specific behavior with a positive (desirable) consequence increases the chance that the specific behavior will be repeated if the stimulus is presented in the future. Following the specific behavior with a negative (undesired) or neutral consequence will decrease the chance that the specific behavior will be repeated if the stimulus is presented in the future.

Delivering consequences in a systematic manner, according to a specific schedule, yields a specific rate of learning or learning curve. (p. 71)

Thus, behaviorism is rooted in the cause and effect relationship amongst stimuli, behavior, and consequences, with the desirability of consequences having a significant effect on whether a behavior will be repeated.

To understand behaviorism in the context of teaching and learning, Boghossian (2006) explained

The behaviorist would interpret, for example, a student’s correct answer to a question as a sign of successful conditioning, and then continue to reinforce correct responses behaviorally by assigning good grades. Often, the form of conditioning used to achieve desirable verbal behavior is a lecture-based pedagogy. Behaviorism thus views the
student as an unreflective responder. In a behaviorist paradigm, the student is engaged in
the educational process only in that she displays the appropriate verbal behavior (e.g.
checking the correct box on a multiple choice test). There is no subjective element to
learning—either in determining what to study or in how information is interpreted, used,
or understood. (p. 716)

Therefore, behaviorist educational practices are based on exchanges in which teachers lecture
and students passively accept information. Students are rewarded for offering factual renditions
of the information they took in or they are punished for not being able to do so with accuracy.

In addition, behaviorism is foundational to social learning theory and has connections to
tenets of behaviorism formed the basis for Alfred Bandura's concepts of individuals learning
through rewards and punishments embedded in social situations via the processes of modeling
and imitation” (p. 71). Blackbourn (2007) also suggested that “the current educational climate,
with its reflection of scientific management principles and assertive (authoritarian) leadership via
high stakes testing and accountability, are indicative of behaviorism's continuing influence on the
field of education” (p. 72).

**Constructivism.** Constructivism is a learning theory that contends knowledge and
meaning are created through experience and collaboration. According to Boghossian (2006),
“constructing knowledge means that students are active participants in a learning process by
seeking to find meaning in their experiences. In a literal sense, learners construct or find meaning
in their subjective experiences, and this result becomes knowledge” (p. 714). Constructivists
believe the learner is ultimately responsible for his or her learning, and learning is situated in a
given social context that includes the subjectivities of all those involved. Jonassen, Peck, and
Wilson (1999) isolated the five key elements of meaningful learning according to constructivism: “(i) intentional learning, (ii) active learning, (iii) constructive learning, (iv) cooperative learning, and (v) authentic learning.” In this way, learning is a process in which students construct knowledge as active participants in their own learning. Constructivism runs counter to the notion that students are “empty vessels” that are filled with knowledge through direct instruction.

Despite the focus on student engagement in their own learning, teachers are not absent in this paradigm. Nettlebeck (2005) stated, “The quest for understanding is at the core of any kind of constructivist educational enterprise where teachers seek and value students’ points of view, challenge suppositions, pose problems and structure learning around ‘big’ concepts and ideas” (p. 133). The teacher does not function as “the sage on the stage,” but instead puts students in a position to learn through doing. To promote constructivist learning, Doolittle (1999) suggested:

- Learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments;
- Learning should involve social negotiation and mediation;
- Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner;
- Teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors;
- Teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content;
- Content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner’s prior knowledge;
- Students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning experiences;
- Students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware.

According to Bork (2000), this learning paradigm is

1) based on highly interactive conversation,
2) individualized (learning style or individualized attention),
3) adaptive to students’ current needs,
4) creative (constructing, discovering),
5) focused on problem solving, rather than memorization,
6) highly interactive,
7) built around internal motivation,
8) focused on peer learning in small groups along with parent or others’ involvement to their learning circles.

Moving from Behaviorist to Constructivist Practices

After analyzing the interview transcripts of teachers, Black and Ammon (1992) found that teachers, as they gain experience, move from a behaviorist approach to a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Bryan (2003) conducted a qualitative study from a constructivist perspective and “examined the belief system of a prospective elementary teacher…about science teaching and learning as she developed professional knowledge within the context of reflective science teacher education” (p. 835). Through this study, Bryan (2003) developed a belief profile of the participant that showed the centrality of the beliefs within two belief systems, which Bryan refers to as “nests.” This study is the most closely related to my own in terms of the research questions, research design, and theoretical influences. However, this study endeavored to move beyond identifying a teacher’s beliefs to understanding the influence of those beliefs on the teacher’s decision-making and resulting actions.

Introduction to the Common Core State Standards

The vision of rigorous, consistent, nation-wide learning expectations prompted the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA) and
mathematics. Thus far, the CCSS have been adopted by 45 states across the nation and “were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, About the Standards Section, 2012). The CCSS “Mission Statement” goes on to say,

The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012)

A major difference between the CCSS and other curriculum standards is that “the Common Core Standards are intended to focus on fewer topics and address them in greater depth” (Rothman 2012). Furthermore, the CCSS are more rigorous in that they emphasize deep conceptual understanding, application, and higher-order thinking skills (Common Core State Standards Initiative, Criteria Section 2012). It is important to note that “the Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, Myths vs. Facts Section, 2012).

While the CCSS clearly articulate what students will learn, “they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, FAQ Section, 2012). As such, “local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, Myths vs. Facts Section, 2012). But, with that freedom comes the possibility of wide variation in enactment from
classroom to classroom, school to school, district to district, county to county, and state to state. Therefore, instructional leaders in the 45 states that have adopted the standards have a tremendous responsibility in overseeing the enactment of these new standards. In fulfilling their role throughout the enactment of the CCSS, instructional leaders will continue to focus on evaluating teachers and working to increase their effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness, in turn, revolves around how well teachers facilitate student learning through their enactment of the CCSS.

**Constructivism and the CCSS**

Although the CCSS do not specifically dictate a teacher’s pedagogical approach in enacting the *Standards*, education policy analyst James Shuls (2013) contended the CCSS will influence instructional practices as they “are built on constructivist principles and are being implemented, by and large, by constructivist means.” Shuls (2013) extended his argument by stating the assessments associated with the CCSS will also “favor constructivist teaching practices.” Similarly, Flynn, Mesibov, Vermette, and Smith (2013) asserted, “A close study of the Common Core Standards reveals that these student learning standards anticipate teachers adopting constructivist-based classroom practices. This is because the emphasis is on understanding and critical analysis not simple recall.” As this study includes an exploration of a teacher’s enactment of the ELA CCSS, it is important to have a basic understanding of constructivist teaching practices.

**Instructional Shifts and the CCSS**

Petrilli (2013) has supported the idea that the CCSS calls for “instructional shifts,” or changes in teaching practices to align with the new standards, as a way to push towards higher levels of achievement.
The main reason there’s been so little achievement gain over the past few decades arising from the reforms that so many of us have been pressing is precisely because neither curriculum nor instruction much changed—hence the students’ actual classroom experience didn’t much change, and hence the students didn’t learn much more.

Petrilli (2013) asks, “If ‘instructional change’ isn’t what we’re all working toward, through any of our reform efforts, what’s the point? How else do we expect to see improved student achievement?” Shanahan (2013) provided specific ideas regarding the instructional shifts the ELA CCSS will catalyze:

These standards will likely lead to the greatest changes in reading instruction seen for generations. One of the biggest transformations will be to reading lessons, involving changes that will upset traditional approaches that have been in place for decades. These communal reading lessons have gone by many names (e.g., directed reading lessons, guided reading), but all variations include a group of students reading a text together under the supervision of a teacher, and it is that daily event that will change most. (p. 5)

The first instructional shift Shanahan (2013) called for is moving from finding “just-right” books for students to close reading challenging texts. In doing so, students will become more frustrated by challenging texts, and this means other instructional supports will be needed to help and encourage them along this path. Teachers must learn to anticipate text challenges and how to support students to allow them to negotiate texts successfully, but without doing the work for them. (Shanahan, 2013, p. 6)

The second instructional shift prescribed by Shanahan (2013) is moving from preparing to read to actually reading. Currently, teachers spend a great deal of class time providing
background information, discussing context, previewing the text (through “picture walks,” for example), making predictions, and setting purpose:

With the reading lesson, the daily rituals increasingly have elbowed the text aside. Instead of serving to focus students’ attention on making sense of each text within its own interpretive universe, the reading lesson has too often conveyed to students that reading is a ceremonial event to which the text is of only marginal importance. (Shanahan, 2013, p. 11)

In response, “The CCSS place the text—not the teacher—at the center of the students’ negotiation of text meaning. Accordingly, they want prereading rituals reduced” (Shanahan, 2013, p. 9).

The final instructional shift Shanahan (2013) proposed is moving from discussing the text to integrating knowledge and ideas. Commonly during reading lessons, teachers pose questions, and “when students can retell the key ideas and details of a text and answer questions about it, teachers often declare victory and move on” (Shanahan, 2013, p. 10). On the other hand, the CCSS advocate for asking text-dependent questions that move from ascertaining facts to developing higher-order thinking skills that focus on how the author crafts and structures the text, and what meaning the reader derives as a result.

Petrilli (2013) summarized the intention of standards-based reform, such as the CCSS, is to “set clear standards, align assessments to those standards, hold educators accountable, and help them find solid curricular materials that sync with the standards.”

Standards and Curriculum

Although the terms “standards” and “curriculum” are often used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts. Standards refer to desired outcomes, whereas curriculum is the plan,
including the resources, for how one will achieve the standards. In other words, the curriculum is the “means” and standards are the “end.” According to Stenhouse (1975), “a curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice” (p. 4). The Introduction to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics has distinguished the two concepts: “These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods.” (p. 5). The ELA Standards have furthered this point:

The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach. For instance, the use of play with young children is not specified by the Standards, but it is welcome as a valuable activity in its own right and as a way to help students meet the expectations in this document….The Standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document. (p. 6)

In their white paper “From Common Core Standards to Curriculum: Five Big Ideas,” McTighe and Wiggins (2012), offered a helpful analogy:

The standards are like the building code. Architects and builders must attend to them but they are not the purpose of the design. The house to be built or renovated is designed to meet the needs of the client in a functional and pleasing manner—while also meeting the building code along the way. (p. 3)

**Teaching Practices**

Ball and Cohen (2001) define *teaching practices* as “how teachers frame and use academic tasks, acquaint themselves with what students know and can do, enact the instructional
discourse, and mediate the environment” (p. 75). For the purposes of this study, the observed teaching practices were situated within the context of the enactment of the ELA CCSS.

Implementation

According to Altrichter (2005), “the term implementation in a broad sense conceptualizes the process through which a proposed concept, model, topic, theory, etc. is taken up by some practice” (p. 36). Therefore, curriculum development precedes implementation, as implementation is the application of the particular curriculum (Altrichter, 2005, p. 39). Snyder, Bolin, and Zumwalt (1992) defined a fidelity implementation approach as one in which the teacher receives a curriculum that was created outside of the classroom and implements it in the exact way it is written and the way the developer intended. This approach removes teacher autonomy and decision-making from the teacher’s practice. Conversely, mutual adaptation is the process by which the teacher adapts the curriculum in a way that best meets the needs of her students, using her professional judgment to alter the material (Snyder et al., 1992).

Enactment

According to Cohen and Ball (2001), “although many people think of instruction as what teachers do, it consists of interactions involving teachers, students, and content” (p. 75). A teacher’s lesson does not merely consist of what the teacher knows and does, the task students complete, or the difference in student ability and motivation level, but rather how teachers and students interpret and interact with each other and with the task (Cohen & Ball, 2001, p. 75). Teachers shape students in terms of their learning and their production through the ways they attend, listen, and respond (Cohen & Ball, 2001, p. 75). “Similarly, individual students understand and make use of their teachers in different ways. And teachers’ interpretations of the
content have an impact on what is available to students to learn, and so on” (Cohen & Ball, 2001, p. 75). Therefore, instruction is interaction (Cohen & Ball, 2001, p. 75).

Likewise, the enacted curriculum is the interaction between teachers, students, and curricular materials. According to Snyder et al. (1992), “From the enactment perspective, curriculum is viewed as the educational experiences jointly created by student and teacher” (p. 418). “In ‘enactment,’ teachers, students and the community become central figures in planning and design as well as implementation” (McCowan, 2009, p. 91). Ball and Cohen (1996) add other critical elements to the notion of enactment: “While ‘curriculum’ is often taken to refer strictly to the textbook or curriculum materials, the enacted curriculum is actually jointly constructed by teachers, students, and materials in particular contexts” (p. 7). Thus, the enacted curriculum is a dynamic, interactive process rather than just a static set of materials.

However, curricular materials play an important role in the dynamic process of enactment. According to McCowan (2009),

Curriculum materials and strategies developed externally, therefore, become “tools” to be used and manipulated, rather than norms to be followed as faithfully as possible.

Importantly, this process of construction of the curriculum is itself seen as a key learning experience for teachers and students. (p. 91)

Ball and Cohen (1996) discussed curriculum enactment as working across five overlapping domains:

First, teachers are influenced by what they think about their students, about what students bring to instruction, students' probable ideas about the content at hand, and about the trajectories of their learning that content. Second, teachers work with their own understanding of the material, which shapes their interpretations of what the central ideas
are, how they hear, evaluate, and respond to students' ideas, and how they decide how to focus and frame the material for students. Third, teachers fashion the material for students, choose tasks or models, and navigate instructional resources such as textbooks in order to design instruction. Fourth is the intellectual and social environment of the class. Teachers must keep their eye on the group, and on the ways of knowing, interacting, and working that seem possible. This requires attention to patterns and norms of discourse, the nature of tasks, and the roles played by the teacher and students. Finally, teachers are influenced by their views of the broader community and policy contexts in which they work, and by the expressed ideas of parents, administrators, and professional organizations. They variously apprehend and interpret messages about goals for instruction and about good teaching, and their interpretations play a role in the way they shape the curriculum. (p. 7)

To summarize the concept, enactment is the interactive instructional process among the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards.

Erickson (1985) believed the construction of the enacted curriculum is primarily “but not exclusively, the responsibility of the teacher as the instructional leader” (p. 133). In this way, the teacher is the one who has the primary responsibility of planning, structuring, and influencing what happens in the classroom. The teacher also has the greatest impact on the classroom environment and engaging students in the learning process. How the teacher encourages students to take on ownership of, and to participate in, their learning is key to understanding the enactment process.
The Role of Reflection in Learning and Teaching

From a constructivist perspective, learning results from the construction of knowledge from one’s own experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Experiential learning theory defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Learning is a recursive process that includes “experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Therefore, reflection is vital to knowledge construction and the learning process. According to Barnes (2013), “learning occurs through reflection, through questioning one’s own ideas, methods, and beliefs” (p. 41).

According to Dewey (1933), reflection is, a “chain…[a] constant movement to a common end…. [I]mpels inquiry” (p. 1-8). Similarly, Loughran (2002), considered reflection to be a cognitive process of inquiry.

In terms of teaching, Garman (1986) described reflection as an active process in which teachers consider their actions and the resulting consequences of their teaching. When a teacher is dissatisfied with the consequences of their teaching, Dewey (1933) stated, “The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious” (p. 100). Furthermore, “reflection may include reflecting on the implementation of a lesson, on how a child is thinking, or on personal views and beliefs. Each contributes to learning and personal development” (Barnes, 2013, p. 41). According to Zeichner and Liston (1987), reflection furthers teachers’ understanding and gives greater control over the content and processes of their teaching practice, developing teachers as decision makers. Moreover, Gore and Zeichner (1984) asserted that teaching includes a cycle of planning, doing, reflecting, and
then modifying action. Lieberman and Miller (1992) suggested the experimentation teachers often engage in following reflection can improve a teacher’s instructional practices. Korthagen (1993) claimed this type of reflection pushes teachers to rationally select and implement curricular material and pedagogical approaches and to accept the responsibility for their choices.


> When we have learned how to do something, we can execute smooth sequences of activity, recognition, decision, and adjustment without having, as we say, to “think about it.” Our spontaneous knowing in action usually gets us through the day…. [However, if] a familiar routine produces an unexpected result; an error…we may respond to it…. Alternatively, we may reflect in the midst of action without interrupting it. (p. 26)

Oftentimes, people refer to this type of reflection as “thinking on one’s feet,” which can appear to be intuitive in nature and generally results from unanticipated outcomes. According to Schon (1983):

> In each instance, the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation. (p. 68)
At these times, “reflection tends to focus interactively on the outcomes of action, the action itself, and the intuitive knowing implicit in the action” (Schon, 1983, p. 56).

One’s reflection-in-action is “bounded by the ‘action-present,’ the zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation…. The pace and duration of episodes of reflection-in-action vary with the pace and duration of the situations in practice” (Schon, 1983, p. 62). Furthermore, the practitioner

may reflect on the tacit norms and appreciations which underlie a judgment, or on the strategies and theories implicit in a pattern of behavior. He may reflect on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way in which he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context. (Schon, 1983, p 62)

According to Schon (1987), regardless of profession, aspects of knowledge exist that cannot be articulated or taught; rather, one must actively participate in the related actions, which involves continually assessing the action, adjusting to circumstances, and anticipating consequences, all of which are founded on personal learning and prior experiences. Thus, “when someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context” (Schon, 1983, p. 68) while thinking and doing converge and experimentation becomes application.

According to Gioe (2012), for teachers, the “in the moment” changes made to address a problematic situation leading to the evolution of the lesson are a result of the “reflection in action” process which involves the teacher reading the cues and interactions of students while executing the lesson and making adjustments accordingly. As a result, the teacher can troubleshoot and differentiate instruction to meet student needs or address external conditions. (p. 45)
Reflection-on-action. Schon (1983) described reflection-on-action as the reflection that occurs after a particular activity has taken place when one thinks back over what happened, evaluates one’s actions along with the success of the activity, and considers whether changes could have resulted in different outcomes. Larrivee (2006) defined reflection-on-action as “thinking back on what was done to gain deeper insight” (p. 35). Schon (1983) added, “We reflect on action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome” (p. 26). In comparison to reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action is more methodical and can lead to the reframing of ideas (Schon, 1983, 1987). According to Ertmer and Newby (1996), utilizing reflection-on-action means “making sense of past experiences for the purpose of orienting oneself for current and/or future thought and action” (p. 16). Through reflection and the contemplation of problem, Dewey (1933) urged teachers to implement solutions. Reflecting on past experiences gives teachers the opportunity to consult educational research, seek collegial expertise, and develop strategies to elicit the intended learning. Reflection-on-action requires time as the teacher does more than merely recall the past; the teacher makes “inferences from [his] past experiences to create possible action plans for the future” (Ertmer & Newby, 1996, p. 17). Thus, the process of reflection-on-action provides educators the opportunity to learn from their experiences and thoughtfully consider decisions about their future actions.

Interestingly, teachers can also reflect on their reflection-in-action, allowing them to examine their “in the moment” decisions where they addressed a need or managed an unplanned circumstance during the lesson (Schon, 1983, 1987). According to Russell and Munby (1991), reflection-on-action is
the ordered, deliberate, and systematic application of logic to a problem in order to resolve it; the process is very much within our control. The sort of thinking characterized by reflection on action involves careful consideration of familiar data…. What control we can exercise comes through reflection on reflection in action, when we think systematically about freshly framed data. (p. 164)

For teachers, this includes reflecting “on their choices and learning from the interactions and experiences with their students” (Weber, 2013, p. 38). Through this kind of reflection-on-action, teachers learn valuable lessons in order to improve their teaching practices for the benefit of students.

In addition, Korthagen (1993) suggested, “one important function of reflection is to help teachers become aware of their personal theories, and if necessary, to restructure them” (p. 51). Instructional leaders can assist teachers in identifying and adjusting the theories that influence their practices. Furthermore, teachers can begin to reflect on “their ideas and actions and how everything fits within their original mental schemes/belief systems, thus identifying any adjustments or modifications that need to be made and leading to a reframing of one’s beliefs and future actions” (Gioe, 2012, p. 44). This type of reflection can lead to more effective teaching practices.

Self-Regulatory Learning Mechanisms

According to Bandura (1986), social cognitive theory describes sociocognitive functioning as a triad of reciprocal causation. Bandura and Jourden (1991) explained this concept in more detail:

In this model of reciprocal determinism, behavior, cognitive, and other personal factors and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally. In analyzing the personal determinants in this interactional causal structure, social-cognitive theory accords a central role to cognitive self-regulative
Each element of this triadic causal structure, which includes cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors, contributes to individuals’ transactional processes. The cognitive component consists of self-efficacy beliefs, personal goal setting, self-evaluation, and quality of analytic thinking (Bandura & Jourden, 1991). The behavioral determinant is established by the execution of managerial choices, and the environmental element includes the various properties of the organizational environment, the level of challenge it requires, and its responsiveness to managerial intercessions (Bandura & Jourden, 1991).

Zimmerman (2006) defines self-regulation as the way in which learners are active participants in their own learning through metacognitive, motivational, and behavior means. Ertmer and Newby (1996) discussed how the metacognitive component consists of an awareness of, and knowledge about, one’s own thinking, while also consisting of several sub-components: planning, self-monitoring, evaluation, and reflection. The motivational element includes the degree to which learners exhibit a self-efficacious, autonomous, and intrinsic motivation to achieve a goal, with effort being a key sub-component (Zimmerman, 1990).

Affective self-evaluation operates as an important dynamic in the self-regulation of motivation and action. According to Bandura and Jourden (1991), people seek satisfaction from fulfilling valued goals and are prompted to intensify their efforts by discontent with substandard performances. This form of self-regulation involves cognitive comparison processes that include both proactive and reactive elements. By making self-satisfaction conditional on matching adopted goals, people proactively give direction to their actions and create self-incentives to persist in their efforts until they accomplish what they seek. Perceived negative discrepancies between
performance and a standard to which they commit themselves creates self-dissatisfaction that can also serve as an incentive for enhanced effort. (p. 942)

Thus, teachers find satisfaction in their self-evaluation of their performance when they meet their goals. On the other hand, if teachers are dissatisfied with the outcomes, they often increase their efforts in order to successfully meet their goals.

Furthermore, one’s self-efficacy beliefs, the beliefs one has about his or her capabilities, have a tremendous effect on all aspects of self-regulation and are formulated as a result of prior observations or prior performance (Santhanam, Sasidharan & Webster, 2008; Schunk & Ertmer, 1999; Zimmerman, et al., 1992).

**Single-Loop and Double-Loop Learning**

A teacher’s reflection can lead to various types of learning processes. According to Argyris (1997),

The processes of learning are the discovery of a problem, invention of solutions, production or implementation of the solutions, and monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation (which often surfaces new discoveries). Two criteria of learning are (a) correcting any mismatches between intention and actuality or (b) producing a match between intention and actuality for the first time. (p. 10)

Argyris (1997) expands his definition to include two different types of learning: “Single-loop learning corrects mismatches by changing actions. The changes remain within the existing governing variables. Double-loop learning corrects mismatches by first changing the underlying governing values and then the actions” (p. 10).

In order to better understand this model, Anderson (1997) defines the key terminology:
**Governing variables:** those dimensions that people are trying to keep within acceptable limits. Any action is likely to impact upon a number of such variables—thus any situation can trigger a trade-off among governing variables.

**Action strategies:** the moves and plans used by people to keep their governing values within the acceptable range.

**Consequences:** what happens as a result of an action. These can be both intended—those the actor believe will result—and unintended. In addition those consequences can be for the self, and/or for others.

In *Reasoning, Learning and Action*, Argyris (1982) often used the term *governing value* in place of *governing variable*. According to Dick and Dalmau (2000), “a governing variable or governing value is best thought of as a mix of motives, values, beliefs and feelings, the specific mix depending on the person, the situation and the context.”

According to Marx (2010),

Double-loop learning would require teachers to surface, examine, and possibly alter the beliefs and assumptions that undergird the prevailing theory-in-action. This can be thought of as a form of problem reframing and is particularly challenge in situations like this because the governing beliefs and values are very personalized and enduring. Thus, double-loop learning is a rare occurrence because of how deeply one holds his or her beliefs and values.

In order to better understand single and double-loop learning, Argyris and Schon (1974) explained,

In the context of theories-in-use, a person engages in single-loop learning, for example, when he learns new techniques for suppressing conflict. He engages in double-loop
learning when he learns to be concerned with the surfacing and resolution of conflict rather than with its suppression.

In single-loop learning, we learn to maintain the field of constancy by learning to design actions that satisfy existing governing variables. In double-loop learning, we learn to change the field of constancy itself.

Double-loop learning does not supersede single-loop learning. Single-loop learning enables us to avoid continuing investment in the highly predictable activities that make up the bulk of our lives; but the theory-builder becomes a prisoner of his programs if he allows them to continue unexamined indefinitely. Double-loop learning changes the governing variables (the “settings”) of one’s programs and causes ripples of change to fan out over one’s whole system of theories-in-use. (p. 19)

A key distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning resides in maintaining one’s governing variables (single-loop learning) or changing one’s governing variables (double-loop learning).

However, what is the impetus for one moving from single-loop learning to double-loop learning? Argyris and Schon (1974) began to answer this question by stating, “The kind of theory building that involves both change in the governing variables and double-loop learning tends to be convulsive, taking the form of discontinuous eruptions that are initiated by dilemmas” (p. 30). According to Argyris and Schon (1974), “Dilemmas consist of conflicts of requirements that are considered central and therefore intolerable” (p. 30). These dilemmas revolve around

1. Incongruity of espoused theory and theory-in-use;
2. Inconsistency: the governing variables of the theory-in-use become incompatible;
3. **Effectiveness:** when governing variables become less and less achievable over time;

4. **Value:** when one no longer accepts or approves of the behavioral world the theory-in-use helped create;

5. **Testability:** when one can no longer confirm or disconfirm assumptions. (p. 31-32)

Although they identify multiple dilemmas, Argyris and Schon (1974) noted,

The basic dilemma is one of effectiveness and constancy. The protagonist strives to be effective and to keep constant his theory-in-use and the behavioral world he has created. When, finally, he cannot do both in spite of his full repertoire of defenses, he may change the governing variables of his theory-in-use. (p. 34)

As such, double-loop learning is most likely to occur when single-loop learning is ineffective or when one cannot reconcile the inconsistencies between his underlying theory-in-use and the resulting actions and outcomes.

**Conceptual Framework**

Argyris and Schon (1974) shared the perspective that “a theory is…a set of interconnected propositions that have the same reference—the subject of the theory. Their interconnectedness is reflected in the logic of relationships among propositions” (p. 5). The previous discussion of relevant concepts related to teacher beliefs, belief systems, reflection, and the enactment of the ELA CCSS involve a number of theories. The following conceptual framework (see Figure 1) was created as an attempt to synthesize the most important theories to this study into a model that shows their interconnectedness and the logic of the relationships among their propositions (Argyris & Schon, 1974).
The belief system is comprised of a network of beliefs. The central beliefs have the most functional connectedness among the beliefs and therefore are the most important beliefs in the belief system and include the individual’s foremost values (Rokeach, 1968; Pajares, 1992). Clusters of beliefs around a specific object or situation form attitudes (Rokeach, 1968), which lead to action agendas (Rokeach, 1968; Pajares, 1992). Action agendas are analogous to Argyris and Schon’s (1974) theories-in-use, which the individual uses to determine behavior. For the purposes of this study, the behaviors of interest revolved around enactment, the interactive instructional process between the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards (Ball & Cohen, 1996) of the ELA CCSS.

The enactment process results in outcomes the teacher is able to reflect upon, utilizing both reflection-on-action and self-regulatory learning mechanisms. This design is based on basic premise of Argyris and Schon’s (1974) conception of theories-in-use, in which the governing variables (the beliefs, values, and attitudes) generate action strategies for behavior (enactment) that generates outcomes the individual reflects upon. As beliefs and behavior are interactive, experiences and reflection inform the individual’s beliefs and belief systems (Richardson, 1996).

The teacher’s primary considerations while he reflects upon his actions include constancy (the desire to keep constant his theory-in-use and the behavioral world he has created) and how effective the action strategies and the enactment were in producing the desired outcome(s) (Argyris and Schon, 1974). If the teacher deems the outcome(s) to be effective, the teacher maintains constancy and the teacher assimilates new information into existing beliefs and belief systems (Pajares, 1992). However, if the teacher, through reflection, determines the outcome(s) to be unsatisfactory, the teacher engages in elements of Taggart and Wilson’s (2005) Reflective Thinking model by recognizing a problem or error and then framing (or reframing) the problem,
leading down a path of either single-loop or double-loop learning. According to Argyris (1997), single-loop learning corrects errors by changing actions while maintaining the existing governing variables. On the other hand, double-loop learning corrects errors by changing the underlying governing variables and then the actions (Argyris, 1997, p. 10). This is part of an accommodation process in which new information causes existing beliefs to be replaced or reorganized (Pajares, 1992). In the end, double-loop learning requires teachers to surface, examine, and alter the beliefs and assumptions that undergird their prevailing theory-in-action (Marx, 2010).
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the connections between a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, the enactment of the ELA CCSS, and reflection-on-action.
A Brief Overview of the Study of Beliefs

Research of teachers’ beliefs has undergone a paradigmatic shift since the mid-1900s, an era of research marked by attempts “to develop predictive understandings of the relationships between teacher attitudes and behaviors” (Richardson, 1996, p. 107). Much of this quantitative research relied on large scale, paper-and-pencil, multiple-choice attitude/belief inventories.

Using multiple-choice instruments to measure teachers’ beliefs has several limitations (Richardson, 1996) as these predetermined instruments may not correlate to the teachers’ beliefs (Hoffman & Kugle, 1982) or portray the interaction among beliefs, experiences, and behavior (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Weinstein, 1989). Furthermore, teachers’ beliefs can be highly eclectic, representing opposing viewpoints (Schmidt & Kennedy, 1990) or combining elements that researchers consider as separate entities (Pinnegar & Carter, 1990). For example, Duffy (1981) and O’Brien and Norton (1991) discovered teachers’ beliefs about reading were often combined with their beliefs about classroom management. Therefore, multiple-choice belief inventories offer too many shortcomings for a thorough exploration of teachers’ beliefs.

As opposed to seeking predictive markers of teacher effectiveness through belief inventories, ever since the latter part of the 20th century, “research on teacher beliefs reflects a shift toward qualitative methodology and the attempt to understand how teachers make sense of the classroom” (Richardson, 1996, p. 107). Similarly, Munby (1982, 1984) proposed an inductive, qualitative research methodology is particularly apt for studying beliefs. Pajares (1992) suggested that “open-ended interviews, responses to dilemmas and vignettes, and observation of behavior must be included” (p. 327) in order to make accurate inferences into the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Likewise, “an understanding of a teacher’s practices is enhanced by research attention to both beliefs and actions through interview and
observation” (Richardson, 1996, p. 104). Therefore, as these researchers have suggested, a qualitative case study is the most effective method for examining the connections amongst a teacher’s educational belief system, enactment, and reflection. Interviews and observations are required to make inferences about the teacher’s beliefs and about the interactions amongst the various unseen constructs within the belief system.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

According to Yin (2014), research “design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p. 28). The following sections describe the design for this qualitative, single-case research study and the rationale for proceeding with the plan as stated.

Research Tradition

Because “qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 2002, p. 14) and as this study seeks to thoroughly explore the relationship among a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, reflection, and the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA CCSS), qualitative methods using a social constructivist approach were most appropriate. Crotty (1998) identified three key assumptions guiding this approach:

1. Human beings subjectively construct varied, multiple, complex meanings as they engage in the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers generally ask broad, general, open-ended questions in order to allow participants to more fully express their views.

2. Qualitative researchers recognize the importance of the participant’s context and setting by personally gathering information in that setting. The researchers’ interpretation of the data is subject to the researcher’s personal, cultural, and historical experiences.

3. Qualitative researchers inductively generate meaning from the data gathered through the social interactions among individuals.

Schram (2006) discussed how “developing qualitative understanding through field-based
research means that you engage in personal encounters and exchanges with self and others. Simply stated, qualitative methods work through you” (p. 8-9). Similarly, Patton (2002) stated, “In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (p. 14). Schram (2006) extended this notion by noting, “Your presence, manifested through talking, listening, looking, reading, and reflecting in greater or lesser degrees of engagement with study participants, filters and affects what counts as meaningful knowledge for your inquiry” (p. 9). As these researchers have expressed, the research all filters through the researcher. As such, the credibility of the findings hinge upon the abilities of the researcher.

Because qualitative research is so dependent on the researcher as the data collection instrument, the discussion of research methodology will continue in the first person. As the qualitative researcher, I continually interpreted and made sense of the information I gleaned, and my subjectivity, along with my experiences, beliefs, and belief systems, played a role in my interpretations of the findings.

Case Study Methodology

The case study method offered the most advantages for this study as my primary research questions, “How do the teacher’s beliefs/belief systems and reflection appear to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS?” and “How does the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action appear to influence his educational beliefs and behaviors?” sought to explain a present circumstance, in this case how a social phenomenon worked (Yin, 2014). The social phenomenon consisted of the influence of beliefs, belief systems, teaching practices, and reflection in the context of the enactment of the ELA CCSS. This case study method was also
relevant as my research “questions require[d] an extensive and ‘in-depth’ description of [the] social phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

In brief, “a case study allows investigators to focus on a ‘case’ and retain a holistic and real-world perspective” (Yin, 2014, p. 4). According to Gillham (2000), a case is “a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw” (p. 1). The case for this study occurred within the context of a 5th grade classroom during the first year of ELA CCSS implementation. I preferred the case study method over a historical method because the ELA CCSS were being enacted in the present, “the relevant behaviors [could] not be manipulated,” and it involved “direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (Yin, 2014, p. 12) in addition to the documents and artifacts I collected. Yin (2014) defined the scope of a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16).

Furthermore, Yin (2014) described the methodological features of a case study as an inquiry that

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 17)
Glesne (2011) added how the study of the case “tends to involve in-depth and often longitudinal examination with data gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document collection and analysis” (p. 22). This case study followed Glesne’s approach in that the combination of interviews, observations, and artifact collection occurred in iterative cycles over a four-month time period, lending depth and credibility to the findings.

According to Yin (2014), there are four applications of case study research: to explain, describe, illustrate, and enlighten. This study best fit the explanatory application as it aimed to explain the influence of a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS, which was “too complex for survey or experimental methods” (p. 19).

According to Yin (2014), there are five rationales for single-case designs, which relate to having a critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case. This study was longitudinal in nature as I studied the case over an extended period of time. I had a prolonged engagement with the teacher to better understand his educational beliefs and belief systems, to observe the enactment of the ELA CCSS in his classroom, to understand his reflections, and to explore the influence of his educational beliefs and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS. This case study was embedded versus holistic as the single case involved analysis at more than one level (Yin, 2014). One subunit included the teacher’s beliefs and belief systems, and the other subunit included the teacher’s reflection-on-action. Conversely, a holistic design would have only analyzed the global nature of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014), which would have ignored the important role each of the subunits played in arriving at conclusions related to how the teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection appeared to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS.

With these perspectives in mind, I utilized an embedded single-case study strategy to collect detailed information through interviews, observations, and artifact collection and analysis
from an elementary school teacher enacting the ELA CCSS in his classroom. This approach sought to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994) from the teacher’s experiences, perceptions, and practices relating his beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS in his classroom.

Figure 2, which was adapted from Yin’s (2014) “Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies” (p. 50), depicts the overall design for this embedded single-case study. This design allowed for the analysis of contextual conditions surrounding the enactment of the ELA CCSS in relation to the case, the influence of the teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on teaching practices, with the dotted lines between the two showing how the boundaries between the case and the context were difficult to distinguish. Within the case are the two primary units of analysis: the teacher’s beliefs and belief systems (both espoused theories and theories-in-use) and the teacher’s reflection-on-action.
Participant Selection

Patton (2002) discussed how interpretivist researchers select their cases purposefully as “the logic and power of purposeful sampling...leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 46). In order to make clear connections among a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, reflection, and the enactment of the ELA CCSS, I
utilized criterion-based participant selection in which I listed the essential attributes of the teacher (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I was seeking a third, fourth, or fifth grade elementary teacher, who was a reflective, verbally articulate practitioner with a working knowledge and understanding of the ELA CCSS. The teacher had to be actively enacting the ELA CCSS and be willing and interested in participating in the study. To find this participant, I used network sampling, which Glesne (2011) described as a method in which the researcher “obtains knowledge of potential cases from people who know people who meet research interests” (p. 45). I asked three district literacy experts I knew and trusted from a southeastern Michigan school district to help identify potential participants. After reviewing the criterion, all three independently recommended the same participant, Ben, a highly reflective fifth grade teacher who exhibited a strong commitment to literacy instruction and had a sterling reputation as a classroom teacher. He was at the forefront of Common Core implementation in his classroom, and when I solicited his participation, he was delighted to be a part of this research.

Data Collection

My strategy for collecting data generally followed the pattern of a) interview, b) observation, and c) post-observation debriefing session, which occurred over four iterations spanning the course of the participant’s second semester (from February—June 2014). However, I maintained a level of flexibility with my approach in order to allow for the study to evolve along the way. This flexibility allowed me to adapt and respond in a more fluid manner based on the data I collected.

I spent the majority of my time with the participant focused on his theories-in-use, his enactment of the ELA CCSS, and his reflective practices, being mindful that the quality of reflection in which I engaged the teacher was crucial to the study. I worked to infer his beliefs,
the functional connectedness of his beliefs, and the composition of his belief systems from the
data I collected. I used my conceptual framework as a guide while beginning the study, but I
was flexible enough to allow for changes to develop in its design as dictated by the data I
collected.

**Interviews.** According to Yin (2014), “one of the most important sources of case study
evidence is the interview” (p. 110). Therefore, throughout this study I conducted multiple
interviews with the participant, which took place in his classroom. These interviews were face-
to-face, open-ended, and semi-structured. Beforehand, I developed interview questions to ask
the participant, but I also allowed for the flexibility “to develop new questions to follow
unexpected leads that ar[ose] in the course of [the] interviewing” (Glesne, 2011, p. 134). I asked
open-ended questions and probed for depth by asking follow-up questions and by encouraging
further explanation and detail as needed. The interview plan was focused on gaining insight into
the teacher’s enactment of the ELA CCSS and his theories-in-use regarding the ELA CCSS.

Glesne (2011) suggested,

The intent of such interviewing is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be;
how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for
something. Such a broad-scale approach is directed to understanding phenomena in the
fullest possible complexity. The elaborated responses [the researcher] hear[s] provide[s]
the affective and cognitive underpinnings of [the] respondents’ perceptions. (p. 134)

Likewise, Hatch (2002) described the qualitative interview process as one that involves open-
ended questions that give the respondent an opportunity to express his perspectives of his
experiences followed by an opportunity for constructivist interviewers to co-construct meaning
based on their interpretation of the responses.
Interviewing the participant was the most appropriate method for data collection for this research study, as Pajares (1992) asserted that to understand one’s beliefs requires making inferences about individuals’ underlying states, inferences fraught with difficulty because individuals are often unable or unwilling, for many reasons, to accurately represent their beliefs. For this reason, beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do. (p. 314)

Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. I also took notes in a field journal to capture my impressions, and I took digital photographs or collected hard copies of any relevant artifacts from the interviews.

The initial pre-observation interview focused on getting to know the participant, building rapport, and gaining an understanding of his perspective of the ELA CCSS, his students, his enactment of the ELA CCSS up to that point in the school year, and his goals/plans for enacting the ELA CCSS moving forward. This interview also served as an opportunity to have a “pre-observation conference” in which Ben shared more specific information related to the upcoming lesson I would observe. My goal for this interview was to begin to understand Ben’s espoused theories-in-use regarding specifics of the ELA CCSS, especially as they pertained to what I might observe in his classroom.

The remaining three pre-observation interviews provided information about what had occurred in the classroom since my last observation and what I would observe in the upcoming lesson. These interviews also allowed me to probe for detail in order to gain a deeper understanding about aspects of his enactment, features of his classroom, or anything else that was beginning to emerge from my initial analysis of the data from previous observation cycles.

Immediately following each observation, I debriefed with Ben in an empty conference
room by asking open-ended, probing interview questions to better understand the his perspective of the lessons I observed. The goal was to reveal the details and general features of his reflection-on-action and his reflection-in-action and to gain a sense of the implications of both on the Ben’s behaviors during enactment while seeking potential connections to his inferred beliefs and his educational belief system.

Following the four observation cycles and after the school year ended, I conducted a final philosophical interview with Ben. The purpose of this interview was to gain more of an understanding about his philosophy of education, his perception of the role of the teacher and the role of the students, and his views on the ELA CCSS. This philosophical interview was conducted after the observation cycles so as not to influence Ben during his enactment of the ELA CCSS nor during our pre- and post-observation interviews. My role as the researcher was to gain understanding without influencing the participants’ words or actions.

**Observations.** While interviews provided an opportunity to establish Ben’s espoused theories, classroom observations were critical for attempting to infer the participant’s actual theories-in-use. According to Argyris and Schon (1974),

> When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation…. We cannot learn what someone’s theory-in-use is simply by asking him. We must construct his theory-in-use from observations of his behavior. (p. 7)

As such, I observed and videotaped the participant enacting the ELA CCSS in his classroom four times over the course of a semester. Additionally, I took notes in my field journal to describe what I observed and to capture my impressions during the observations. These observations helped to establish the elements of Ben’s educational belief system as well as to identify his
instructional strategies for enacting the ELA CCSS.

Of course, the classroom observations still entailed making inferences as to which beliefs were potentially influencing the teacher’s behavior. Argyris and Schon (1974) acknowledged, inferring explicit theories of action from observed behavior has problems comparable to inferring principles of grammar from observed speech. The task is to devise progressively more adequate constructions of theories-in-use that account for regularities of behavior, deviations due to external or internal inhibitions, and behavioral manifestations of inconsistent theories-in-use. When a person tries to construct his own theories-in-use, his evidence includes his behavior, the intimations of his tacit knowledge, and his ability to construct imaginative experiments that indicate what he would do under various circumstances. The outside observer may also find ways to make use of the agent’s intimations and imaginative experiments but must beware the tendency to confuse espoused theories with theories-in-use. His inquiry will be facilitated by the presumption that the agent has tacit knowledge of his theories-in-use that may be elicited in various ways. (p. 11-12)

Because of the complexity of this study and the magnitude of the data set, seeking a preponderance of evidence to support the inferences about the underlying elements of Ben’s educational belief system proved critical for lending credibility to the findings.

**Artifact collection.** As an extension of the interviews and observations, I also took digital photographs and collected relevant artifacts that appeared to pertain to Ben’s beliefs, belief systems, reflection, and enactment of the ELA CCSS. According to Glesne (2011),

Visual data, documents, artifacts, and other unobtrusive measures provide both historical and contextual dimensions to your observations and interviews. They enrich what you
see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions.

Your understanding of the phenomenon in question grows as you make use of the documents and artifacts that are a part of people’s lives. (p. 89)

The photographs I took helped provide the visual stimuli necessary for writing thick, rich descriptions of the key elements of Ben’s classroom. Likewise, the hard copies of handouts and other relevant artifacts helped me to include specific, accurate detail to assist the reader in developing an understanding of the enactment within the classroom.

**Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Authenticity**

Although quantitative researchers must establish validity and reliability, qualitative researchers work to establish trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Glesne, 2011). Trustworthiness and credibility revolve around readers believing and trusting in the findings and interpretations of the study (Schram, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, the researcher must reflect the experience of the participants and the context in a believable way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Authenticity is closely associated with trustworthiness and credibility as it involves the researcher accurately portraying the participants’ lived and perceived meanings and experiences (Sandelowski, 1986). Therefore, it is essential for the researcher to remain true to the phenomenon and the participants who are being studied (Hammersley, 1992). Furthermore, Eisner (1991) advised using structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy to validate findings in qualitative research.

Creswell (2012) explained, “In structural corroboration, the researcher uses multiple types of data to support or contradict the data” (p. 246). Similarly, Eisner (1991) made the connection between a preponderance of evidence and the development of credibility by stating, “we seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about
our observations, interpretations, and conclusions” (p. 110). Extending what builds credibility, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) discussed how “referential adequacy materials support credibility by providing context-rich, holistic materials that provide background meaning to support data analysis, interpretations, and audits” (p. 139). The data I collected that assisted in developing referential adequacy included video footage taken during the classroom observations, the recordings of the pre- and post-observation interviews with Ben, and the artifacts I collected/photographed throughout the study. Consensual validation involves “an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (Eisner, 1991, p. 112). For consensual validation, I regularly shared and discussed the data I collected along with my analysis and interpretation of the data with my dissertation chair in order to corroborate the plausibility of my explanations for the phenomena I was studying.

I have worked to develop a high degree of trustworthiness and credibility by engaging in critical reflexivity, prolonging my engagement with the participant, coding the emergent themes, triangulating the data, and exploring disconfirming evidence. And, to ensure authenticity in this single-case study, I utilized several additional strategies, including using thick, rich descriptions and verbatim quotations in the narrative and engaging Ben in member checking.

**Reflexivity.** Creswell (2003) defined *reflexivity* as a systematic reflection of who the qualitative researcher is in the inquiry through a sensitivity to his personal biography and how it shapes the study. This process is an introspective acknowledgement of biases, values, and interests (p. 182). Similarly, Schram (2006) noted the importance of qualitative researchers undergoing such introspection:

You will see value in seeking out your subjectivity as a means to explore how your
assumptions and personal biography may be shaping your inquiry and its outcomes.

From an enlarged awareness of how your own assumptions may be informing or affecting your understanding will emerge a still greater appreciation of complexity. (p. 7)

Reflexivity is a way for me to recognize that my personal-self is inseparable from my researcher-self (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative that I share information about myself that also has relevance to this study.

At the onset of the study, I was in my third year as principal of an elementary school in a suburban, metropolitan Detroit school district. Previously, I had served as an assistant principal at a high school in a nearby school district, and prior to that I taught English at that same high school. For the previous five years leading up to the study, I had been strongly influenced by Carol Dweck’s (2000) research regarding implicit theories of intelligence, developing a personal bias toward incremental theories of intelligence and a bias against entity theories of intelligence. Likewise, I had become interested in the role of teachers’ self-efficacy in their performance. As a principal, two of the primary responsibilities I put considerable time and resources into included evaluating teacher performance and increasing teacher effectiveness. I have an undergraduate minor in psychology and have long been interested in social cognitive inquiry.

My background as a school administrator was an advantage during this study in that I had spent considerable time over the past seven years observing classroom instruction following the protocols in this study, which include taking field notes on the following “look fors”:

- What is the teacher doing?
- What is the teacher saying?
- What are students doing?
- What are students saying?
• **What artifacts are involved the lesson or are relevant to the teacher’s instructional practices?**

I had already established practices with the protocols for my field notes that helped me to be able to record objective facts about what was occurring in the classroom using thick, rich description to do so.

Along with my experience observing teachers and their classroom practices, I also had innumerable discussions with teachers about teaching and learning, which was beneficial as the interviews with the participant included similarities to the pre-observation and post-observation discussions I have had with teachers throughout the evaluation process. Through these conversations, I have continued to improve upon my abilities to ask open-ended questions that foster reflection and follow-up questions that probe for additional detail.

As a practicing principal, I have continued to gain knowledge and insight regarding the Common Core State Standards as much of our professional development over the past several years has revolved around the CCSS, both in terms of instructional practices and assessment. Furthermore, I have developed a strong working knowledge of the curricular materials and resources teachers in the district are using and the instructional practices and approaches teachers are employing to meet the standards. Even though I was unfamiliar with the participant, I was quite familiar with the direction of the district through the increasing focus towards shifting into the CCSS. Therefore, this experience with the CCSS, particularly within the same district as I conducted the study gave me a deeper understanding of context.

While my current position provided several benefits, there were also challenges associated with being both an administrator and a researcher because my purpose in each role was different. As an administrator supervising the instructional program in my school, I was the
sole person responsible for evaluating the 35 members of my teaching staff. Teacher evaluation at its core is about making determinations as to the level of teaching effectiveness in comparison to a rubric. However, this study eschewed evaluative judgment for a desire to understand the influence of a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS. Although there was no way for me to completely withhold my judgment, the data I gathered through this study was the basis for gaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon.

For starters, developing the protocols for this study required me to “deprogram” myself to a certain degree in order to be better able to understand the phenomenon through the eyes of the teacher I was working with. My initial tendency was to insert my own personal biases and assumptions in the interview questions based on my expectations. For example, I originally included a pre-observation interview question that asked about the teacher’s learning target for the lesson. Because learning targets were a major focus through our district professional development, I assumed the teacher would utilize learning targets to focus his lesson. Through revising my protocols, I reduced the number of questions I was asking, and left the questions broad and open in order for the teacher to be able to explain his practices in his own terms. Therefore, I reduced my pre-observation interview protocol to “Tell me about the lessons I am going to observe in reading and writing.” I monitored the teacher’s response for addressing what would take place during the lesson, the artifacts that would be used/produced, the activities/assessments that would be included, and how this lesson fit into the larger unit. I also was interested in whether the teacher would specifically discuss the ELA CCSS.

This qualitative research study began as my attempt to better understand the influence of a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the ELA CCSS. In developing this deeper understanding, I believed the findings could possibly assist me and others
in similar instructional leadership positions to more effectively supervise, support, and enhance classroom instruction. In preparing for and conducting this study, I acknowledge that I have been influenced by all aspects of my personal history along with the literature review and the conceptual framework I constructed to synthesize the literature on the important concepts in the study. I began this study knowing my tendency would likely be to try to confirm my biases, including my conception of how the components of the conceptual framework came together. Although my perceptions were influenced by my experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and values, the data corpus was the basis for all of my assertions in the dissertation. In this dissertation, I have included as much raw data, including and especially the participant’s own words, as possible in order for readers to see the evidence for themselves and have the opportunity to make their own inferences while also understanding the basis for my conclusions.

In addition, as this was a study about the influence of beliefs, it is important to make my educational beliefs and values visible, as they have influenced my perceptions and my biases:

- I believe our children are our most precious resource, and I believe all children can learn.
- I believe positive relationships are the foundation of everything we do in education.
- I believe every adult associated with a school is an educator, and we must all find ways to connect our work to the collective vision and mission of the school.
- I believe in active learning, differentiated instruction, building student and staff leadership capacity, and involving parents and community members in school activities.
- I believe high expectations are essential for maximizing learning potential.
- I believe school administration is a form of servant leadership that creates and models a vision for growth, builds reciprocal trust, develops a safe, caring school culture, provides instructional leadership, effectively manages school operations, plans thoughtfully,
maintains consistency, and empowers and motivates self and others to be better every
day. The principal must be active and visible in all aspects of the school.

- I believe in the impact of well-planned professional development for continuous growth
  and improvement in instructional practices.
- I believe strong literacy and numeracy skills are invaluable for student success.
- I believe the arts are vital for inventive expression and extending learning in all
disciplines.
- I believe regular, clear, open communication is essential to increasing our understanding
  and facilitating progress.
- I believe in a growth mindset, which revolves around the notion that while we all have
  inherent strengths and weaknesses, we can increase our abilities in all areas through
  learning and practice.
- I believe we can achieve more if we build on each other’s strengths.
- I believe people respond better to positive reinforcement and encouragement than
  negative reinforcement and punishment.
- I believe we can achieve anything we collectively and actively pursue.
- I believe in using data to inform decision-making.
- I believe the Common Core State Standards will help our students reach higher levels of
  achievement in a more rigorous educational environment.
- I believe a constructivist approach to education provides an environment that is most
  conducive to learning.
- I value effort, commitment, teamwork, excellence, honesty, trust, compassion, diversity,
  perseverance, integrity, innovation, empowerment, optimism, creativity, efficiency,
understanding, empathy, a sense of humor, humility, family, loyalty, respect, patience, dependability, and courage.

Furthermore, reflecting upon the memos I wrote and recorded during the data collection and analysis phases of the research study gave me additional opportunities to explore, articulate, and account for my biases.

**Prolonged engagement.** Creswell and Miller (2000) contended that “being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data” (p. 128). With these advantages in mind, I maintained prolonged engagement with the participant over the course of several months through the multiple interviews, observations, and debriefings we engaged in together.

**Coding.** According to Glesne (2011), coding involves “segregating data into like categories to discern themes, patterns, and processes and to make comparisons and build theoretical explanations” (p. 283). While I analyzed the data from the study, I used coding to determine labels for the themes and concepts that emerged, looking for patterns.

**Open coding.** My first approach to coding the data set entailed an open coding method in which the data was segmented into preliminary categories based on recurrent words, phrases, topics, and concepts.

**Axial coding.** Next, I used axial coding to move these categories into thematic groupings, which led to the development of working theories that attempted to plausibly describe the relationship between Ben’s educational beliefs, belief systems, enactment, and reflection.

**Triangulation.** Creswell and Miller (2000) defined triangulation as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). During the data analysis phase, I triangulated the
information gleaned from the interviews, observations, post-observation debriefings, and artifact collection into cogent themes.

**Disconfirming evidence.** According to Creswell and Miller (2000), searching for disconfirming evidence involves a “process where investigators first establish the preliminary themes or categories in a study and then search through the data for evidence that is consistent with or disconfirms these themes” (p. 127). In order to solidify my interpretation of the data set, I engaged in a process of analysis that ensured disconfirming evidence was unable to be triangulated from the information gathered through interviews, observations, post-observation debriefing sessions, or artifact collection.

**Thick, rich descriptions.** According to Denzin (1989), “thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts…. Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report facts” (p.83). In Chapters 4 and 5, I described the setting, the participant, and the themes from the study in rich detail to give readers a thorough, accurate sense of the case being studied and to enable readers to decide if the findings of the study could potentially apply to other settings or contexts (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Member checking.** Member checking consists “of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed member checks are “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314) in a qualitative research study. Following a thorough analysis of the data, I shared a draft of the emerging findings with the participant in order to validate whether I had identified sensible themes, whether I had developed the themes with adequate evidence, and whether I had been realistic and accurate in my accounts. Plus, Ben’s verbatim quotes comprise the majority of the narrative in
chapter 4 as a way to support my assertions and to ensure reliability and credibility.

**Legal, Ethical, and Moral Issues**

Following Creswell’s (2003) model, I protected the participant’s rights by utilizing the following safeguards:

1. I clearly articulated for the participant, both verbally and in writing, the objectives of the research study and how the data would be used (see Appendix A).
2. The participant consented in writing with his signature to proceed with the study as articulated in Step 1.
3. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received a research exemption form (see Appendix B).
4. The participant was informed of all data collection devices and activities (see Appendices C, D, and E).
5. I clearly articulated for the district (see Appendix F) and parents (see Appendix G), both verbally and in writing, the objectives of the research study and how the data would be used.
6. I made the verbatim transcriptions, video footage, written interpretations, and reports available to the participant as they pertain to that individual.
7. I first considered the participant’s rights, interests, and wishes when making decisions regarding reporting the data.
8. The names of the participant and his students were changed, and the school and district remained anonymous.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Rather than this case study having generalizability to any larger population, this study
offered an opportunity to shed empirical light on the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs/belief systems and reflection on his enactment of the ELA CCSS (Yin, 2014). To do so, my data analysis began with writing and reflecting upon my memos about what I observed during fieldwork and my first impressions of the data (Yin, 2014). The memos included thoughts, hints, clues, and suggestions that helped to derive an initial interpretation of the data (Lempert, 2011). Glesne (2011) stated that “by writing memos to yourself…you develop your thoughts; by getting your thoughts down as they occur, no matter how preliminary or in what form, you begin the analysis process” (p. 189). My memoing was an important aspect for analyzing the data from the observations. According to Patton (2002),

The purpose of observational analysis is to take the reader into the setting that was observed. This means that observational data must have depth and detail. The data must be descriptive—sufficiently descriptive that the reader can understand what occurred and how it occurred. The observer’s notes become the eyes, ears, and perceptual senses for the reader. The descriptions must be factual, accurate, and thorough without being cluttered by irrelevant minutiae and trivia. (p. 23)

My memos served as points of reference for what I observed over the course of the study, providing additional fodder for the thick, rich descriptions, and were key parts of the data triangulation processes to ensure I was developing plausible explanations for the phenomena explored within this single case.

Beyond the analysis that emerged from reviewing my memos, my general strategy for data analysis was inductive in nature as I examined the data set. Patton (1980) asserted, “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and
analysis” (p. 306). I looked for patterns and useful concepts and connections to emerge by assigning “various kinds of codes to the data, each code representing a concept or abstraction of potential interest” (Yin, 2014, p. 138). According to Gibbs (2007), “coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about” (p. 38). Glesne (2011) elaborated on coding by stating that coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data…that are applicable to your research purpose. By putting pieces that exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea together in data clumps, you begin to create a thematic organizational framework. (p. 194)

Gibbs (2007) suggested asking questions about the data that could lead to categorizing relationships among data. The codes and the relational categories that emerged became the platform from which I looked for patterns, made comparisons, produced explanations, and built models (Gibbs, 2007, p. 78).

**Grounded Theory**

Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained, “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (p. 23). In using a grounded theory approach, I analyzed the data using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which I reviewed every line of the interview transcripts as well as the field notes multiple times to develop the codes that represented the concepts from the data set. I compared each of the codes to all of the other codes to identify any similarities, differences, and general patterns. This helped me become more familiar with the data set and enabled me to identify logical connections amongst
the codes and to synthesize the groups of codes into themes. As part of the data analysis process, I also extracted the coded material from the transcripts and organized the material in sections according to each code/theme. By doing so, I was able to more clearly identify which concepts and themes were substantiated by a preponderance of concrete evidence and triangulated from multiple sources: the transcripts, my field notes, the video footage from the observations, and the artifacts I collected or photographed.

Through continued analysis, I began to develop working theories that could plausibly explain the phenomenon I had observed with this single-case study. Throughout this time, I regularly engaged in consensual validation with my dissertation chair in order to ensure my assertions were logical and supported with ample evidence from the data set. Through an extensive analysis and numerous conversations with my dissertation chair, I began to recognize that Ben’s goals were an important construct I needed to attend to, even though the concept of goals barely surfaced in my literature review. At times, I referred back to the literature review to help me appropriately label what I was attempting to describe through my working theories. An example of this occurred when I articulated the elements of Ben’s educational belief system as his central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions according to the research of Rokeach (1968) and Pajares (1992).

I also searched for disconfirming evidence that would call into question any of my working theories, and in the situations that warranted it, I adjusted my theories according to what the data was telling me, and I eliminated the theories that were not supported by the data. A key example of this occurred when I realized the reason I was struggling with the inclusion of “theories-in-use” as a construct in one of my working theories was that although it made sense logically there was not enough evidence to support it in my explanation of the phenomena.
The grounded theory from this study eventually came to fruition in the form of a culminating visual model that depicts the interaction among the elements of Ben’s educational belief system, his goals, his enactment of the ELA CCSS, and his reflection.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

The intention of this qualitative study was to interpret and explain the phenomena within a single case, not to generalize beyond the case. I sought a deeper understanding regarding the connections between a teacher’s underlying beliefs and goals, the teacher’s decisions during enactment, and the teacher’s reflection. As Glesne (2011) suggested, through qualitative analysis, I searched for “patterns” without “try[ing] to reduce the multiple interpretations to numbers, nor a norm” (p. 8). Qualitative research relies upon interpretation and “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) to tell the participant’s story.

While my goal was not to use the grounded theory from this study to generalize, it is possible for the authenticity and trustworthiness derived from the prolonged engagement, the data triangulation, the referential adequacy, and the thick description to possibly lead to dependability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this way, with the support of extant literature, the findings may have transferability or applicability with teachers who have similar characteristics to Ben. Of course, more single-case studies of this nature would be needed to build on the understanding that resulted from this study.

There were several conditions that limited the scope of the study, such as the determination to make this a single-case study, the criterion used to describe the characteristics of potential participants, the people chosen to identify any potential participants, the participant selection, the location, the number of observation cycles, the questions I asked, and the details I attended to. I chose to conduct a single-case study in order to devote the time and attention
necessary to investigating such a complex phenomenon. I selected Ben because he was recommended to me independently by three professionals in the field who I knew and trusted and who all emphatically stated that he was an experienced, reflective, high-performing teacher who was actively working to achieve the ELA CCSS in his classroom.

While I believe my methods for conducting this single-case study were sound and substantial enough to derive a high level of understanding about the interaction amongst the elements of Ben’s educational belief system, his goals, his enactment, and his reflection, I acknowledge that prolonging my time in the field and asking additional questions may have generated even more depth and clarity to the findings. Nonetheless, given the constraints of being a practicing principal with myriad duties while conducting this dissertation research, I was unable to extend the commitment beyond what I have described throughout this chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings

The findings presented in this chapter are the result of an extensive analysis in which the data guided the sense-making process. The data for the study consisted of pre-observation and post-observation interview transcripts from each of the four observation cycles, observation notes from four three-hour observations, video footage from four classroom observations, and the transcript from the final philosophical interview. The analysis was conducted to better understand the influence of this teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA CCSS) in the teacher’s classroom.

The methodology used for this research was based on Strauss and Corbin’s (1994) conception of grounded theory, which is a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection…. In this methodology, theory may be *generated* initially from the data,…then [the theory] may be *elaborated* and modified as incoming data are meticulously played against them. (p. 273)

Therefore, throughout the analysis phase, the emphasis was on keeping an open mind in order for the data to tell the story of Ben’s teaching practices in terms of what he wanted to accomplish, how he endeavored to accomplish it, and why he did so in that manner. Rather than trying to
prove a particular theory or validate the conceptual framework that represented a synthesis of the literature review, it was imperative for the data to bear the weight of whatever theory emerged.

Initially, the data set was examined using an open coding approach in which the data was segmented into preliminary categories based on recurrent words, phrases, topics, and concepts. Then, through axial coding, these categories were put into thematic groupings, which led to the development of working theories that attempted to plausibly describe the interaction of Ben’s beliefs, belief systems, enactment, and reflection.

In a global sense, the findings of the study were shaped by the analysis of accumulated data and a search for disconfirming evidence that culminated in the creation of a model to explain the complex phenomena of the study. Because the model is complex, this chapter presents the material in sensible chunks to develop the reader’s understanding one concept at a time. Plus, the findings are presented in an order that is consistent with the structural framework of the model, and the relevant pieces of the model are included in figures that accompany each section. The whole picture will come into focus at the end of the chapter with a presentation of the full model, which depicts the interactive relationships among the key constructs of the study: Ben’s belief system, his goals, his enactment, and his reflection.

In terms of the narrative component of this chapter, Ben’s words were the primary source of evidence used to support the findings. As such, the data was authentic and credible, and the findings were supported and validated by Ben through member checking. As this is the story of the interaction among Ben’s goals, belief system, enactment, and reflection, it is a story best told through Ben’s voice.

In summary, the data directed the sense-making, analytical process, resulting in the creation of grounded theory, which was graphically represented in a conceptual model that
showed the interactive relationship among Ben’s goals, his belief system, his enactment, and his reflection. The findings presented in this chapter are organized in a manner that is consistent with the model that emerged, and the evidence used to support the findings consists primarily of Ben’s own words.

In the sections that follow, the findings of the study are presented concept by concept, beginning with a discussion of Ben’s goals. These findings are supported by a presentation of the evidence that pertains to each component, and each concept is contextualized in relation to the other parts of the model.

**An Overview of Ben’s Goals**

Over the course of the data analysis process, a preponderance of evidence suggested Ben’s goals were crucial to many facets of his instructional practice. This was an unanticipated finding as the importance of a teacher’s goals did not emerge through the literature review as being closely connected to a teacher’s beliefs, belief systems, enactment, or reflection.

Following the tenets of the constant comparative method of data analysis as espoused by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) was vital to discerning the importance of Ben’s goals in understanding what he hoped to accomplish as a teacher, how he attempted to accomplish it, and why he endeavored to do so in that manner. These are complex, abstract connections that will take considerable explanation—beginning with the identification and classification of Ben’s goals.

The data indicated that Ben had an overarching, multi-faceted, long-term goal that was crucial to his instructional practice. For the purposes of this study, this overarching goal will be referred to as his *primary goal*. This far-reaching, idealistic goal was closely associated with
Ben’s sense of purpose as a classroom teacher and reflected what he hoped to accomplish with his students in a big-picture sense.

The data also revealed that Ben harbored several goals that were smaller in scope and were more specifically tied to the ELA CCSS or certain aspects of his enactment. These narrower goals helped guide his daily lessons, and they contributed to achieving his primary goal. For the purposes of this study, these goals will be referred to as his \textit{secondary goals}.

Comparatively, Ben’s primary goal seemed to be more deeply held over a longer period of time than his secondary goals. Many of Ben’s secondary goals seemed to have emerged with the onset of the ELA CCSS while others were tied to specific classroom practices. In either case, Ben’s secondary goals did not carry the same weight or significance as the primary goal. As such, Figure 3 below represents the portion of the model related to Ben’s goals with the primary goal at the forefront followed by the secondary goals. In this figure and the remaining figures in this chapter, the positioning and color of each concept in the model are used to show the relative centrality of these elements in a complex, fluid, organic, non-linear structure. In the model, the shades are lightest at the core of the model and the layers get increasingly darker moving outward from the center. The various layers, as expressed in a series of concentric circles and ovals, are labeled according to the concept they represent and show the relationship of the entities as interacting with one another.

Thus, Figure 3 illustrates how Ben’s goals function together to form the core of the model. Ben’s primary goal is positioned at the heart of the model in the lightest shade of blue to show its central importance, and the secondary goals emanate outward in a slightly darker shade to show that these goals were important, but less so than the primary goal. Ben’s primary goal drove his instructional practice in a broad, long-term sense that was most
important to him while his secondary goals were more closely associated with the ELA CCSS and specific components of his enactment, which informed his daily lessons.

**Ben’s primary goal.** Analysis of the data indicated that the primary goal Ben was trying to achieve regarding ELA in his fifth grade classroom was to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners. The various components of this goal held great importance in his planning, in the enactment of his classroom practices, and in his reflection. In many ways, Ben’s primary goal became the “window to his soul” insomuch as it revealed his motivations and his intentions while hinting at his beliefs. Ben’s primary goal spoke directly to what he hoped to accomplish in a big-picture sense, and he often reflected upon how successful his lessons were in accomplishing the goal. Therefore, Ben’s primary goal became the entry point for understanding the interactive influence among his beliefs, enactment, and reflection.

Ben’s primary goal appeared to have both a cognitive component and an affective component. On the cognitive side, Ben was working to impart the requisite knowledge and skills
in literacy for his students to be successful both in the present and in the future. As an illustration of this point, Ben wrote a quote by Jon Meacham (2013) on a sticky note that he kept by his desk, which stated, “Active thought, active expression, active preparation for lifelong learning.” In essence, Ben was striving to advance his students’ learning, to push their thinking, and to make their thinking visible through written and verbal expression, as preparation for learning over the course of their lifetimes. In order for his students “to be ready for taking on the learning,” he said, “I'm…your teacher and facilitator…. And, I'm here to be whatever I need to be to get you to learn the best.”

While advancing student learning through increasing knowledge and strengthening skills represented the cognitive component of his primary goal, there was also an affective aspect of the goal that meant a great deal to Ben. As such, Ben was determined to develop a passion for reading and writing in his students, which would make a vital emotional connection to literacy amongst his students. This affective component of the primary goal was the aspect he espoused most regularly as he consistently sought ways “to help kids love reading and writing.” As a result of his own journey regarding literacy, Ben worked hard to instill a love of reading in his students. Ben said, “I feel like my mission is to get kids to love to read. And…that's something I hated to do. You know, I hated it…growing up. And, I feel like I was put here to get people to love it.” In addition to his focus on developing a passion for reading, Ben also expressed, “I want the kids to be excited about writing as much as they are excited about reading.”

Ben’s primary goal revealed his assumption that by facilitating student learning in terms of knowledge and skill and instilling a passion for reading and writing, his students would become independent, lifelong learners who would thrive as they moved on from his classroom. Therefore, the end-state Ben hoped to contribute to involved gradually releasing responsibility to
his students so they would become increasingly more independent while developing the will and desire for learning that would not diminish over time. Ben said, “I want the students to be invested in their learning…. I'm giving them more responsibility to take on…the learning,…which is what…my goal is, to have them be active, long-living learners.” Along those same lines, Ben said, “The student's role is to be an active participant in the room, that independent learner.”

Prior to one of Ben’s final lessons of the year, he expressed how his “ultimate thing [is] getting them to love reading and writing, even when the teacher is not around.” This lesson revolved around using a mentor text as a guide for writing independently in a genre of their choice.

They're going to pick the genres and things that they love and want to write about. So, what that does for me, it gets back to that loving to write, loving to read, and building that thirst before I send them off to summer. So,…if they know that they can write a fantasy by looking at a fantasy, and studying a fantasy, and using a fantasy as a mentor text, [they will] give it a go on their own. And, that's…how I want to end my year… I want them to be able to…take something that they love, study it, and use it as a mentor text. And, I think…it's a forever lesson….. I think it’s gonna help them forever.

This quote ties Ben’s assumptions about instructional practice and his primary goal together in that by imparting the knowledge and skills of a variety of genres and developing a passion for literacy, Ben thought his students would show signs of becoming independent, lifelong learners.

**Ben’s secondary goals.** While Ben’s primary goal was broad, general, and far-reaching, he also developed more specific, shorter-term goals, which were related to his interpretation of the ELA CCSS or were rooted in certain aspects of his teaching. Upon analysis, these secondary
goals, while narrower in scope, still contributed to Ben’s primary goal in some way. In other words, the secondary goals Ben espoused regarding the ELA CCSS helped him achieve some aspect of his primary goal: to impart the knowledge and skills students needed to become independent, lifelong learners. Furthermore, the data revealed how Ben’s secondary goals were often tied to the learning targets he created for his individual lessons. Therefore, the majority of the examples of secondary goals that follow pertain to specific lessons or activities Ben planned for his students.

As an arbitrary starting point for illustrating secondary goals, the following quotation shows that Ben wanted students to be able to read, identify, understand, and explain the importance of various organizational patterns:

In readers' workshop, we're looking at organizational patterns of writing. We're looking at cause and effect. And,…one of the important things that readers have to do is they have to be able to, when they're reading non-fiction, they need to be able to identify the structure of what they're reading. And, if they're reading, using facts, they need to find what the cause is. And, when they're reading some causes, they need to look for these effects. So, the lesson has to do with identifying cause and effects and these organizational patterns…. And, they need to explain, they need to be able to find and explain it.

Another secondary goal Ben espoused was “to get them to look at a piece of text and determine the important part and summarize it efficiently.” He also wanted his students to be able to support their claims with evidence and reasoning:

All year long I've worked on, "What's your claim? Back it up with evidence and reasoning, directly quoting." And, these are right from Common Core…. And, that's
hard for this grade, this age group, to do it on their own. So, the goal of that read-aloud-
the goal of that read-aloud is always to bring out that conversation. But, it builds on…
claim, evidence, reasoning. I mean, that really [is] such a big part of it. And, that's why I
asked them the thing about the tiger and how, if the tiger was going to escape,….then tell
me why. Back it up with evidence. And,…we'll revisit that tomorrow, and I'll
say,…“Get that piece out, and I want you to look to the text. What part of that text will
help you,…or what passage…could we include in here to show that Cistene is a hard girl
that will get him to do anything?”

Beyond supporting their claims with evidence and reasoning, Ben wanted his students to
“think about purpose.” To Ben, the notion of “purpose” seemed to include the writer’s purpose
as inferred from reading a text as well as students being clear about their own purpose in their
writing. As Ben described one of his lesson plans, he shared how a reading activity would help
students with a subsequent writing project:

I want to tie it in to Reades' Workshop point of view and how that is going to translate to
the magazine that they're writing. And, this is not a typical writing assignment…. It's
morphed a little bit, this project. And,… I like it, and the kids love it.

The preceding example shows how Ben used a combination of reading and writing activities
within a lesson in order to better understand the writer’s purpose, which emerged as one of his
secondary goals. The excerpt also touched on how important it was to Ben for students to “love”
what they were doing, which was connected to Ben’s primary goal in that he wanted students to
develop a passion for reading and writing.
As Ben became more familiar with, and knowledgeable about, the ELA CCSS, he started to recognize how important it was for students to be able to make inferences and to be able to synthesize information from multiple sources:

Something that I learned about Common Core ELA is the claims, the claiming and backing up with evidence that starts way back in kindergarten. But, by fifth grade they have to use all these strategies: inferencing and pulling quotes from multiple sources…. They're engaged in a deeper understanding of…the reading that we do. They can turn around and they can write in their notebooks, their readers' and writers' notebooks and provide evidence…. And, what the Common Core has done for me is…there's like a thread that holds it all together. And, they need to learn how to inference in order to be able to…actively express their thinking about a claim.

An additional secondary goal Ben espoused in relation to his lesson plans was to ensure students understood different characters’ perspectives. As a way to give students multiple opportunities to do so, Ben used two different mentor texts.

So, during reader's workshop, I'm gonna read the Two Bad Ants story, and they…travel to a kitchen. And,…the students…are gonna have to inference things like when they climb a great mountain, it's actually the side of the building. So they have to see the setting and the story through the eyes of an ant. So, this is a little bit different than Voices in the Park where they were taking the same situation and looking at it four different ways. This is, the character is looking at something familiar and writing it differently. So, I want them to see…that…. I think they're gonna be able to connect the Voices In The Park to the Two Bad Ants. But, it's a different style of writing, too. So,…there is not going to be confusion, but,…I want to make sure that they see the parallels between the
two. We'll talk about that a little bit. And, it's a great story, and I know the kids will like it, but I want to make sure that they are not just enjoying it, but understanding the purposes behind why I'm picking this story…, so I want them to see this in a different way, and I think it's gonna lead to… this idea of perspective. I want it to be across genres.

One espoused secondary goal was indirectly related to the ELA CCSS as Ben stated: Metacognitive awareness is my new goal with these guys. I want them to think about how they did, what they did, what they could do better, and whether it's an exit slip or a conversation at the end, I'm going to keep pushing them to think about this process a little bit more.

Although metacognition was not a featured part of the ELA CCSS, the personal reflection and self-analysis of metacognition fit closely with the increased emphasis on critical thinking that was part and parcel to the CCSS. Ben’s goal of getting his students to be more aware of, and to think more critically about, their learning also contributed to achieving the primary goal of students developing the knowledge and skills necessary to be independent, life-long learners.

Furthermore, as Ben expressed, this was a “new goal,” which implied this goal was secondary in nature in that it had not been held as long, or as deeply, as his primary goal.

While many of Ben’s secondary goals related directly or indirectly to the ELA CCSS, other secondary goals related to the specific features of his enactment. As an example, for book clubs, Ben worked to facilitate “that flow of conversation, and building off an idea, [which] is…my ultimate goal in the book club.” Again, this secondary goal contributed to Ben’s primary goal by developing the skills (having a free-flowing conversation about a text that includes adding onto others’ ideas) students need to be independent, lifelong learners.
Another secondary goal that was related to enactment was Ben’s efforts to blend reading and writing instruction and the activities related to each. This secondary goal was tied to the evolution of Ben’s use of the workshop model of instruction, particularly with the onset of the CCSS. Ben started to combine reading and writing during what became a longer literacy block as opposed to having separate reader’s and writer’s workshop times:

When I know I'm doing things right, there’s no readers' and writers' workshop. It's just…literacy time. And it's happened before, where I feel like…the machine is just…going. And, the kids are like, "Are we in readers' or writers' [workshop]?
" I mean, they don't know…because the lines have been blurred. And,…that's when I kind of feel like, "Yeah, I've got…it going right." It doesn't happen all the time, but that's kind of like another ultimate goal, is to get those lines blurred a little bit.

Ben reiterated this secondary goal of blending reading with writing numerous times throughout the study. For example, Ben said, “I always try to…connect with what they're learning in reading to what they're doing in writing, because…like I said before, I really want these lines blurred.” In subsequent lessons, Ben said nearly the same thing with, “the work that we're going to do in reader's workshop is going to support what we're doing in writing” and “I'm trying to blend the lines of Reader's and Writer’s, and it really…should be.” In reflecting on a lesson, Ben said, “It really was…more like a writing lesson than a reading lesson. But…again, those lines are getting blurred.”

**Summary of Ben’s Goals**

Figure 4 lists Ben’s achievement objectives for his students that emerged from this study in a broad, long-range sense (primary goal) and in a more specific, short-term sense (secondary goals). The theoretical model posits that the primary goal was the most closely held goal that
had existed for the longest amount of time and was tied to Ben’s purpose as a teacher. Further, the model illustrates some of Ben’s secondary goals that were based on the ELA CCSS or teaching practices and contributed to the achievement of the primary goal.

An Overview of Ben’s Educational Belief System

Initially, during the preliminary coding and data analysis phases, the notion of beliefs became a catch-all for a variety of phenomena, which made developing a sound working theory problematic and overly general. Going back to the literature review provided more clarity on the various components of a belief system and included definitions that helped distinguish the
various phenomena from the study, which plausibly fit with the data set. More specifically identifying and analyzing the elements of Ben’s belief system in conjunction with the identification and analysis of Ben’s primary and secondary goals led to the working theory that Ben’s belief system was closely connected to Ben’s goals in a manner that was reminiscent of the connection between a proton and neutron in an atom. This idea was the impetus behind moving away from a linear model driven by arrows, such as the model found in the literature review chapter, to a more organic model that consisted of a system of concentric circles emanating from the core of beliefs and goals. This full model, which ties all of the concepts together, will be presented at the end of the chapter.

As Pajares (1992) stated, a belief system “is composed of beliefs connected to one another and to other cognitive/affective structures” (p. 316). As will be explored in more detail below, Ben’s educational belief system consisted of his central beliefs, his values, his attitudes, and his opinions. Ben’s educational belief system was closely associated with his primary goal as well as his secondary goals. Gaining insight into Ben’s belief system provided a deeper understanding of the underlying why that undergirded what he was trying to accomplish (his goals) and how he set out to accomplish it (the enactment process). The findings indicated that Ben’s central beliefs were the most important construct of his belief system and they were the most resistant to change. By comparison, Ben’s values were the next most vital aspect of his belief system, followed by his attitudes, and his opinions, respectively.

Figure 5 is a visual representation of the portion of the theoretical model that pertains to Ben’s belief system. Ben’s central beliefs are positioned at the heart of the belief system in the lightest shade of blue to show their fundamental importance within the belief system; whereas, his values, attitudes, and opinions emanate outward in increasingly darker shades to show that
while each are essential, they become less significant the farther away they are from the core. Therefore, out of the four elements of his belief system, Ben’s opinions were of the least consequence, had been formed most recently, and were the most susceptible to change.

![Figure 5. The elements of Ben’s educational belief system.](image)

**Ben’s central beliefs.** Ben’s central beliefs emerged as the foremost tenets he believed to be true. As such, they were the most deeply held and most important aspects of Ben’s larger belief system in relation to his goals and the enactment processes within his classroom. Ben’s central beliefs were the core of the unseen foundation that fostered all other aspects of his instructional practices.

While Ben directly espoused some of his central beliefs, others were inferred from his words and actions. Nonetheless, each of the beliefs was substantiated through the consistency of his actions over time, lending credibility to the findings. As a starting point, one of Ben’s most
fundamental beliefs was that all students can learn, which had a strong connection to his goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that will empower all students to become independent, lifelong learners. Ben said, “I think about kids as…all being able to learn.” This central belief is evident in Ben’s reflection on one of his lessons:

So, we read aloud. That read-aloud book is…a great story. And, the same girl that struggled,…Jayden—the same girl that struggled with telling me what that book was about—she shines in that…. Her oral language is super. She has good thoughts and good ideas. And that’s an outlet for her to show that she can…do this work. Although Jayden struggled in some areas, she showed she has impressive thoughts and ideas about literature, that she “can do this work,” which illustrates Ben’s espoused central belief that all students can learn.

Ben added:

Something that’s always stuck with me is that if a child is not learning, I am not—me personally, the teacher—has not found the right method to teach them. And, because…I have that strong…feeling that students—all students, can learn.

This quote reiterated Ben’s belief that all children have the capacity to learn while also implying his next central belief that he, as the teacher, was ultimately responsible for his students’ learning. This belief appeared to be heavily influenced by a quote from Marie Clay that was framed on his desk, which stated, “If children are apparently unable to learn, we should assume that we have not as yet found the right way to teach them.” Much like Ben’s statement from above, the Clay quote implied that the responsibility for student learning resided primarily with the teacher as all students are capable of learning.
Taking these notions one step further, Ben expressed a high level of efficacy for being able to successfully facilitate learning for all of his students when he stated,

I think I can reach everybody if I keep working at it and changing the tools that I use in order to reach them…. Even in the case of special education kids that struggle with literacy,…I feel like…I can use this approach with them and differentiate with them,…[and] I…[can] lift them.”

Ben repeated this same thought almost verbatim later in the study, when he said, “My philosophy is that I think I can reach everybody if I keep working at it and changing the tools that I use in order to reach them.” Thus, Ben’s first three central beliefs seemed to be complementary to one another as they focused on the interaction between the students and the teacher in terms of learning. Ben believed all students could learn, that he was responsible for their learning, and that he could successfully facilitate their learning.

Similar to his goals, some of Ben’s central beliefs were focused on cognition (learning), whereas his final central belief was affective in nature as Ben also appeared to believe that everyone can develop a passion for reading. He said, “I think there's going to be a book out there for everybody” and “there's an instance when a child finally becomes a reader.”

Ben’s beliefs that all students can learn, that everyone can develop a passion for reading, and that he was responsible for, and capable of, facilitating learning for all of his students emerged, at least in part, from the successes he has had throughout his career, particularly with students who had previously struggled with literacy.

I get these reluctant readers to read. And then my confirmation is emails from parents saying things like, “Why is he reading at home?”… “He got his book out without me telling him to.” And, I say “he” because it usually is. And it goes back to my philosophy
of...if I haven't reached somebody, it's [be]cause I haven't figured out how to do it yet....

Everybody's reachable. It's just that we haven't figured out how to reach them yet....

The community that's built in the beginning [of the school year], and the rapport that I
have with kids, and the knowledge of the books I have, all help me get them to
be...readers and to love it.

These examples show that Ben’s central beliefs were tightly aligned to his primary goal in that
he was trying to establish a passion for reading in all of his students, and he had the confidence
and sense of efficacy that he could facilitate that love for literacy and the skill development that
would help students become stronger readers through learning and growth.

**Ben’s values.** Following the central beliefs, values were one of the foremost
substructures within Ben’s belief system. Rokeach (1968) defined a “value” as
a type of belief, centrally located with one’s total belief system, about how one ought or
ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining.
Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude
object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal
terminal goals. (p. 124)

In Figure 5 depicting Ben’s belief system, values are situated within the concentric circle that
surrounds central beliefs as they were the second most important construct of the system. As
Rokeach (1968) suggested, values are an individual’s disposition that underlies one’s attitudes;
therefore, Ben’s values precede his attitudes in the model.

Ben’s key values that emerged from this study were related to literacy; student
independence; lifelong learning and continual improvement; active thought and active
expression; building relationships and a sense of community; authenticity; and structure,
routines, expectations, and efficiency. Each of these values will be elaborated upon individually in the sections that follow.

**Literacy.** Literacy emerged from the data as one of Ben’s most prominent values. Several of Ben’s foundational experiences—including his past experiences as a student, as a student teacher, and as a summer school teacher—contributed to his commitment to literacy and helped inform his goal of facilitating the learning of all of his students in reading and writing.

I've always been a person that knows what I know and knows what I don't know…..

When I was in high school, I was an awful writer. Just awful. And, I had an opening in my schedule where I could do an independent study. And, instead of doing like an art independent study, I went to the hardest literacy teacher and I said, "I wanna do an independent study on writing with you." And so…we did that. And, I always knew that reading wasn't something that I was good at, so that was something that I…kind of pushed myself to get better at.

The value Ben placed on literacy was evident through his desire as a high school student to improve in the key areas of literacy: reading and writing. Ben’s interest in literacy continued into his student teaching experience despite not feeling fulfilled by the instructional methods he was using.

It was a really eye-opening experience….. I learned a lot of management from that experience. Just a ton. And,…not a whole lot of literacy skills from that experience….. I knew in my mind what was right with literacy, and what we were doing wasn’t. We were…listening to books on audio tape, and we had a basal book that we’d follow. And, I knew that there had to be more than that. So…that…was something…I totally want to work on. And, literacy wasn't always a strong thing for me anyway. I always struggled
in elementary school with literacy and things like that, too. But,…as I got older, of course, I got better at it. But, teaching it was a whole other thing…. That's why my internship was kind of a letdown because I was…there to inspire, and…there's a book called *Readicide*, where you're killing readers by “basaling” them. And, that's what I felt like I was doing.

Ben valued literacy to a high degree, but he needed additional experiences to develop his ability to teach reading and writing at a high level. Teaching in a summer school program, Summer Academy, provided a turning point for Ben that shaped his instructional practices in literacy:

I was very fortunate to do summer school at Summer Academy…. My sister, who teaches in the district, was doing summer school at the time and said, "Come on,…check it out." So, you know—gosh, thirteen or fourteen years ago was my first experience at Summer Academy…, which opened my eyes to what literacy instruction was all about. And I did that for the next ten years. I did Summer Academy for ten years after that, every summer…. It was one of the best experiences and has absolutely made me the teacher…I am today, because of that…. Summer Academy was the…trigger, I guess, to saying, "There's a better way to do this…," and you can inspire kids to read this way…. That's what gravitated me towards doing that…, and I enjoyed the PD part of Sunshine, too. At that time, we would teach for…three hours. And, then an hour after, we would meet as a group and talk about what happened and how…could it be better…. What weaknesses do you see?… How can you improve? And, that…was the best PD you can possibly ask for… [Summer Academy helped me] to begin that journey of understanding how to teach this…. And, that's what drew me to it every year…. And, I now wanted more and more and more.
Ben’s appetite for teaching experiences in literacy was nearly insatiable, which speaks to how important literacy was to Ben and how driven he was to teach literacy in the best possible ways. It was evident that Ben’s foundational experiences as a student, as a student teacher, and as a summer school teacher impacted his educational belief system at a values level, and also influenced his evolution as a teacher. He said, “Teaching literacy…was the one [thing] I needed to work on the most. But,…I would say [it] is another passion of mine now, too, teaching literacy the way I feel is right with the workshop.” His personal struggles in literacy, his subsequent efforts to improve as a reader and a writer, and his focus on improving in his literacy instruction laid the foundation for his goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing in his students.

**Student independence.** One aspect of Ben’s primary goal was to develop “independent readers and writers.” Therefore, student independence was of great value to Ben. Along those lines, he said, “The student's role is to be an active participant in the room, that independent learner.” He sought to achieve this by “giving them more responsibility to take on…the learning” through a gradual, scaffolded process. Ben discussed this concept repeatedly throughout the course of the study in a variety of contexts. For example, in terms of reading, Ben used whole-class read-alouds, book clubs, and independent reading as the three main components of his enactment, and he did so in a scaffolded manner in order for students to gain greater independence. As Ben discussed his method for whole-class read-alouds, he said,

> It's that gradual release of responsibility again. I'm decoding it all for them. And, their…job is to think and write and comprehend and infer and all those good things.”

(However), in book club, that responsibility goes more to them. They're decoding and thinking and ready to share…. And, then independently reading, they're using their
sticky notes” to capture their key thoughts and questions in relation to what they are reading. In terms of discussion amongst students, Ben said with “turn and talk,…I very rarely…prompt them….. I'll stop and say, ‘Okay, turn and talk to your neighbor’ because I want them to come up with the things to talk about.

In doing so, Ben released the responsibility for students having a quality conversation with a partner by giving students the freedom and independence to discuss what was important to them without him posing specific questions or prompting them with required topics. In fact, the culmination of the school year was an independent study project in which students selected mentor texts in the genre of their choice to guide their own independent writing in that particular genre.

With a goal of increased student independence in mind, Ben said, “I want them to leave me knowing…if I weren't there to help them, how…they [could] help themselves.” In designing lessons to this end, Ben would ask, “How can I frame it so that kids can see it, feel comfortable doing it with me, and then be able to do [it] on their own?” Or, in other words, “How can I make this…less dependent on me?” Similarly, Ben said:

Every time I teach a lesson, I think about modeling it for them…. It comes down to the basics of “to, with, and by.” I show them. We do this together. And, then it's their turn…. Again, it's back to that gradual release of responsibility.

Ben used an analogy to further this point: “That's like…teaching [them] how to fish versus giving them the fish.” By scaffolding his instruction to gradually release more of the responsibility for learning to his students, Ben gave them opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop their skills in ways that would assist them in becoming independent, lifelong learners.
**Lifelong learning and continual improvement.** In addition to student independence,

Ben valued the concepts of lifelong learning and continual improvement:

Another part of my philosophy would be, if I expect my kids to be lifelong learners, then

I'm a lifelong learner. I surround myself with...as much current research as I can. And, it's...a job that will never be mastered, unfortunately, which is, I think, the hardest part about it. Every...year, I'm trying something...new, and within that framework of the...workshop model.

Ben modeled what it meant to be a lifelong learner by working to stay current in the field through research and had furthered his learning for ten consecutive years by teaching in a summer school program:

Fourteen years ago, this [workshop] framework, this approach to learning, was picking up speed. And, people were writing about it like crazy. And, [Summer Academy] took me from, you know, reading a basal text with an audio cassette tape to understanding that...“to, with, and by” approach, and...what's the best way to...differentiate instruction,...to teach strategies that will help students immediately with reading and writing better. How to keep kids engaged.... I was in a group of people that supported my...lack of understanding. So, I would teach for three solid hours: reading for an hour, writing for an hour, word study and things for an hour. And, afterwards we got to sit down, and we had a roundtable discussion. How did the day go? Here's some new learning. And, that was...by far the experience that led me to this, to where I am now. I did it ten years in a row; every summer for ten years and was very sad to stop. But, every year I learned—you know, I felt like I doubled my knowledge of how the
workshop…goes and how to help kids love reading and writing…. It certainly shaped the way I teach literacy.

Ben’s ten-year commitment to the Summer Academy program showed his dedication to lifelong learning and continual improvement as his knowledge of the workshop model of instruction exponentially increased and had a profound effect on how he taught literacy (his enactment) in order to develop a passion for reading and writing in his students (part of his primary goal).

Beyond his own interest in lifelong learning and continual improvement, part of Ben’s mission as a teacher was to facilitate his students’ learning in ways that would increase their independence and “give them the tools they need to be active, lifelong learners.” In doing so, Ben said, “I think it’s gonna help them forever.” Ben knew he had only a finite amount of time with his students, but he believed he could help set the stage for his students to continue to learn and improve across the span of their lifetimes, which was a key component of his primary goal.

**Active thought and active expression.** Ben placed a great deal of value on his students actively expressing their thinking. In fact, Ben kept a sticky note on his desk that contained a quote by Jon Meacham (2013) that said, “Active thought, active expression, active preparation for lifelong learning.” In many ways, this sticky note encapsulated a guiding force in Ben’s teaching philosophy that was furthered by the CCSS:

> What the Common Core has done…is…there's like a thread that holds it all together….

> They need to learn how to inference in order to be able to…actively express their thinking about a claim. They have to know the point of view of the author in order to…have deeper understandings. So,…I see the Common Core as being difficult; however,…it's gonna be great for our kids. And, I know there's a lot of negative PR on it,
but I really do think it's going to give kids—go[ing] back to that sticky note of mine—that active thinking…they need to be active, lifelong learners.

This quote pulls together several key ideas as it shows the value Ben places on active thought and active expression in helping to achieve lifelong learning (part of his primary goal) while also connecting to his secondary goals of inferencing, supporting a claim with evidence and reasoning, and understanding the author’s purpose. This quote also shows how Ben gives credit to the ELA CCSS for providing the rigorous expectations for pushing students to become deep, active thinkers.

Similarly, Ben referenced the book *Total Participation Techniques: Making Every Student an Active Learner* by Persida Himmele and William Himmele (2011) as a resource that enhanced his ability to actively engage his students in their learning. Ben said, “I feel like part of my philosophy is students need active participation, a[n] active role in the classroom.”

Participation and engagement are key components to students actively thinking, expressing their thinking, and preparing for lifelong learning. Through Ben’s own commitment to lifelong learning, he used this resource to find new ways to engage his students and meet his goals.

Ben also wanted his students to think about their thinking at a deeper level as he said “that metacognitive awareness is my new goal with these guys.” Later in the study, Ben also said:

I've always tried to push a meta[cognitive] philosophy. I'd say mine is teaching them strategies, not for strategies' sake, but for them to think at a deeper level, [which] gets back to that act of expression. All the things I think you got a chance to see, from understanding point of view to…perspective, all of those were strategies to get them to actively think and… express.
Through this example, Ben made a connection that gives a glimpse of the complex interaction amongst his values (metacognition and active expression), his secondary goals (understanding perspective), and his enactment (his teaching “strategies”).

**Building relationships and a sense of community.** Ben valued relationships and building a sense of community in his classroom as he worked to create a collaborative environment in which students were able to work well together in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole class. Ben said, “Community is really important…. We're all in this together…. That's…my mantra….. And, we build that community of readers.”

For Ben to empower students to become independent, lifelong learners, he realized he must create a classroom environment that was conducive to such a goal in which his students felt safe and comfortable. He started by building relationships, which increased students’ confidence and their willingness to take risks on their way to becoming more independent. Ben said:

When I sit down to think about giving the students information—or teaching them how—that is to the forefront of my thinking: "How can I frame it so that kids can see it, feel comfortable doing it with me, and then being able to do…that on their own?” And,…in order for…that to happen, I need to have a strong relationship with my students and invest in their interests and strengths and what their aspirations are. And, when I've created this…kind of community, an environment where kids feel safe to take risks and to explore their full potential…, that rapport…[is] an all year long process. For them to take risks, that environment and community needs to [extend beyond the classroom, including] things like going to their baseball games and stuff like that…. Or, trying to incorporate some things they're interested in into the lesson…. just acknowledging what they're doing to get them involved in the process of learning.
The value Ben placed on building quality relationships and a sense of community in the classroom helped students become comfortable practicing and applying skills and concepts on their own. Ben shared how through relationships and community-building, “I get these reluctant readers to read. And, then my confirmation is emails from parents saying things like, ‘Why is he reading at home?… How did he [get]…his book out without me telling him to.’” This work in the classroom transcends to his students’ lives outside the classroom as even his reluctant readers developed their literary skills with increasing independence.

Part of building such a comfortable classroom community involved having fun while still maintaining a focus on learning:

We have a good time. And, I have a…sense of humor, and it comes out with the kids. And, they'll joke with me and I'm okay with that…. I think this place needs to be fun. But, one of the things they learn first is there's a time to have fun and there's a time…to get down [to] work.

During the classroom observations as well as the interviews, Ben expressed a genial sense of humor by smiling often and laughing regularly. While Ben took his role seriously as an educator, he did not take himself too seriously. He would occasionally make light, self-deprecating comments, and in many of his reflections, he noted aspects of his professional practice he wanted to improve. While he was an exceedingly successful teacher and well-thought of by his students and colleagues, Ben never gave the sense that he thought he knew it all. Instead, Ben exuded a pleasant, humble disposition punctuated by an amiable sense of humor. Ben was down-to-earth and easy to talk to, which endeared him to his students. Plus, Ben viewed his students as valuable members of the classroom community. As such, Ben sought opportunities to uplift students in the eyes of their peers by sharing their successes and insights.
publicly. “I have to share that good stuff with the group. They don't see Miguel as being a strong reader [or] writer. . . . So, that. . . is part of that community-building I kept talking about in the beginning.”

Likewise, his students clearly demonstrated their affection for him, particularly in their desire to be near him during their read aloud time, which he found flattering. “I love that. I love the set-up. I love sitting in a circle. I love the fact that they fight to sit next to me. I think that is so awesome.” Through building relationships and having some fun together, Ben was successful in creating a classroom community of learners who treated each other well.

As part of his efforts to operate as a classroom community, Ben made his classroom supplies accessible for students to use as needed:

I try to keep. . . bins. . . . They know where the paper is, and they know where. . . . all the student material is. And, they know where my tape is. My desk is theirs. . . . They [may] take my scissors off the desk and use them. . . . There's no. . . off-limits. . . . They understand that. . . we're all in this together.

This example shows the trust Ben had in his students to make good choices in relation to the supplies they needed in the classroom. He shared his resources with his students because he valued a classroom community in which the teacher and students worked together openly and freely without boundaries or barriers.

**Authenticity.** For Ben, authentic learning experiences were important for engaging students with the content in meaningful ways in order help them to improve their literacy skills. Ben’s teaching practices eschewed what he considered to be more artificial methods, such as worksheets or canned comprehension questions from basal readers, in favor of notebooks, discussions, and student-selected books. Ben explained:
Some lessons are about how real writers—real authors—have a notebook of ideas…

We will walk around the school with our writer's notebook, and we'll literally…record things that we see and notice and hear and try to get that…idea that writing can…be anything. And, they're better for it…. I very rarely, if ever, pass out a worksheet. I never do. It all happens within the context of their notebook. And,…it's always geared towards them reading better or writing better. Really. Literally. It boils down to that.

Ben valued authentic learning experiences as a method for improving students’ skills in the present while promoting learning over the course of a lifetime, which were aspects of his primary goal.

Additionally, as a way to promote authentic discussions, and as an alternative to specific teacher-created questions or prompts, Ben gave students the freedom and flexibility to talk with each other about a text based on their own ideas:

And, if you notice too,…very rarely I'll prompt them. I'll…stop and say, "Okay, turn and talk to your neighbor" because I want them to come up with the things to talk about.

That's…designed on purpose. I don't want to always just come up with a question. I think that becomes artificial.

Ben’s concern over artificiality in his teaching practices seemed to underscore the value he placed on an opposite approach the centered on authenticity:

I try to make the learning as authentic as possible, too. I would say that would be another part of…my philosophy. And one way we do that is…at no time was there…a meaningless task. Everything was based on…real magazines, real work that people do.

And, I'm really honest with the kids about these kinds of tasks…. How does it relate to
their life outside of school? And, why… is this important to know?... My role is to get them to understand that. I'm trying to make them these learners forever. Through this authentic approach to learning tasks, Ben helped students to understand a real purpose beyond just his classroom as a way to facilitate lifelong learning.

The data indicated Ben valued authenticity in his processes and procedures, as well. In terms of how his students checked out books from his classroom library, Ben said:

I don't have a shopping day… because readers can… finish a book and are ready for another one. And, you're not going to wait until it's your day to shop for one…. I try to make it authentic and real, too. People aren't going to wait to get that next book in their hand, you know?

Ben wanted the check-out procedures in his classroom to reflect the authentic human tendency to get a new book when they were interested in doing so as opposed to having a set day to shop for books that was unrelated to his students’ levels of engagement in their books.

Furthermore, Ben used mentor texts regularly in his instruction as a way for students to learn by analyzing authentic pieces. At times, Ben would guide his students through the mentor texts as part of his readers’ or writers’ workshop mini-lesson, and at other times, he would have individual students or small groups of students explore the mentor texts on their own using the inquiry method of instruction. An example of Ben’s use of a mentor text as part of his instruction that indicated the value he ascribed to authenticity occurred when Ben told his students about a real situation in which he used a mentor text:

I'll tell them the story about when I… was a best man and I had to write a best man speech. I didn’t just sit down and write one. I went and found a couple that were great, and I… used those as mentor texts.
Ben elaborated on the purpose behind this kind of pedagogy through the statement, “I want them to be able to say, ‘I…would love to write a graphic novel, and I'm going to take a graphic novel and use it as a mentor text.’” Instead of teaching a specific genre, such as the graphic novel, Ben gave students opportunities to examine a genre of choice as a way to give them a model to follow in their own work, which suggested the value he placed on authentic, real-world experiences to facilitate learning.

**Structure, routines, expectations, and efficiency.** Ben valued the interrelated concepts of structure, routines, and setting expectations, which helped create a smooth-running, efficient classroom in which students knew what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

I am a big groupie of routines, and expectations, and having the kids do as much [as possible]…. I'm such a…systems thinker…. And, I'm all about organization…. They…know what to expect from me. There's no…surprises, which I think makes kids feel comfortable.

During the first pre-observation interview, Ben shared basic details about how he ran his classroom, starting with his expectations and the various structures and routines he used that created the conditions for student success. For starters, Ben set clear behavioral expectations as he invested time into “writing expectations with the kids in the beginning of the year—of what they can expect from me, and what I expect of them—we do that [in]…the first part of the year and revisit it as the year goes on.” Ben’s classroom was orderly, well-managed, and free of distracting misbehavior. By setting clear behavioral expectations at the beginning of the school year, he set the stage for success throughout the remainder of the school year.

The basis for Ben’s classroom management system was connected to the school’s Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) program, which is a system built around common behavioral
expectations. Ben said, “I'm on...our PBS committee, which has been…awesome for our school.” He elaborated:

In the beginning of the year we had our...PBS rules for every…place in the school: hallway, bathroom, what does the assembly look like?... And, we…do skits, and we practice, and we have a…volume level system. Kids are [at a] level zero in the hallway. Those…expectations…, by fifth grade, are embedded in what they do. So, that's not something that we have to practice all too much. But, then…it totally pours into the classroom. So, when it's independent reading time, they're at a level zero…. So, those things, they play out [in the classroom]. Those are supposed to be outside of classroom things, but it's just so natural [in the classroom, too]…. Writing expectations with the kids in the beginning of the year—of what they can expect from me, and what I expect of them—we do that [in]…the first part of the year and revisit it as the year goes on. But,…I'm pretty lucky. I mean, I feel like I have a…really good group. I have a feeling I have a really good sense of who they are…. I feel fortunate because I don't…get a lot of behavior issues because I get them to work and [I] keep them…occupied with the things…that need to be done…. They know what to expect from me and…that's half the battle…. We set up that expectation in the beginning, and we do practice. So, I'll have a kid come in and model what that looks like. I'll have a…student…model it…incorrectly and then…show how to do it correctly…. We don't really have to revisit too often, because…they understand it.

This example illustrates the importance Ben ascribed to setting behavioral expectations in order for students to focus on learning without any unnecessary distractions. After all, facilitating student learning was embedded in Ben’s primary goal.
As part of the PBS philosophy, Ben used “a ticket system” of “Miller Bucks,” which could be exchanged for prizes and rewards, as incentives for students who met the expectations.

I give…the kids a set of “Miller Bucks.” And, they are totally extrinsic, but it really works…. They get a set of five, and…every week they turn them in. And, the goal is to have all five. And, I'll do…a drawing, and I'll do things like, “The desk that you're sitting in.” A student will get a drawing, and I'll pull them out and they get to sit there, and they get to move their stuff there, and they get to kind of interact with me the whole week. So,…those are our…prizes. The kids…get to be a line leader for the week. It's…a system [that has been in] use since the first day of school, and…those silly little Miller Bucks, they just think the world of them. It's so silly, but they love it. They totally love it. And, what's happening is, every week, I would get all students but like one turning in five. So, I…adapted. And, what I decided to do was, if you turned in five—meaning you were seriously perfect for the week: you turned in all your work, and your planner was signed, and…you followed all the expectations—I’d give them…a gold Miller Buck just to hold onto. And, after a couple of months, I'll do an auction. And, I'll do…more prizes. [For example,] you get to sit next to your friend for a week. And, there'll be enough prizes and things where…everybody will have something, even if they only have one week of the one something. I had lunch with [a student]—those are kind of the master prizes. And, that…system, it just really seems to work for this age group. And, I know it's totally extrinsic rewarding, but…it totally seems to work…. And, it's not something that occupies a tremendous amount of time. You know, all I have to say is, “Hey, I'd hate to take a Miller Buck from you.” Or, you know, maybe the student deserves a golden Miller Buck…, and…it just takes a couple of words about the ticket, or Miller Buck, or
whatever, and the expectation kicks back in…. In a week, I did this on Tuesday,…of the twenty-four kids I have…, five kids turned in less than five. So, the rest of them were pretty much right on. And, if they turn in…four, nothing really happens because…everybody has a bad day… But, as that progresses, if you only turn in three, then you're going to sit inside for recess time.

Through his extensive use of this behavior management system of rewards and consequences, Ben showed the value he placed on setting clear expectations.

Furthermore, Ben established a number of daily routines for students to follow. For example, for students to gain independence, which was a key aspect of Ben’s primary goal, Ben had his students take on tasks in the classroom to support an efficient and effective learning environment. Ben described some of these daily tasks:

So, routines-wise,…students come in and they're in charge of their lunch count…. I do the attendance of course, but the kids have magnets and things that they put on the walls that represent…[that] they're here and what they want to eat. And, so…efficiency is another part of this, too…. They come in the room, and they're ready to go. They know the morning expectations and routine…. They put their things away, and they grab their literacy notebook, and the first thing that the kids do once they're in their seats [is] they record their independent reading book and what page number they're on…because we want to keep track of, not only what they're reading, but what rate in which they're reading. So, they have a calendar in that literacy notebook in which they record their starting page every day…. I finish up attendance and get all these permission slips and…all that teacher business out of the way. Every day. Every day. And, then I don't have to remind them. It's just the norm…. It's how they start every morning…. [And],
every day I have the schedule on the TV up here. That's another…routine. The kids
don't have to ask me what's going on next. They already know what's going on next.
Ben’s students had internalized the routines and expectations to the degree that they had become
norms that the students carried out independently without Ben reminding them. As student
independence and literacy were also important to Ben, he explained that “once they're in their
seats ready to go in the morning, they're independently reading.” As such, one of Ben’s values
(routines) was in direct support of two of his other values (literacy and independence) in order to
achieve his primary goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing
that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners.

Moreover, Ben also utilized some basic organizational systems that tied into his
expectations and routines:

I'm all about organization, too…. You've got this literacy binder. You have a home for it
in the back of the room. You have a switching binder where all of your notebooks go:
math, social studies, science…. The expectation is that…you’ve got [a] planner, and you
take that home, and so there's…the organizational part of it, too. They…know what to
expect from me. There's no…surprises, which I think makes kids feel comfortable.

In many ways, these systematic structures created the predictability that contributed to students
feeling “comfortable” in the classroom, which was an important part of creating the type of
classroom community (another one of his values) that gave students the opportunity to learn and
grow. In this way, Ben’s values of expectations, structure, and community helped create the
conditions that would help Ben achieve his primary goal with his students.

Instructionally, Ben’s practices were built into the structures of the instructional models
he employed. The workshop model of instruction, read alouds, book clubs, and the inquiry
method of instruction were all recurrent lesson plan frameworks that were structurally unique from each other and involved their own set of norms and routines. Additionally, Ben’s students also participated in several daily routines that fostered gains in student independence, which was a key aspect of his primary goal. In speaking about these classroom routines, Ben said, “efficiency is another part of this, too” as time was such a precious commodity in the classroom.

**Summary of Ben’s central beliefs and values.** Figure 6 identifies Ben’s central beliefs and his foremost values, which are the two most important aspects of his belief system. These entities are both closely related to Ben’s goals and they contribute significantly to Ben’s enactment and reflection, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The expanded view of the central beliefs and values from the model summarizes the first two layers of Ben’s belief system. While the central beliefs were the most closely held and most important aspect of the belief system, Ben’s values emphasized what mattered to him and also contributed to the development of his goals, his enactment, and his reflection.
Ben’s attitudes. Following his values, Ben’s attitudes emerged as the next most important aspect of his belief system. According to Rokeach (1968), an attitude is “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner” (p. 112). Beyond having a positive attitude about each one of his values, Ben had a positive attitude toward several other aspects of his ELA instruction, including the teacher being a facilitator of learning, the workshop model and inquiry method of instruction, formative assessment, the differentiation of instruction, data, feedback, instructional technology, and the ELA CCSS. On the other hand, Ben had a negative attitude regarding basal reading.
programs and worksheets, and while he did not have a negative attitude towards the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs), he did not think as highly of the former standards as he did the CCSS. The following sections expand on each of the attitudes that emerged during the course of this study.

**Teacher as facilitator.** The data suggested that Ben viewed teaching as the facilitation of students’ learning. As the popular axiom goes, Ben did not see himself as the sage on the stage, but rather as the guide on the side. This view of the teacher as a facilitator moves the focus from the teacher to the students in that the facilitator assists students in furthering their learning without all of the learning having to flow directly though the teacher. Instead, facilitation redistributes more of the classroom leadership to the students as they take on more of the responsibility for learning through discussion, inquiry, and exploration. As a major aspect of his primary goal was to develop student independence, Ben empowered his students by helping them develop the knowledge, skills, and passion to be able to progress on their own over the course of their lifetimes.

Ben’s positive attitude about the teacher being a facilitator of learning was illustrated when he, stated:

I'm…your teacher and facilitator…. And, with a facilitator, with…their instructor [to] guide them through…[means] less of me being the teacher, [and me] being more of a facilitator and participant…. If I could take myself out of the equation, I would love it…[as] I get much better writers when they can self-select a topic and I just have to guide them through conversation.

This quotation also reveals how Ben’s positive attitude about facilitation had an impact on his enactment as he preferred to guide students’ through conversation about a self-selected writing
topic rather than utilizing any number of other teaching methods or strategies to further their writing skills. Plus, based on his comments of getting “better writers” using this strategy, it appeared this teaching preference was supported by previous positive results.

**The workshop model of instruction.** The workshop model of instruction, which was Ben’s primary lesson structure, went hand in hand with the notion of Ben being a facilitator of learning as the workshop format involved only a small amount of direct instruction while giving students many opportunities to explore concepts individually, in pairs, or in small groups with Ben’s guidance. Ben expressed his positive attitude towards the workshop through many comments, starting with “I hold that workshop model so high.” One of the reasons Ben held the workshop model in such high esteem is that he “[saw] that workshop as [having] a huge advantage” for meeting students’ needs. Ben discussed how “moving within a lesson to groups of kids, conferencing, sharing—goes back to that workshop model—[which] allows me to…assess kids, so I can differentiate as well.” Ben felt so strongly about the workshop model that he said, “The workshop model is going to be…I would say ninety percent of my format.” He took that notion even farther when he referred to “the workshop model that I always…die on.” Although “dying on” the workshop model might otherwise seem to have a negative connotation, Ben seemed to be indicating with that phrase that he was such an advocate for the workshop model that he used it almost exclusively from beginning to end, that he *lived and died* by it. But, staying true to his value of continual improvement, Ben said, “every year I'm trying something…new…within that framework of the workshop…model.” Thus, putting in the time and effort to evolve in his practices with the workshop model, showed what a positive attitude Ben had about it.
**Formative assessment, differentiation, data, and feedback.** Ben also expressed a positive attitude about his evolution as a teacher in his use of the formative assessment process, which helped him to differentiate his instruction based on the ongoing performance data (information) he garnered from his students and provide students with meaningful feedback to advance their learning:

> I was reading my college philosophy of teaching [from] thirteen, fourteen years ago, and I wrote on their assessment…. I knew that I would assess kids at the end and give them feedback and all sorts of stuff, but that…part of it has changed dramatically. And, that has to do with new research and everything. But, just the ongoing change…of keeping your ear to the ground and making sure that you're not moving too fast and not too slow, and differentiating…. using my assessments to differentiate in my instruction and different formative assessment techniques to try. So, that data part, that understanding the data piece,…has adjusted my teaching so much and has…impacted my students so much because that's an ongoing, every day, every lesson thing. And, I knew [assessment] to be a summative assessment with feedback at the end instead of ongoing feedback for the kids. And,…again, too, giving them ownership of their learning by…giving them responsibility to identify their strengths and weaknesses and helping them with feedback—or giving them feedback has evolved…the assessment part of my educational philosophy, for sure.

Through this evolution in his formative assessment practices, Ben concluded he was better equipped to determine his individual students’ academic performance levels and advance their learning from there through differentiated instruction, using data to inform his decision making.
and providing quality feedback, all of which he had a positive attitude about. And, again, the workshop model provided a useful framework for Ben to be able to do those things as he said:

Not all teachers have the same workshop philosophy as I do. And, I think the challenge for teachers that don't have that philosophy—that workshop model—is to be able to differentiate. How are they gonna differentiate...along with moving kids down this Common Core path? It's gonna be...very challenging [for them].

**The inquiry method of instruction.** Despite Ben’s attachment to the workshop model, he expressed an emerging positive attitude about the inquiry method of instruction as he began to experiment with it toward the end of the study. In comparison to the workshop model, Ben said:

There's gonna be times where...the inquiry process might be a better way to go, especially when it's...a genre study.... So,...this is going to be more driven by the students, where workshop is...explicitly teaching them.... "Today I'm going to show you this, and watch me as I do,"...[and] all those words that I...try to put in every time I do a lesson. I'm...giving them more responsibility to take on...the learning, which is...my goal.... So, I think...[the] inquiry process is going to have to be a part of...my teaching.... I don't want to get away from the workshop model [be]cause I hold it so high, but in this case, I need to use [the inquiry method].... So, there's a formatting shift.... It's a content shift...of thinking about a big idea and how to translate it into different modes...versus...teaching the genres.... So, it's just the journey.... It's just the evolution of...my thinking and the research I've been reading...for kids.

While Ben was not looking to replace the workshop model as his default lesson structure, this quote illustrates that he did appreciate how the inquiry method might further his students’ independence.
Instructional technology. Over the course of the study Ben expressed a positive attitude towards integrating technology in his instructional practices. Ben explained how this interest pushed him to earn his “master's degree from Wayne State in instructional technology because that's another passion of mine.” Ben’s use of technology in the classroom had evolved over time as “it [has] a huge impact on kids. But, technology…has changed over that time too, with using technology for technology's sake instead of integrating it across the [curriculum]…so…that certainly has evolved, too.”

Ben’s classroom was full of technology. As Ben discussed the technological resources at his disposal, he expressed his positive attitude by using words such as “fortunate,” “cool,” “neat,” and “fun” among others. For instance, Ben said, “I'm fortunate to be in a room with [a] laptop cart…. The kids have access to [all] these computers.” Plus, “we have…two iPads in the room. I was able to get one of those…foundation grants…. That's been fun, too.” In discussing the additional technology in his classroom, Ben said:

I've been really fortunate….I think I've had a document camera every year but one year, and [I] never had a[n] overhead projector. [I] always had a document camera and Epson projector. And, a coup, like…five or six years ago: I had a Promethean board. And, then something happened. We moved to a different room. And, then I was able to get this Epson interactive projector, which I really like…. The interactive projector…goes right onto the white board…. I can project anything from it. And, I can write with my white board marker on the white board along with that. So, that's kind of a cool tool, too, because…I can put up a piece of text, and the kids can use a white board marker. All of them can go up there and circle at a time versus standing in line to grab a pen… For example, if I put a piece of text up there and I'm asking kids to find maybe some tier two
words,…I can have a whole table come up and grab a marker and search the paragraph and tear it apart versus…you gotta wait in line…. It's efficiency again…. You get four kids up there at a time,…and there's no shadow, either. So, they can…get right to [it].

It's really neat. It's really, really cool.

The previous quote hints that one reason Ben held a positive attitude about this classroom technology was because it allowed for effective, efficient practices. Ben was able to have a small group of students simultaneously analyze and annotate an excerpt of text projected from his document camera onto the white board for the benefit of the entire class. In this example, Ben’s positive attitude regarding instructional technology appears directly connected to one of his values: efficiency.

**Basal readers and worksheets.** Although Ben did not express many negative attitudes over the course of the study, he did speak out against the use of rote reading programs that use basal readers and worksheets. In reflecting on his student teaching experience, Ben said:

I knew in my mind what was right with literacy, and what we were doing wasn't. We were…listening to books on audio tape, and we had a basal book that we'd follow. And, I knew that there had to be more than that…. That's why my internship was kind of a letdown because I was…there to inspire, and…there's a book called *Readicide*, where you're killing readers by “basaling” them. And, that's what I felt like I was doing.

Basal readers represented to Ben the antithesis of engaging literacy instruction that would inspire a passion for reading in his students. Likewise, he viewed the use of worksheets as a stifling practice that did not agree with his teaching sensibilities. Ben said, “You'll notice, I very rarely, if ever, pass out a worksheet. I never do…. It all happens within the context of their notebook. And,…it's always geared towards them reading better or writing better.” The use of worksheets
seemed to fly in the face of the authentic learning experiences Ben strived to create for his students in which they would engage in texts through their reader’s notebooks. Furthermore, Ben said, “‘The last thing I want to do is have a whole bunch of comprehension questions that I ask them…. That will kill the reader, I feel.’” Primarily through his experience teaching in the Summer Academy program, Ben was able to transform his instruction from “reading a basal text with an audio cassette tape to understanding that…‘to, with, and by’ approach, and…what's the best way to…differentiate instruction,…to teach strategies that will help students immediately with reading and writing better. How to keep kids engaged.” Once again, the workshop model of instruction gave Ben a paradigm to follow in meeting his goal for students.

**Ben’s opinions.** Beyond his attitudes in the model, the final layer of Ben’s belief system comprised his opinions. Rokeach (1968) defined an opinion “as a verbal expression of some belief, attitude, or value…. An opinion typically represents a public belief, attitude, or value, but may come closer to private ones when verbally expressed under increasing conditions of privacy” (p. 125). Ben expressed a handful of personal opinions over the course of the study that seemed to represent his version of some of the common public beliefs that existed about the ELA CCSS. In comparison to the other aspects of his belief system, it appeared Ben had held his opinions for the least amount of time, particularly as they related to the ELA CCSS since they were still a recently adopted set of standards at the time of this study.

The main opinions Ben expressed were consistent with the widespread notion that the ELA CCSS were rigorous standards that would challenge students and teachers; that the ELA CCSS emphasized depth over breadth; that the ELA CCSS focused on big ideas such as “perspective” that cut across genres, rather than studying genres separately (as the GLCEs called for); and that drama had a greater emphasis in the ELA CCSS in comparison to the GLCEs. By
virtue of the fact that many of these opinions seemed to emerge from the talking points used to sell educators on the CCSS, these opinions did not appear to be nearly as deeply held in Ben’s educational belief system as his central beliefs, his values, or his attitudes. Plus, as the CCSS was such a new phenomenon, Ben had not yet had much of a chance to solidify his thinking about them. Nonetheless, through his initial experiences with the ELA CCSS, these commonly held opinions appeared on the verge of being integrated into Ben’s belief system, which made them important to include as part of the outermost regions of the theoretical model.

When thinking about the onset of the ELA CCSS, Ben said the “rigor comes to mind first.” He elaborated by saying:

I think it has to do…with stamina. The kids can…sit down and look at a task and…for the most part…defend a claim…. But, looking at the Smarter Balance[d assessment], the kids have to look across. They have to read with a critical eye, they have to watch a video and determine importance from a video. They have to look at chart[s] and graph[s], and they have to pull that all together in order to create something cohesive. And, I see that…being a giant, giant task, a giant challenge that kids are going to have to master. And,…we've had conversations before about how difficult it is for kids to determine importance. They have to determine importance from text and from video and from…multiple sources. And, I think that's going to be…difficult. That's really difficult. And, they have to put it all together in their own words. And, [with] what we've practiced, it's been…challenging.

Despite this somewhat daunting level of rigor, Ben said, “I personally am excited to be…teaching Common Core…., specifically because of the work I've done so far. It validates…a lot of the work I've been doing with teaching the kids how to do things.” To sum it
up, Ben said, “I see the Common Core as being difficult; however, that's gonna be…great for our kids.” So, although Ben seemed to appreciate the GLCEs when they guided his instruction in the past, he seemed to have developed a higher opinion of the ELA CCSS by comparison.

To better understand Ben’s opinions related to the differences between the GLCEs and CCSS it is important to note that his approach to teaching literacy shifted as a result of implementing the ELA CCSS. While the GLCE’s required teaching reading and writing through a “genre study” method, the ELA CCSS required a focus on perspective that cut across multiple genres:

We've been talking about…perspective of [a] character…. This is a shift for me, having to think about the Common Core. And, I'm trying to think about reading and writing…not like I used to think about it. I would teach them…genres…. So, this is a big idea of…perspective. So,…the driving force is perspective…. And, I'm using different genres to…teach that….versus…my old way of doing things…. My GLCE way of thinking was we would take a genre, and then we would take it apart and do all sorts of things. And, so anyway, I'm taking perspective as a vehicle to show lots of different genres.

Part of Ben’s instructional shifts due to the onset of the ELA CCSS was to give students the opportunity to think about the concept of perspective across multiple genres, which was also related to one of his secondary goals. This method differed considerably from what Ben had done previously with the GLCEs, which was to study genres independently without any conceptual connection amongst them.
As Ben used the notion of “perspective” as a guiding force in his instruction with the ELA CCSS versus studying individual genres with the GLCEs, Ben also moved to an independent study project at the very end of the school year. Ben said:

It's been really exciting because that's all they want to do in the classroom the last couple days…. June ninth can be—I mean, it's impressive that they wanna keep doing [it]—and I hold the Common Core as the reason why. I don't think that would have come up if I were still doing the Michigan GLCEs…. I used to teach things in pigeonholes. And, what the Common Core has done for me is—there's like a thread that holds it all together.

While Ben did not speak negatively about the GLCEs, he attributed his students’ excitement about their independent study project to the ELA CCSS, and he did not think his students would have felt the same way if he were still teaching in the era of the GLCEs.

One of the reasons Ben appreciated the ELA CCSS was rooted in an opinion that they had a deeper focus on fewer concepts, which echoed the publicly-held belief that the ELA CCSS prioritized depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. To this end, Ben said, “Something that I learned about Common Core ELA is…they're engaged in a deeper understanding of…the reading that we do.” Throughout the course of the study, Ben regularly talked about his students gaining “deeper understandings” of the material. For example, he said, “what comes to mind [with the CCSS] is…[students] understanding something in a deeper way versus giving them a worksheet on simple, thin questions.” This comment supported the positive opinion Ben was developing of the ELA CCSS particularly when juxtaposed with a more simplistic response worksheet, an educational practice Ben had a negative attitude about.
Furthermore, as Ben talked through how he was leading the class in an exploration of the concept of perspective within multiple genres, which was a by-product of the ELA CCSS, he hoped to provide students writing their own poetry in different perspectives...from the perspective of an object...just so they can think a little bit more critically on...that. So,...again, I think it's that whole [emphasis on] deeper versus wider...[through] that big idea of writing [and] thinking about point of view and thinking about perspective.... I mean, this has been about a month and a half worth of work. We've done non-fiction. We've done fiction. Now we're working on plays and poetry. All based on that big idea.

Studying perspective and point of view for a month and a half is a good example of the level of depth that had come about through the onset of the ELA CCSS.

Ben also expressed the opinion that drama had a greater emphasis in the ELA CCSS than it did through the GLCEs. He said, “Going through the Common Core recently, I noticed that drama is in there all over the place, like reader’s theater and plays, and I haven't done a whole lot of work with that.” Nonetheless, part of Ben’s primary goal was for his students to develop a passion for reading and writing, and towards the end of the school year, his students started to show a keen interest in reading and writing plays:

This idea of a play, not only was it...in Common Core, but they were buzzing about it before. They said, "We've never done a play." And, you know, "Can we?" So, I'm trying to honor that a little bit, too. And, the standards I have to do, as well.

Although he acknowledged that he had to cover elements of the CCSS, which included more drama than in the past, Ben seemed most interested in doing the play because of his students’ excitement level for it as opposed to the fact that it was a part of the Common Core. In essence,
Ben’s decision-making subtly appeared to be influenced more by his overarching goal to instill a love of reading and writing than his desire to comply with the ELA CCSS. For Ben, wanting to do something was more compelling than having to do something, even though he had developed a positive attitude about the CCSS. Regardless, Ben was not forced to choose one over the other as his students were interested in what the CCSS called for. But, this example gives a sense that Ben held his primary goal more closely than a sense of duty influenced by his attitudes and opinions regarding the new CCSS.

**Summary of Ben’s attitudes and opinions.** Figure 7 shows the portion of the theoretical model that includes Ben’s belief system with a summary list of the specific attitudes and opinions that were presented above. Ben’s attitudes included his positive and negative views of various concepts while his opinions consisted of his interpretation of the public beliefs about the ELA CCSS. The overall model posits that Ben’s attitudes and opinions may influence his goals, enactment, and reflection, but not to the extent of his central beliefs or values. As such, these opinions and attitudes were not as closely held nor as substantive as values or beliefs.
Connections Between Ben’s Goals and His Belief System

The findings from this study are built upon the fundamentals of grounded theory in that the analysis of the data led to the creation of a plausible explanation for the interaction amongst the complex phenomena of Ben’s educational belief system, his goals, his enactment, and his reflection. The model that emerged is not intended to be portrayed as a definitive depiction of reality. Rather, the model is simply intended to help better understand these phenomena within the context of this particular case and how they might be related.
After extensive analysis of the raw data, the preponderance of evidence suggested the importance of Ben’s goals in relation to his instructional practice. From there, a working theory began to emerge that Ben’s goals could help reveal what his beliefs might be. While the importance of a teacher’s goals was not a part of the literature review, the weight of the data supported the crucial connection between Ben’s goals and the elements of his belief system. Thus, Ben’s central educational beliefs and values corresponded with the primary goal he worked to achieve. Through inference, it appeared Ben believed all students could learn, that he was ultimately responsible for student learning, that he was capable of facilitating learning for all of his students, and that everyone can develop a love of reading. Ben’s words and actions also supported the identification of his values as literacy, student independence, lifelong learning and continual improvement, and active thought and active expression. With those beliefs and values as a foundation, Ben strived to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners.

Although Ben’s enactment will be discussed in detail in the next major section, it should be noted here that the data suggested a close link between Ben’s values/attitudes and his enactment. Furthermore, the data supported a loose, indirect connection between Ben’s opinions of the ELA CCSS, which showed the positive impression he had of the CCSS, and the secondary goals he harbored, many of which pertained to achieving aspects of the CCSS. In other words this loose connection between his opinions and secondary goals hinged on his opinions, which consisted of the positive attitude he espoused, and the value he ascribed, to the ELA CCSS. Ben’s working understanding of the CCSS as expressed in his opinions along with his belief in the benefits of the CCSS appeared to give rise to some of Ben’s specific secondary goals. For example, with the opinion that the ELA CCSS focused on big ideas such as “perspective” that
cut across genres, rather than studying genres separately through the GLCE’s, it was logical for Ben to develop the secondary goal of understanding characters’ perspectives.

Figure 8 graphically illustrates the interactive connection between Ben’s belief system and his goals through the positioning of both entities side by side at the heart of the theoretical model in a manner that is reminiscent of a proton and neutron forming the nucleus of an atom. The data set from the study indicated a close relationship between Ben’s belief system and his goals, yet the complexity of the interaction between those constructs defied a linear representation. Therefore, the model is intended to provide a reasonable, accurate, and simple view of a dynamic system in which the interactive influence radiates from the core of Ben’s belief system and goals. In Figure 8, Ben’s belief system and goals are positioned as interactive companions at the core of the model. The most important components, Ben’s central beliefs and primary goal, are featured in the center in the lightest shades of blue to show they are the most deeply held elements within the system.
The Enactment Process in Ben’s Classroom

As explained in the previous sections, the data suggested that Ben’s primary goal was to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners. The secondary goals that emerged from the data were more numerous, but they were generally related to the ELA CCSS. Therefore, in the context of Ben’s classroom, given his central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions, Ben sought to achieve his primary and secondary goals through the enactment process. For the purposes of this study, enactment was defined as the interactive instructional process among the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards. As Ben was the central figure of this single-case study, the enactment process described in this section focuses primarily on the actions he took to achieve his goals.

Figure 8. Ben’s educational belief system and goals.
In attempting to make sense of the complex phenomena of the study, the data indicated the enactment process marked the point of demarcation from Ben’s internal, unobservable world of thought to the external, observable world of action. Thus, the enactment process consisted of how Ben used the curriculum, various instructional strategies, and assessment to achieve his goals with students in accordance with the elements of his belief system. The enactment process within Ben’s classroom was situated within a set of lesson structures and routines he employed. The most prominent structure that guided his instructional practices was the workshop model of instruction, which was a recurrent daily lesson framework that consisted of three main parts: a whole-group mini-lesson, small group/independent work time, and a whole-group sharing session.

While Ben attempted to blend his reading and writing instruction together as one of his secondary goals, he would still sometimes refer to these elements separately as reader’s workshop and writer’s workshop, both of which utilized the same basic workshop model framework. Although Ben valued both reading and writing, his reading instruction often occurred first, followed by writing. Likewise, he spoke more often about the importance of his students’ passion for reading in comparison to writing. As such, Ben’s reading instruction included two additional prominent practices: read alouds and book clubs. Read alouds seemed to stand apart from the workshop model as its own structure; whereas, book clubs appeared to occur within the framework of the workshop model during the small group/independent work portion. An emerging method Ben began to use as a departure from the workshop model structure was the inquiry method in which Ben would present students with mentor texts, and students would work to discern the key features of the genre and experiment with those features in their own writing. Several additional observable strategies also fit within the main instructional
frameworks Ben utilized, which included individual or small group conferences, turn and talks, quick writes, and fab five summaries.

The data suggested the enactment process within Ben’s classroom was anchored by various expectations, structures, and routines, which contributed to a well-managed classroom environment in which students could be successful and efficient in achieving his primary and secondary goals. In this way, the data indicated that the enactment process within Ben’s classroom had an instructional component that was supported by a management component. The purpose of the following sub-sections is to identify and explain key features of Ben’s enactment while showing the interaction amongst Ben’s goals, his belief system, and his enactment process.

The workshop model of instruction. The workshop model of instruction was the primary lesson structure Ben utilized as part of the enactment process to meet his primary goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all students to become independent, lifelong learners. Upon analysis of the data, a congruence emerged between the workshop model of instruction and the various elements of Ben’s belief system, including his values of student independence, active thought and expression, structure, and routines, as well as his positive attitudes about the teacher as a facilitator of learning, formative assessment, differentiation, and feedback.

As enactment was defined as an interactive instructional process among the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards, the following example gives a sense of how Ben viewed the student’s role and the teacher’s role with the content:

The student's role is to be an active participant in the room, that independent learner….

And, the way I can go about that is through…critically engaging kids in texts and
arguments, and to [teach them to]…concisely express their thoughts. I think we can do that in the context of that workshop framework. And, that…is…my over-arching philosophy.

This example illustrates how Ben considered the workshop model as an effective instructional framework for him to facilitate learning and to engage his students in the content while also providing his students with opportunities to actively participate in the learning process, make their thinking visible, and develop their independence. Similarly, Ben made a connection between the workshop model of instruction and his beliefs and values when he said:

I use that workshop model to actively get kids engaged, actively get them thinking, actively express their thoughts…. Because I…think that all students can learn, I feel like part of my philosophy is students need active participation, a[n] active role in the classroom.

This example shows how one of Ben’s central beliefs, that all students can learn, contributed to how much he valued students actively thinking and actively expressing their thinking, which was made possible through his use of workshop model of instruction during the enactment process within his classroom.

Ben elaborated on his use of the workshop model to meet his goal of developing student independence, which he achieved by incrementally giving more responsibility to his students:

Because I hold that workshop model so high, I also hold high that gradual release of responsibility. And, that's worked in through the workshop. So, every time I teach a lesson, I think about modeling it for them. You know, it comes down to the basics of, “to, with, and by.” I show them. We do this together, and then it's their turn. And,…again, it's back to that gradual release of responsibility.
For Ben, the workshop model of instruction began with a whole-class mini-lesson that he led, which included a connection to previous learning and a learning target that encapsulated the new learning they would accomplish that day. The mini-lesson typically consisted of direct instruction that could include a short lecture, an exploration of a mentor text or other model, and/or a demonstration. The mini-lesson often concluded with an opportunity for some type of guided practice before Ben sent students off to practice independently. The independent practice portion of the workshop often consisted of Ben conferencing with individuals or small groups of students, which afforded him the opportunity to gather formative assessment data on his students’ learning and skill development. The culmination of a workshop lesson involved the students coming back together as a whole group for the sharing portion, in which students and/or Ben would share examples that showed the successful attainment of the learning target.

This structure allowed for the gradual release of responsibility through scaffolding, which fostered student independence as students first could see him do it, they could try it with his support, and then they could do it on their own. Ben reiterated these points during the first post-observation interview:

I loved the book To, With, and By, by Margaret Mooney. And,…every time I write a lesson, I think about…that structure. I'm going to show them a sample. You're going to do this with me. And, then you're going to give it a go on your own. Well, it's… scaffolding. So, that was the reason I used the Sharks book. And, then I gave them another sample and…I kind of gradually released the responsibility. And, then I wanted them to unearth one on their own.

Ben’s interpretation of the workshop model of instruction, guided by Mooney’s Reading To, With, and By Children (1990), incrementally moved the responsibility for learning from the
teacher to the student, which fit with the value Ben ascribed to student independence and the
positive attitude he had about the teacher being a facilitator of learning. As Ben alluded to in the
example above, the workshop model, in essence, offered a formalized, repeated lesson plan
structure that was based on the tenets of scaffolding. Within the workshop model, Ben would
first deliver the instruction to students. Then, he would help students begin to understand and
apply the concepts or skills with his and/or other students’ support. Finally, students would
independently practice by themselves.

Ben expounded in more detail about what the mini-lesson portion of his workshop model
of instruction included and how it had started to evolve:

This year is newer. And,… part of workshop mini-lesson—the structure of a mini-
lesson—you always start with a connection to something you've done. And, then you
name the teaching point. So, that, to me…is something I've always done. But, the
learning target takes it a step further because it puts it in kids' language. And, what…I
tr[ied] to do today…that I've just learned is posting the learning target and then letting the
kids kind of have at it for a minute.

In this example, Ben referred to an evolution of his teaching practices in which he would write
his learning targets in kid-friendly language that students would then analyze and discuss in a
sense-making fashion. This new practice gave students a deeper understanding of, and more
responsibility and ownership for, what they would learn over the course of the lesson.

**Conferencing with students.** Student conferencing was a key component of Ben’s
enactment of the ELA CCSS within the workshop model of instruction. Conferencing was
consistent with Ben’s attitudes about teaching as it allowed him to facilitate student learning in a
differentiated way. Through individual student conferences, Ben and his students developed and
monitored (assessed) learning goals. Plus, goal setting functioned as a type of academic routine that helped his students develop a higher degree of independence:

Part of my philosophy is students need active participation—an active role in the classroom..., like building those routines and sitting down with...all of them and creating goals. And, [through]...conferences [and] being able to agree upon a goal together...give[s] the students the independent push...to...accomplish...their goal. I want the students to be invested in their learning and that's one way...to do that.

The enactment process in Ben’s classroom involved active student participation and collaborating with them collectively and individually as they established routines, conferenced about goals, and worked together to achieve goals, all of which promoted student ownership over their learning, and thus, a greater degree of independence. Likewise, this example showcases the value Ben ascribed to his students’ active thought and active expression. By working one-on-one with students, Ben had opportunities to build relationships with students individually, which the data suggested was important to Ben. To summarize, by setting goals and assessing progress towards achieving goals through student conferences, Ben activated student engagement and fostered greater independence.

Ben clarified his role in this process when he said, “My task there is to make sure that they're...achieving the goal that we set forth.” This sentiment helped support the interpretation that one of Ben’s central beliefs was that he was ultimately responsible for student learning. Assessing student progress in relation to their goals was an important way in which Ben determined whether he was living up to his responsibility as the teacher to advance their learning, which was a key aspect of his primary goal. Through these specific, individualized
goals, Ben could help students develop the knowledge and skills they needed to become the independent lifelong learners he was striving to create. Ben elaborated:

The kids will identify the things that they're struggling with. And, I…have them write it down in their readers' notebook…. I sit down and say…, "Let's talk about your goal. And, how are you achieving this goal?" And, we'll sit down and have a meeting—a conference. And, I'll ask them, "So, you wrote down “questions”—you're not good at writing questions. So, let's make a plan." And, then…we whip out their readers' notebook, and I [say], "Here's a chart. I want you to write down a question [and] the page number you did it on. And, was it answered? Was it a thin question? Thick question?"

Because those are lessons that we do in the beginning of the year. And, then, "When I come back to you on Thursday, show me what you did." So, we move—because that expectation is there. "I'm coming back to you Thursday and you're going to show me how you accomplished your goal." So, it's like a—I hate to say IEP, but it's like your individual plan. And, then if I'm noticing that there's a cluster of kids that are having a problem, well that becomes my main lesson…. So, it's dynamic…. I've got my ear to the [ground]…. I know what I need to teach, but to be responsive, I really need to…capture what's happening. And, what are your goal[s]? What are you good at and what are you not? And, that becomes whole-class lessons, or small groups… So, that's how I treat readers' and writers' workshop.

Ben referred to this goal-setting process as being akin to creating an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each of his students. This level of individualized instruction was indicative of Ben’s commitment to advancing the learning of all of his students through differentiation. Ben also adjusted his instruction based on trends he noticed among groups of students as a way to
impart the knowledge and skills his students needed to improve upon. The practice of student conferences matched up well with his positive attitude regarding the teacher being a facilitator of student learning. Furthermore, it gave him multiple opportunities for gathering formative assessment information, differentiating his instruction, and giving/receiving feedback, all practices the data indicated he had a positive attitude towards, as well.

Through student conferences, Ben was able to establish accountability with students towards achieving their goals by using questioning techniques and by maintaining careful records:

There's an intent with conferences when it's the independent part of the workshop, especially for readers’ [workshop]…. The kids have reading goals, and my task there is to make sure that they're reading a book that is appropriate, along with are they achieving the goal that we set forth. And, then I record [in] my notes:… "What are you working on? Last time you did this; [now], show me what you've done."

Ben reiterated the importance of goals and his student conferencing plans when he said, “I get so much accomplished in readers’ workshop because I have these goals [that] are set. I have this plan of kids I'm going to meet with.” As such, the data suggested that Ben felt the respective goals and his conferencing plans helped his students sustain a high level of learning as his record-keeping informed this overarching formative assessment process, which was a component of the enactment process in his classroom. He gathered data about where students started in terms of their strengths and challenges, he provided feedback, he charted their progress along the way, and asked for evidence to substantiate their growth, which gave students responsibility for their learning.
Through the conferences in which Ben and his students jointly monitored their individual goals, Ben worked to achieve his goal of furthering his students’ level of knowledge and developing their skill sets. In doing so, Ben’s central beliefs that all students can learn, that he was responsible for their learning, and that he was capable of facilitating learning for all of his students became more evident.

Ben also believed that everyone could develop a love of reading, and his primary goal included developing a passion for reading that would act as a catalyst for independent, lifelong learning. Conferencing with students within the workshop model of instruction was an instructional strategy Ben used to achieve this goal. Conferencing helped Ben to develop a deeper knowledge of his students and the books that might interest them while building relationships and a sense of community. Even if a student was reluctant to become a reader, Ben believed he just hadn’t figured out how to reach him or her yet, a sentiment that was reminiscent of the guiding quotation by Marie Clay framed on his desk: “If children are apparently unable to learn, we should assume that we have not as yet found the right way to teach them.” This quote underscored the responsibility Ben seemed to take for his students’ learning, including and especially his struggling learners. Ben shared a powerful example that showed how student conferencing, building relationships, creating a classroom community, and fostering independence were successful ways to develop a passion for reading in even the most reluctant readers:

Ethan…came into my room as…[a] student [who] was here from first grade or kindergarten…,and [he] couldn’t…be reached…. He was the kid that…was in every intervention that we have and…was forced by [his] parents to be in summer schools and all sorts of stuff. And, Ethan had a really hard time…with reading, and he hated it with a
passion. So, like I talked about in the beginning, I wanted to get to know him first. And I think that's a huge step getting kids to have their walls being broken down. And a lot of the…strategies that I was working with him on [weren’t] helping…. I'd sit with him and say, "Okay, these are my favorite books. And kids that sometimes don't like to read love this one." And, he'd read it…. And you could tell the affect—there was no affect. There should have been. And,…so I would conference with him, and he was hating it, or wasn't understanding it, or didn't like it, or all of…those. And, I was getting a picture of what kind of reader he was…. It was a task. Teachers said…this was his favorite book, you should read it. He was going to read it cover to cover. No enjoyment…. To get the kids to love to read,…they need to find a book that they really enjoy, they can connect with. So, I kept going back and forth with him on different texts, and he was the kid that would…gravitate to non-fiction books…. Anything informational he would like. I wish I could say it was as easy as just giving him an informational book and having him read it. But, it wasn't that at all. He…was looking for something that was a quicker read…. There's a lot of things that he was looking for in order for him to find a text that he would like,…that he would enjoy. And, part of it was listening to him and understanding him. And, it took weeks to figure out kinda his ins and outs of his personality, and what he's read before, and what he's been forced to read at home…. I think there's going to be a book out there for everybody…. I'll remember it forever. It's called…I Survived,…and it is a…fictional based book, but it's based on a true event like the tsunami in Japan. So, then the writer writes a fictional story about that event. He loved the…non-fiction part of it that was real, and he loved the adventure part of it,…that it was fake, but it could have happened. And, I bought them all. I bought every single one. In my library, I've got a
crate of *I Survived* books. One that the kid loved—I bought them all. And, he read them all. Every single one. Took it home, and he read it, and he loved it. And, I have them…. It was huge…. I wish there were more because now, he read them all, every single one. And, it was like a barrier being broken. And, now he was like comparing books to those. It was the first time that he had a book that he loved. And, it took a long time to figure it out, but he finally did. And, he…was happy…. I don't want to say it's a process. It's not a process. But, building a community and knowing him, and knowing what he's done, knowing his strengths and weaknesses, I was able to help him find something that…that got him going. And, I got him hooked, and that is like my number one goal. So, you know, I went back through a couple different strategies, but it was more like—it was more perseverance than trying different tools…. I would sit with him and read a little bit…. Well, I guess that that's a tool, too. I know that the first chapter of books a lot of times is make it or break it for kids. So, I would read the first chapter with him on that *I Survived* book. And, then he'd get the character's names. He kind of figured out—he knew what the problem was, and that helped him just feel like, "You know, I got this…."

It was like training wheels. So,…yes, there were lots of strategies in order to get him to enjoy it. But, every year…I can tell you a time when it took weeks and…lots of tricks, but eventually you get them to enjoy it.

Despite the monumental challenge, Ben was able to help Ethan find books he loved to read, which furthered Ben’s espoused belief that there was a book out there for everyone and that he could help all of his students to develop a passion for reading. Furthermore, through this example, Ben expressed how Ethan’s newfound interest in reading helped him gain confidence in his abilities. In turn, Ben was able to gradually release more responsibility to Ethan, which
was a scaffolding technique Ben used to further Ethan’s independence, another important aspect of Ben’s primary goal.

Guided reading. As a type of student conference, guided reading was an important part of Ben’s reader’s workshop. Often during the independent portion of his reader’s workshop lessons, Ben would pull a small group of between two and six students for guided reading. Generally students were grouped according to their ability level and/or the specific learning goals they had. In the meantime, while Ben was with a guided-reading group, the remaining students in the class would read independently or work on an individual or small-group task that was related to the specific mini-lesson and learning target for that day. Ben would meet with each guided-reading group for approximately 15-20 minutes, and he would likely meet with every student in the class at least once each week as part of a guided-reading group.

In general, Ben’s guided-reading lessons involved pre-reading activities around a specific teacher-selected text they all had in front of them, students taking turns reading aloud, and closure activities about the text. During the pre-reading portion, Ben would often attempt to discern students’ level of background knowledge and add to it, he would establish the purpose or goal for the group, and he would preview what they were about to read, in some cases talking about text features and/or vocabulary. Then, students would take turns reading excerpts from the text aloud while Ben assessed their decoding and comprehension. Ben would often differentiate his instruction for each individual student based on his assessment of their proficiency with the text and their individual goals. In some cases, Ben would take notes on students’ progress. After the reading phase, Ben would typically engage students in a discussion about what they read, focusing on comprehension or other related skills such as inferencing. These discussions would generally be focused on whatever the purpose was that was established during the re-reading
phase. A specific example of a guided-reading lesson will be discussed in great detail later on in this chapter in the reflection section.

**Turn and talks.** An instructional strategy Ben used on a regular basis as part of the enactment process within the workshop model of instruction was the “turn and talk” in which students shared their thoughts with a partner in a brief conversation while they faced each other. These exchanges often took place while students sat on the floor in the front of the classroom, but they would occasionally occur while students were seated at their desks. Following the second observation, Ben explained how:

All the stops that I made today were intentional…. Sometimes…the kids will make a gasping sound, which is an indicator of thinking. So, I'll stop and go, “Turn and talk.” And, if you notice too,…very rarely I'll prompt them. I'll…stop and say, “Okay, turn and talk to your neighbor” because I want them to come up with the things to talk about. That's…designed on purpose. I don't want to always just come up with a question. I think that becomes artificial. So,… that's what I'll say: “Stop. Turn and talk to your neighbor.” And,…they will. And, that's kind of neat, [as] those were mini-lessons at the beginning of the year: when we stop, be ready to talk. And,…here are lots of things you can talk about. So, those are all…intentional moves.

Instead of prompting his students, which he felt was “artificial” and would go against the authentic learning experiences Ben seemed to value, he merely provided his students with an opportunity to talk with each other in pairs. To support this teaching strategy, Ben conducted several mini-lessons early in the school year so his students would know what to discuss during a turn and talk. By giving students the autonomy to talk in an unprompted way, Ben showed his commitment to gradually releasing responsibility to his students so they could further their
independence. By frequently using the turn and talk strategy, Ben gave students numerous opportunities to actively express their thoughts, which provided evidence for the interpretation that Ben valued active thought and active expression.

**Structural features and materials that supported the workshop model of instruction.**

The context for enactment within Ben’s classroom included various physical features and materials that supported his use of the workshop model of instruction. These structures also assisted with the management aspect of the enactment process. Key features of Ben’s classroom included his classroom library, a document camera, an interactive projector, two iPads, and a cart that housed a classroom set of laptops. Students used flip-top desks, which were generally clustered in groups of four, and students sat on chairs that could be moved and stacked as students also sat directly on the floor at times. The materials students used most often in the classroom included the books they were reading, their literacy binders, sticky notes, and writing utensils. In terms of décor, Ben’s classroom was uncluttered and minimalistic, highlighted only by a handful of posters and anchor charts. The main elements that contributed to the enactment process in Ben’s classroom both in terms of instruction and management will be discussed in more detail in the subsections that follow.

**Classroom library.** Ben’s vast classroom library was a vital physical structure that supported the enactment process within the workshop model of instruction in his classroom. Ben regularly promoted the importance of reading, and the classroom library provided students with easy access to a large selection of books as they became a “community of readers.” Immersing students in books assisted Ben in stimulating a passion for reading in all of his students, which was part of his primary goal, and it gave credence to his central belief that everyone could develop a love for reading by finding the right book. Ben stated:
I'm very proud of [my classroom library] that I've been building...every year since I've been here.... It's an important part of my room.... I don't think I have a lot of management problems because...we talk about reading as if it's like the most important thing that they can do.... I show them all those...studies on...how many words you read in your life or in a year, and how that translates to test scores later on in life. And, we build that community of readers.... We talk about choosing books and abandoning books, and when it's time to choose a book or abandon a book,...you go right to the classroom library and find another one. I...try to organize it like Borders or Barnes and Noble...where I've got tubs of books that are funny, authors that fifth graders love. And, I want that...place to be ever-changing, too. So,...I move baskets around, or I'll create a new basket, or I'll have a kid grab a basket...and he'll put his [favorite] books in there. And, so the kids will go through his books. And,...there's no check-out system. It's on the honor system. You pick out a book. You love the book. And, you record that you've got it. And, when you're done, it goes back where you found it.... So, that's a really important...part of the room, and I don't know...what I would do without it.... I try to get as many new books throughout the school year to keep it...fresh and going.

The classroom library in Ben’s classroom helped reinforce his mantra that reading was the most important thing in the world. Ben stocked his library with books and authors “fifth graders love,” which supported his goal of instilling a passion for reading in his students.

In terms of routines, students checked books out from the classroom library on the honor system with the idea that they “pick out a book” and “love the book.” This trust in his students to be responsible with their books was similar to the openness Ben had regarding the supplies in his classroom. Sharing resources with one another was a way for students to develop a sense of
community, which the data suggested was something Ben valued. Students checked books out of the classroom library to use primarily during the independent reading time of reader’s workshop. This check-out system was also a way for Ben to release responsibility to his students as part of their growing independence. Ben elaborated on this check-out process in greater detail:

In our building, that [check out process] has evolved. At lower el. to now, they have…a shopping day. But,…I don't have a shopping day…because readers can…finish a book and are ready for another one. And, you're not going to wait until it's your day to shop for one…. I try to make it authentic and real, too. People aren't going to wait to get that next book in their hand, you know? Or, if you're reading a book and…you're in the fourth or fifth chapter and it's just not…speaking to you, you put it back…. It's okay to abandon a book. And, we talk about—[in] the beginning—there's lots of lessons on how to…choose books. I do a lot of lessons on abandoning books, too. When to abandon the book. How do you read different when you…think you want to abandon a book? How do you start reading it differently because you have to? And, if all else fails,…stand up and go get another one…. That's the real part of it. I'm trying to make this…real, so that when I'm out of the equation, this thing will continue to happen…. And, I think the kids respond—they really do respond to that. They've started bringing books from home…. They'll come to me and say, “You know, Mr. Miller, I was reading this book at home, and I think it'd be great for the classroom library.” So, “Bring it in!... Let's get a look at it.”

Through these procedures, Ben gave students the independence to shop for books and abandon books on their own in a realistic, authentic environment. Ben facilitated these practices by
scaffolding through a number of lessons that established how to choose a book and when to abandon a book. In doing so, Ben hoped students would be more likely to replicate those practices on their own in different contexts without his direct support. This gradual release of responsibility from Ben to his students in what he considered an authentic environment worked in service of empowering students to become independent, lifelong learners, which was the final outcome Ben strived for with his primary goal. Furthermore, the fact that students brought in books from home to add to the classroom library was evidence that helped characterize the enthusiasm they had for reading, which was also a key aspect of Ben’s primary goal. Plus, this independent initiative to enhance the classroom library for current classmates and future students was a form of students encouraging lifelong learning in others, which was another important part of Ben’s primary goal.

*Literacy binder.* Beyond the classroom library, Ben utilized other organizational materials that contributed to the enactment process in his classroom as part of the workshop model. For example, students each had a literacy binder, which was a three-ring binder that housed their reader’s notebooks and their writer’s notebooks:

Their literacy notebook…[is a place for] everything literacy. And, so I asked for binders. And, what starts to happen—when I know I'm doing things right—there's no readers' and writers' workshop. It's just…literacy time. And, it's happened before, where I feel like we're on this like—the machine is just like going. And the kids are like, “Are we in readers' or writers' [workshop]?”… They don't know because the lines have been blurred. And,…that's when I kind of feel like, “Yeah, I've got…it going right.” It doesn't happen all the time, but…that's kind of like another ultimate goal is to get those lines
blurred a little bit. So,…the kids have a reader's notebook…[and] they also have a writer's notebook. Using a singular literacy binder supported Ben’s secondary goal of merging reading and writing together as a best practice in literacy instruction. Ben considered those instances in which students could not identify if they were in reader’s workshop or writer’s workshop as evidence that he had successfully blended the two practices together.

By using the literacy binder and the reader’s and writer’s notebooks so prominently, Ben “very rarely, if ever,” used worksheets. Ben said:

I think…the writer's and the reader's notebook[s] are essential to…this literacy time…. You'll notice I very rarely, if ever pass out a worksheet. I never do…. It all happens within the context of their notebook. And,…it's always geared towards them reading better or writing better. Really. Literally. It boils down to that, and that's what it is.

A key aspect of Ben’s primary goal was for students to become better readers and writers. The implication of the example above was that Ben believed the notebooks were a more authentic way to move students forward in their learning in comparison to worksheets. Thus, this example suggests that the value Ben ascribed to authenticity was rooted in his assumption that students would learn more about literacy from interacting with texts, concepts, and skills by writing on blank pages of notebook paper rather than completing ready-made worksheets or reading through handouts.

Despite Ben’s interest in combining reading with writing, he still utilized separate notebooks within the literacy binder for reading and writing. According to Ben:

The reader's notebook is a place for them to write down their thoughts and their feelings about what they're reading, along with…[the start] of budding literary essays, and a place
for them to write anchor charts that we'll do in class. And, as fifth graders,…it's effective for…me to write and for them to write at the same time. It's not…when I'm done with the anchor chart, they're done with their note taking. So, I want them to have a place for…this anchor chart. And, the reader's notebook is a part. I always tell them the back of the notebook is for me, and the front of the notebook is really for them…. I mean…, anchor charts go in the back, and…their thinking and thoughts and all that—and all the information that they're thinking—will be in the front.

This example shows how the reader’s notebook was a place Ben designated for students to actively express their thoughts and feelings about what they read as well as a place to capture their notes. As such, this example serves as evidence in support of the interpretation that Ben valued his students’ active thoughts and their expression of those thoughts.

As the other essential component of their literacy binder, Ben’s students used their writer’s notebooks in similar ways to their reading notebooks. Ben explained:

Part of that writer's notebook is—again, it's for them to write down ideas. And, the front is all about ideas and [the] beginning of stories. And, they might put…artifacts from home, pictures from—almost like a scrapbook, even, in the beginning. Because, again, I've found in my career, if I told them what to write, versus getting them to self-select—I get much better writers when they can self-select a topic. And, I just have to guide them through conversation to the kind of genre I want them to do. So, if we're opinion writing, and they really want to talk about their cat, then we might talk about…why is it important [for]…children that are ten and eleven to have pets. So, I'm honoring their ideas and thoughts,…and, then we're transforming it to what I need it to look like. And, that's not
hard do to. And, the kids, they like it. They like you for it, too. They like the teacher for honoring their ideas and then…moving forward.

By allowing students to self-select their writing topics, Ben fostered student independence and helped students develop an enjoyment and passion for writing, which were two key aspects of his primary goal. Plus, Ben acted as a “guide” during the writing process, which was consistent with what the data suggested about his attitudes regarding the teacher’s role as a facilitator in the classroom. As students appreciated the choice they had in writing and that their teacher honored their ideas, they liked the teacher more for doing so, which contributed to the relationships and community he was trying to build with students as they worked together to achieve their goals.

Ben elaborated on how students used the writer’s notebook as a place to further develop their writing skills and to enhance their writing endurance:

So, this writer's notebook is a place for…all things—ideas. And, I'll do a quick write—like, I'll put a picture on a board of something really interesting. I will let the kids write and write and write for as long as I can get them to write for because in the beginning of the year, I talk about reading and writing stamina. They come from grade levels that…I feel practice the same workshop model as I. So, reading isn't...as big as building that writing stamina back.... They come into the fifth grade able to read, for the most part, you know, twenty to thirty minutes at least without disruption. And that...extends as the year goes on. But, writing—they don't do a whole of that in the summer, if any. And, we have to build that stamina back up. And, a lot of times that quick write goes...not all the time, but goes in the writer's notebook. And, many times, they'll look at their quick write and say, “Hey, that's pretty good. I mean, this is something that I could expand on.” And, they'll take that and write on it. This isn't really a place for drafts. It's a place for
ideas…so that you never have to come up to me and say, “I don't know what to write about.” I don't get that because I've taken the time in the beginning of the year to build this writer's notebook.

This example introduced the “quick write” instructional strategy Ben used with his students as part of the enactment process in which they used their writer’s notebook to actively express their thinking, which was something the data suggested Ben valued. Plus, through the procedures and expectations he established at the beginning of the school year, Ben’s students showed a commitment to improving their writing skill and stamina.

As the data indicated Ben valued lifelong learning as part of his own development, he consistently sought resources that would help him become a more effective teacher:

I use…Ralph Fletcher…. We have a Ralph Fletcher kit that has a lot of different examples of lessons and how he built the writer's notebook. And [we] talk about how some lessons are about how real writers—real authors—have a notebook of ideas. And we go…through that. And,…the writer's notebook works out. As my career has gone on, I've done a better job at coming back to the notebook.... What I would do…when I started [the] writer's notebook, we… would be hot and heavy and really working on the writer's notebook. And, then it would kind of go away for a little bit. And,…now it doesn't. I…feel like I do a better job at keeping…this with them every time they sit down to write. And, you know, we do…crazy things, like we will walk around the school with our writer's notebook, and we'll literally…record things that we see and notice and hear and try to get that…idea that writing can…be anything. And, they're better for it.

By modeling his writer’s notebook practices after author Ralph Fletcher, Ben had a viable framework to effectively establish the expectations, procedures, and routines for writing that
allowed students to actively express their thinking in an authentic manner. By remaining consistent with these practices, Ben was able to provide students with ongoing opportunities to independently cultivate their writing skills using the simple tool of a writer’s notebook.

All in all, Ben’s use of a literacy binder as a part of the enactment process tied together parts of his belief system in ways that allowed him to achieve his primary goal, which was to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that will empower all students to become independent, lifelong learners.

*Sticky notes.* In addition to the literacy binder that contained students’ reader’s and writer’s notebooks, Ben utilized sticky notes as part of the instructional routines that contributed to the enactment process within his classroom. For the most part, sticky notes functioned as a proxy for highlighting or writing notes in the margins of books. Using sticky notes gave students an opportunity to capture their thoughts and feelings related to what they were reading, which was connected to the value Ben seemed to place on students actively expressing their thoughts, without defacing school property. As an example, Ben described how students used their sticky notes after they finished reading a text:

The sticky notes becomes like a record of thoughts. And, one of my favorite activities to do with them is, once the text is done, [is] read over your sticky notes. And, is there a common thread between all the sticky notes? And literally, they can…sort their sticky notes. And, it becomes like this synthesis piece where they're taking what they learned from the text—they're taking their thoughts from the text—and they come up with like this pattern or theme. And,…then they'll write from it. And, they'll keep a space in their reader's notebook for all of their sticky notes, because I want to honor that process. I don't want them to just throw them away…. But, that…activity of pulling them out and
finding that common thread, you know, I haven't had a kid yet go, “There's no pattern here.” There's…something that—maybe a couple of sticky notes that build off of each other, and then we talk about it. And, we build these literary essays around…it, like a synthesis paper eventually on the texts that they read. So,…that's how the sticky note…ends…and then we start it again…. And, the savvier kids will find books that are by the same author and…read on. And, they'll start connecting their synthesis from prior…texts with the new one. And, then they'll start talking about authors…. So it's a really cool way to get them to think about their thinking.

Using sticky notes to record their thoughts about what they were reading provided students with multiple opportunities to “think about their thinking” as a form of metacognition and actively express those thoughts. As this example suggests, Ben also had students write on sticky notes as a way to achieve the secondary goal of synthesizing information from multiple sources. Another implication that stems from this example is that metacognition and synthesis were advanced critical thinking skills that could serve students well in becoming independent, lifelong learners, which was the ultimate outcome of Ben’s primary goal.

Ben also used sticky notes to receive feedback from students through a “Sticky Note Garage,” a poster that contained a grid of individual square sections where students placed sticky notes so Ben could formatively assess their learning.

And, there's places like that…big gigantic yellow poster in the back. All the kids have…their little garage space. They'll stick a sticky note in there once in a while for me to do like a quick formative assessment on how things are going, or talk to me about the character [they’re] reading about, [or] settings. I mean whatever we're focusing on a lesson, they'll stick it in that spot. And, then when…they're at lunch…or whatever, I can
Evidence from the study suggested Ben had a positive attitude regarding formative assessment and differentiation, and he used the Sticky Note Garage as a formative assessment tool within the enactment process to elicit evidence of individual students’ thoughts in relation to various aspects of his lessons. As Ben worked to move students forward in their learning, he sought information from individual students about their interaction with the content in class. The Sticky Note Garage was one method Ben used to gather this kind of informal evidence in a written format that he could analyze and use to adjust and differentiate his instruction.

**Read alouds.** As a part of his literacy instruction, but seemingly outside the framework of the workshop model of instruction, read alouds were one of the major components of Ben’s enactment. A read aloud in Ben’s classroom involved him reading a novel aloud as students sat in an oval at the front of the classroom. Ben sat amongst the students and read the novel in small chunks day after day. Ben explained:

[For] read aloud, we're reading a book called *Tiger Rising*. And, any time…I'm doing read aloud, it's all about conversation, talking moves, bringing out deeper comprehension. My goal—every time we sit down, we sit in a circle to read. And, I give a book to everybody. It is not a whole-class chapter book…. I'm reading the text and they're following along. It…takes the pressure off decoding. And, they are…fully comprehending…what they've got. They're reading with a pencil or pen…to write down their thinking on sticky notes and their reader's notebook. And, then we'll talk, and I'll ask them some guiding questions to get them to talk a little bit deeper about…the story. So, that's…read aloud.
Through read alouds Ben worked to deepen students’ reading comprehension, which was part of his primary goal of developing students’ reading skills, and to give them a stimulus for which to actively think and express their thoughts both verbally and in writing, which was one of Ben’s secondary goals.

Although Ben had begun to use learning targets with his reader’s and writer’s workshops, he did not extend that practice to his read alouds. Learning targets in Ben’s classroom were very specific to his daily lessons; whereas, his read alouds were guided by longer-term goals of developing comprehension and discussion skills. Ben explained this further:

I think the read aloud group works fine. There really isn't—and I don't really necessarily plan like a learning target ever for that. But, not always. But, that one is just kind of getting that conversation going. And, then in read aloud, that's where I…will get the kids to think about the background knowledge, too. That's where that background knowledge can come from. We pull in—a lot of times we'll talk about the read aloud from before, and we'll compare characters from one…book to another book…. So anyway, the read alouds are really important.

Even though reading was the focal point of the read aloud, Ben often had students write prior to beginning the read aloud as a way for students to remember and reflect upon what happened during the previous read aloud. Ben explained this technique:

So, then read aloud occurred, and I talked a little bit about that. I…liked for them to write before read aloud begins for lots of purposes. One is, they…have an understanding of what happened last time without saying, “Okay, let's talk about what happened last time.” That's already been done in the writing. They've already accomplished that. So, they're coming to the…carpet—or, they were already there—with what happened last
time because they wrote about it. So, it's a...time-saver. Plus, it gets them to...write.

And, I need them to continue to write, write, write. So, I like...doing that.

This pre-writing strategy helped save time and gave students more opportunities to write, which connected to the value he placed on efficiency. Plus, writing and reading in close succession helped Ben blend both of the key literacy elements, which was one of his secondary goals and a method he seemed to think was an effective way for students to develop their literacy skills.

In addition, a writing strategy Ben utilized fairly often in relation to his read alouds was a “fab five,” which Ben explained as

Something I picked up from...a resource on basically a five finger essay—a summary....

And,...sometimes I'll say, “Alright, give me a fab five on what we're reading in read aloud.” And, they'll...take their reader's notebook...[which] is a place for them to write it down. And,...that strategy [has] morphed into bigger, longer, better essays, too.

So,...that's how I started that...fab five, and it's morphed into this really neat essay.

The fab five instructional strategy helped Ben achieve two of his secondary goals, for students to determine important part of text and summarize it efficiently, and to combine his instructional practices of reading and writing.

**Book clubs.** Book Clubs were another one of the main teaching practices Ben utilized as part of his enactment process. Like read alouds, book clubs did not seem to fit within the workshop model of instruction. Nonetheless, book clubs in Ben’s classroom were characterized by small groups of students (roughly four to six students per group) reading the same novel over the course of a few weeks and having group discussions about the book with Ben’s support.

Ben’s enactment of book clubs connected directly to the goals of developing a passion for reading in his students while they improved their reading skills and gained greater independence:
Part of my book club philosophy is that it's really important for kids to buy-in…. I really want the kids to leave here loving to read…. I wasn't that kind of reader. And, I think part of my mission is to make kids like that…love to read…. That philosophy of mine of…keep[ing] that reading life…bountiful is literally driving the things that I do. So, that's…my philosophy of book clubs, and they love it. They really love book clubs…. They'll finish a book and they'll say, “When are we starting the next one?”

Ben’s goal of inspiring a love of reading drove his enactment of book clubs, and he seemed to be successful in doing so as his students clamored for a new book as they finished their previous book club book. This success toward an aspect of his primary goal seemed to validate his book club practices.

In addition to wanting his students to be passionate about reading, Ben worked to increase student independence by giving them some decision-making power over what they read in book clubs:

I have the kids literally shop for book club books when it's time…. I'll set out six or seven books. I'll literally do…a movie trailer for each one…and then go around and they literally assign themselves to different books. They'll give me like their top three books that they want to be in. And, usually I'll honor one and two. I'll either give them their first choice or their second choice.

By giving students choice over what they read, Ben was also trying to increase the likelihood that students would enjoy their book and therefore love reading even more:

So, once we begin, that's literally my grouping, [which] is…self-selected. And, I know them as readers now. I mean, I don't do book clubs right off the bat because I don't know them good enough as readers. So, I usually wait…ten to fifteen weeks before I get
started with book clubs because I want to model it in my read-aloud, and then… I want to move them right into a smaller group read-aloud, basically. And, they're in charge of… reading the text. So, when we meet for the first time, the kids will have their reader’s notebook, and their book club book, and sticky notes, and I… share with them my expectations. We create norms. And, we get… started reading a couple chapters at a time. I'll include them in the… assignment process of… [reading] two or three chapters. And, then we'll meet on… whatever day. And, then… we go from there. So, I try to include them in that… If I could take myself out of the equation, I would love it to continue. But, I… never do. I mean, I'm always part of this book club because in order for them to get any kind of feedback, I need to be there. I need to hear that, you know? And, it's… worked well for me… So, we'll continue book clubs through the remainder of the year, and they'll do a little writing in their notebook… Depending on what group it is, I might have the kids write before they come to me, and then we'll share. Sometimes we'll just get in and start discussing. But, the expectation is that that's what's done….

The kids come prepared for book club for the most part. They understand that the role of the book club is… to come with an idea—some discussion points ready to share. The last thing I want to do is have a whole bunch of comprehension questions that I ask them….

That will kill the reader, I feel.

Consistent with his values, Ben began book clubs by setting expectations and creating norms to guide their work together in this aspect of his enactment in the classroom. Through book clubs, Ben emphasized discussions amongst students about what they were reading. The students themselves came prepared to their book club meetings with discussion points, which was one of the ways Ben promoted increased student independence. Furthermore, Ben’s enactment of book
club discussions served as a way to increase students’ passion for reading, as opposed to asking a multitude of teacher-created comprehension questions, which he believed would be inauthentic and “kill the reader.”

Ben’s version of book clubs in his classroom were influenced by Fountas and Pinnell. Ben said, “I have a wonderful book that supports me with book club, and…it's this book called *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency*. And, Fountas and Pinnell are literacy leaders in the nation, for sure.” In addition, Ben said, “This resource helped me really guide questioning and procedures and…those kind of things. It was very helpful.” This is another example of how outside resources also had an influence on Ben’s instructional practices.

**Inquiry method of instruction.** Although the workshop model of instruction, read alouds, and book clubs appeared to be long-standing literacy practices that guided his enactment, Ben’s thinking, research, and reading led him to experiment with an inquiry method of instruction that used mentor texts and open-ended questions to enhance the outcomes in his classroom according the ELA CCSS:

I've read a fantastic book by Katie Wood Ray called *Study Driven*. And,…I think if you would interview her, she would say that she teaches genre through a[n] inquiry-based method. So, that's one of the things I'm going to do today is,…and it's another…philosophy thing. I'm going to show them a mentor text. I'm going to give them a…reader's theater play. I'm going to simply ask what do they notice? What do they see? Write three to five things that you notice about…the script. And, we're going to have a conversation about it, and they're going to generate a list of how to create a play or a script…. It's one of those situations where I want them to leave me knowing…if I weren't there to help them, how could they help themselves? So, I think that inquiry
process is the way…to go…. I'm gonna provide the mentor text, but they certainly could do this in the future. They could find a fantasy. Or,…if they were supposed to go write a memoir, they could find a memoir, read it, and say…, "Okay, how did this author use it as a…mentor text?"

This inquiry method of instruction quite naturally fit Ben’s goal of gradually releasing more responsibility to his students as they could use mentor texts as models for their own writing, even after they moved on from Ben’s class, which would be a marker for the independent, lifelong learning aspect of his primary goal:

I also want them to see that they don't need me to discover new genres. And, that's kind of another overarching goal here. They don't need me;… they need to find…a good example and do what they did today. Notice…, not steal, but be…inspired. Or,… use it as a tool that will propel them into doing what they need to do…. But, as the days go on, I'm gonna talk about, when we do things like this, how does that translate to forever—to being a lifelong learner?

Using the inquiry method of instruction, Ben wanted students to develop a greater depth of understanding so they could independently identify and understand the conventions of various genres while also discerning the purpose, the problem, and the solution of a mentor text, which were part of Ben’s secondary goals. Ben said:

And there’s two ways to look at that. It's how does the writer develop, what craft do they use to make that writing so fantastic? But, then there's the how does that genre work?….. How does the author craft a piece?... The one I was going to use was Owl Moon, which Jane Yolen is an expert at writing beautiful, lyrical sentences…. It's a personal narrative about a girl that goes looking for owls with her dad. And, I would love to use this as a
mentor text. I'm going to show the kids why and how…. I'm using it for craft, but I want them to be able to use it for craft and to understand genre because that’s the work, the second part, is what we've been working on with the plays, and that's how I'm trying to connect this together. You...do all that work with figuring out what a play is, you're still loving the drama stuff, that's great, we'll keep doing that. But, we're gonna add a layer to it, and the layer is looking at a different mentor text and looking at not only the genre, but how it's written. And, the kids…came up with that…poster about plays. They wrote there has to be characters in the beginning, a list of characters that the author puts a character in, and a colon, and they write the dialogue. There's a narrator and we talk about the narrator and all that stuff. But, then we get in to [how] there has to be a story. There has to be a purpose. There has to be…a problem and a solution. And, now we’re getting into a little more depth. You're not just looking at [it] and seeing what is different. You're gonna get…the beginning steps of…what it looks like. Now, how does it…sound?... How does the author write?

Through the use of the mentor text *Owl Moon*, Ben pushed his students to gain a deeper understanding of the “why” and the “how” behind the author’s writing. In other words, Ben wanted students to begin to see the connection between the author’s purpose (a secondary goal) and how the writer attempted to achieve that purpose through various writing techniques. This lesson connected directly to his primary goal of improving the quality of his students’ reading skills, which, through application, would also help to improve their writing skills.

The culmination of how Ben worked to achieve his primary goal using an inquiry method came in the form of an independent study project proposal that he introduced at the very end of the school year. Through the following example, Ben explained how he endeavored to achieve
his goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all students to become independent, lifelong learners:

Today we are going to be looking [at] an independent study…. We looked at the play…and a lot of kids might pick a play to write for an independent study. But, I want them to be able to say, “I…would love to write a graphic novel, and I'm going to take a graphic novel and use it as a mentor text.” And Writer's Workshop [to]day is about using a mentor text in an independent study to learn about the genre, and I'm assuming that…a lot of kids will pick plays because that's…what we have been doing. But, kids that aren’t, they're going to pick the genres and things that they love and want to write about. So, what that does for me, it gets back to that loving to write, loving to read, and building that thirst before I send them off to summer. So,…if they know that they can write a fantasy by looking at a fantasy, and studying a fantasy, and using a fantasy as a mentor text, it's not gonna stop them to give it a go on their own. And that's…how I want to end my year…. I want them to be able to…take something that they love, study it, and use it as a mentor text. And, I think that's gonna help them prepare for—it's a forever lesson…. I think it’s gonna help them forever.

Using the inquiry method, Ben planned this independent study of mentor texts as a way for students to discern characteristics of the particular genre they selected and then apply those techniques in their own writing within the chosen genre. The independent study project provided a connection amongst the various components of his primary goal of advancing student learning, instilling a love of reading and writing, and empowering student independence “forever.”

Furthermore, the independent study project created excitement for students with writing that Ben had otherwise found difficult to achieve:
I jump to writing because it's something that [at] this time in my career I can get my most reluctant readers to read. But, writing has always been another trick for...the stubborn kids that don't want to read or write. But, this “independent study” word builds an excitement, and it gives them some freedom to keep the quality of the writing up.... I wanna make sure that they're not just writing garbage. And, I think that having a mentor text is gonna be a key at keeping the quality high and keeping the enthusiasm high.... I want that work to happen now so that they leave me with that. And, if I could go back in time, I would probably have started even earlier. Having this idea of using the mentor text, and we've used mentor text all year long, but they have never...had the freedom to choose their own mentor text.... So,...the lesson is going to kind of frame around choosing a mentor text. What do writers look for when they are looking for a mentor to follow?

Ben believed the combination of enthusiasm and choice inherent in the independent study project would lead to higher quality work. Going back to Ben’s goal, pushing students to produce higher quality work is a way to advance students’ knowledge and skills, and student choice is a form of student independence while excitement and enthusiasm are components of loving to read and write.

Ben explained the project in further detail with the hope that students would extend the work even after the school year concluded as a way for students to move towards an ethic of lifelong learning:

[We have] three full days left of school. And, tomorrow we're going to be gone at the art museum, but I'm gonna have them create a project proposal for an independent study, independent writing. Whether, “What are you planning to write? Describe your project.
What are some of the different steps you'll take to finish the project?” Those kinds of things. I want them to be thinking about it. And, I love to get them so excited about it that they continue this as school's out…. That would be my hope…. I know it's not gonna happen for them all, but I bet a vast majority will take it home and keep going...., which again…has always been my ultimate thing, you know, getting them to love reading and writing, even when the teacher is not around.

With very little time left in the school year, Ben still assigned this new independent study task. In doing so, Ben hoped to build a level of excitement that could potentially lead to students continuing the work on their own over the summer and beyond, which is a form of students loving to read and write while gaining independence for lifelong learning, which were key aspects of his primary goal:

That idea of…having them choose a mentor text and that level of excitement, I think since day one I've told the kids about how to independently find a book. I'm not going to force everybody to read the same text. And, I guide them into finding books that they love, and in writing it's you've got opinion writing to do, and it's exactly the way you kill readers, as what I do in writing. You know, so, this idea of giving them more control of finding mentor texts, this needs to happen, like September because there's opportunities during Writer's Workshop, that, we might be between a study…. If they can do this work on their own and there is a buzz, you know, and that happens already. But, it doesn't involve that extra step of you want to try a new genre. You need to learn about this genre by finding a mentor text. I think that's a missing piece to this whole thing, and that's kind of why I'm cramming it in right now, because I want them to be able to do this forever…. The idea of using a mentor text and their idea of writing is going to create this enthusiasm
and quality of writing, which is what lacks when it's their turn to sit down and write something. The quality is gone. They start doing things like they want to write about a sports-person—I'm thinking about the boys. They will want to write about an athlete, and it will be kind of like a list. It won't be writing, it will be a baseball card back…basically. And, I want them to see the sports non-fiction books that I have, how did those authors do it? And, what did they write in there that maybe inspires you to not make this such a list, or a baseball card? You know, that's not what writing is. It's not a list. So, it's important work and I think I waited, I know I did—I needed to do it a lot earlier.

Ben discussed how over the course of the year, as a facilitator, he guided students in selecting books independently. Ben believed that “forcing” students to read or write something specific would “kill” their enjoyment of the activity. Ben reiterated the notion that the combination of choice over, and use of, mentor texts will generate a lasting enthusiasm and high quality writing that fits the convention of the genre. By relying so heavily on mentor texts while using the inquiry method of instruction, Ben worked to enhance the authenticity, one of his values, in the enactment within the classroom.

**Summary of Ben’s Enactment and Expansion of the Theoretical Model**

Figure 9 includes a summary of enactment in Ben’s classroom, which entailed the interactive instructional process among the teacher and students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards. The data indicated relationships existed between Ben’s enactment, his primary and secondary goals, and his educational belief system. Therefore, in the graphic in Figure 9, enactment encircles both core elements: Ben’s belief system (his central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions) and his goals (primary and secondary)
in order to illustrate interaction amongst these concepts. The main instructional practices Ben utilized as part of the enactment process included the workshop model of instruction, read alouds, book clubs, and the inquiry method of instruction, which were supported by the teaching strategies of student conferences and turn and talks. As Ben’s enactment was the demarcation point from his internal realm of thought to the external world of action, enactment is featured in the color red to distinguish it from the goals and belief system, which are portrayed in shades of blue.

**Ben’s Reflection**

To this point, the theoretical model has depicted Ben’s goals, his belief system, and his enactment. By way of review, Ben’s primary goal served as his overarching, long-term purpose, whereas his secondary goals included his more specific, short-term goals that were directly tied to the ELA CCSS. These goals provided a window into the various elements of Ben’s belief
system, including his central beliefs (his deepest held core beliefs), his values (his ideals), his attitudes (his preferences), and his opinions (his least-held, espoused public beliefs). In addition, the model has shown Ben’s enactment, which was the interactive instructional process between him and his students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving goals and standards. It appeared Ben developed plans for enactment that were based on his assumptions about which elements of the curriculum he should use, the instructional methods and teaching strategies he should employ, and the assessment approaches he should utilize in order to best achieve his primary and secondary goals. These assumptions, while often implicit, seemed to be in the form of if-then logic models. A general example of this type of logic is if I do this, then that will be the result. Overall, Ben’s enactment was the combination of the choices he made and the actions he took in order for his students to achieve his goals.

The theoretical model presented so far has shown what Ben hoped to accomplish through his goals, the underlying why behind those goals through his belief system, and how Ben attempted to achieve the goals through his enactment. What the model has not yet shown is how Ben perceived and reacted to the outcomes of his enactment through reflection.

For the purposes of this study, Ben’s reflection was defined as the active process in which he considered his actions and the resulting consequences of his teaching (Garman, 1996). Through reflection, Ben examined the actions he took during enactment and then he evaluated the consequences, which can be thought of as the outcomes or results of his teaching. In general, outcomes can include the knowledge or skills students gained as a result of the enactment. The data suggested Ben’s perceptions of the outcomes could affect his enactment, either through adjustments he made in the moment or adjustments he planned to make in the future. Therefore, the following section will examine Ben’s reflective process and how his reflection either led to a
validation or modification of his enactment based on how successful his students were in achieving his goals. In doing so, this section will also explore the interaction among Ben’s goals, enactment, and reflection.

The data indicated that Ben’s reflection could be described as a test of the if-then logic he used during enactment. Therefore, Ben’s reflective process appeared evaluative in nature and centered on his perception of how successful the enactment was at achieving his goals. As a general rule, if he was satisfied with the outcomes of the enactment, Ben would proceed according to his existing assumptions and plans about curriculum, instruction, and assessment without making changes. However, if he was dissatisfied with the outcomes, Ben would make adjustments to his assumptions, plans, and enactment to better meet the goals.

Throughout the study, when Ben reflected upon the outcomes of the enactment, he generally assessed his students’ level of learning through informal observations and through individual and small group conferences. In his reflection, Ben frequently referenced his students who were approaching grade-level. This small group of struggling students became his barometer for how successful he perceived the enactment was at meeting the goals, which included individual goals, small group goals, and/or whole class goals. It appeared Ben evaluated his level of success as a teacher not based on how his most proficient students performed, but rather, by how his least-proficient students performed. In essence, it appeared success by his approaching grade-level strugglers presupposed success by his at or above grade-level students.

The following vignette includes a series of examples from a portion of a single guided-reading lesson with a small group of approaching grade-level students, starting with Ben’s explanation of the lesson plan. In total, these examples and the accompanying analysis will
illustrate Ben’s reflective process and the interaction among his goals, his enactment, and his reflection. Ben shared his plan for this portion of the lesson:

I'm going to pull a group of my approaching students…. And, I'm pushing the text level a little higher than what they're going to be comfortable with on purpose…. And, this group of…students, they really struggle with staying focused on a book…. They see the purpose of reading, but… I'm trying to light that fire a little bit for them. So, I found a great book called *Finders Keepers*. And, it's about under water sunken treasure. And, I'm going to let them [do] a little bit of reading with me in this guided-reading book. And, then I found four real-life…sunken treasure sites that I'm going to have them read on the internet—have them read about and do some study on… just to kind of light that fire.

Ben’s espoused plan exposes his assumption that having students read from the book *Finders Keepers* and the websites about actual sunken treasures (his curricular choices), using a scaffolded, guided-reading approach (his instructional choice), will “light that fire” for these students (his goal for this group, which relates to his primary goal of developing his students’ passion for reading). This is an example of the if-then logic that underlies his enactment.

Ben went on to explain the rationale behind some of his choices:

That zone of proximal development that I think about—I think about that theory. And, with [being] a facilitator—with…their instructor [to] guide them through and ramp up that text level…. Those are…my approaching students. They were approaching grade level but not at grade level, and by boosting them to the grade level…with my support, I think that builds confidence…. Plus, it's a high-interest topic. I feel like it's a high-interest topic for fifth graders: treasure, destruction, all that good stuff. But, that's why
I'm picking…the guided-reading group. That's where you really want to ramp up that
text level, so…they can go, “Yeah. You know what? I was able to read something a
little bit more difficult and figure out what it means.”

This explanation reveals another assumption that appeared to be embedded in his enactment
plan: using a high-interest book that was above the students’ reading level (his curricular choice)
with him providing support (his instructional choice) would increase their confidence in their
reading fluency and comprehension abilities (his goal, which was related to his primary goal of
enhancing students’ reading skills, and a step towards the implicit goal he had for his
approaching grade-level students to achieve at grade-level).

In enacting this guided reading group lesson with his approaching grade-level group,
each individual student had an opportunity to read aloud a passage from the book *Finders
Keepers* (his curricular choice) while Ben determined individualized goals for each student in the
group and monitored their progress towards achieving their respective goal (his assessment).
The following example relates to Ben’s interaction with a female student named Jayden in which
he took on the role of a facilitator as he differentiated his instruction with the “stop, think,
paraphrase” teaching strategy (his instructional choice), which he determined was appropriate
based on the information he gathered from Jayden’s paraphrase of what she had just read (his
formative assessment data), and the individualized goal he had for her, to determine the
important part of a text and summarize it efficiently, which matched a secondary goal Ben had
for his students. Ben shared his reflection on their interaction:

But, that group of kids,…you could tell, one of the girls has a really difficult time… She
has no little voice that says, “What did I just read?”… It's not there. So, she
actually…[is in] an intervention group for visualizing what she's reading. And, she goes
to the special ed. teacher five days a week for a half hour…. And, they work on just that. She’s not a special ed. student—it’s an intervention. And, that’s what I was having her do, the “stop, think, paraphrase.” I think that worked really good for her, where she read a sentence or two, and I put my hand over it—physically put my hand over it—and said, “Tell me what happened.” And, at first… she couldn’t. So, I had to have her re-read it. So, that's something we're continually doing. I think that worked really good. I want to do that more with Jayden.

In this reflection, Ben considered his actions during enactment and then he evaluated the results. After contemplating the outcome of the enacted student conference, Ben said, “I think that worked really good,” indicating a level of satisfaction that convinced him his enactment, which was based on several underlying assumptions, was effective. Thus, he said, “I want to do that more with Jayden,” which indicated he planned to continue to enact the “stop, think, paraphrase” teaching strategy in his individual student conferences with Jayden. This example is representative of many other situations from the study that showed how Ben’s perception of a successful result led to no change in his enactment or his assumptions. Likewise, this example shows the interactivity amongst one of Ben’s goals, his enactment (involving curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and his reflection.

The next example from the guided-reading vignette includes Ben’s interaction with Jack, another student from his approaching grade-level group. Ben’s goal for Jack was to improve his decoding skills and accuracy in reading by becoming more adept at “chunking” parts of words correctly. Unlike the example of a successful enactment process with Jayden, this example shows how Ben made adjustments to his less effective enactment in two different ways. The first modification occurred during enactment based on Ben’s formative assessment and
subsequent dissatisfaction with Jack’s performance in relation to the goal. The second alteration included the changes Ben indicated he would make to his enactment in the future in order to avert similar unsatisfactory outcomes:

I wanted to make a note on Jack. Jack was the first kid that struggled with the word “departure,” and, when I got in, he had zero strategies for breaking apart words. He's a new…student from somewhere. And,…he's so resistant on chunking the words up. And, so he was chunking it at the wrong spot. He was saying “dep-arture,” and he couldn't pronounce “ture,” which was a big surprise for me, too. So, that's when I showed him the word “picture” on my notebook. I said, “Well, how do you say that part?” And, even then he didn't know what the word “departure” was. He said the word “departure,”” and he didn't know what it was. And, that again goes back to lack of background knowledge. You know, if you ever go on an airplane, you know…when the departure is. So, I need to remember that when I…pick books like that.

Like the example with Jayden, Ben’s reflective process regarding his interaction with Jack began with his description of what occurred during enactment and then moved into his evaluation of the success of the results. However, unlike with Jayden, Ben’s assessment revealed Jack was not successful according to his differentiated goal, which was to decode words accurately. Therefore, Ben immediately employed a different instructional strategy, which was to use a familiar word with an equivalent “chunk” to help Jack pronounce the word correctly. This shows how Ben adjusted his instruction in the moment in order to more successfully achieve one aspect of his primary goal, to improve students’ reading skills. In addition, because of his reflection, Ben planned to preload students with the necessary vocabulary prior to reading new texts in the future (a choice related to enactment), which would give them a greater likelihood of
success in decoding words accurately (his goal). In essence, Ben developed a new if-then assumption that he would test through a cycle of enactment and reflection at a later time.

The small-group component of this guided-reading lesson mimicked the interaction among the goal, enactment, and reflection of his individual student conferences. Ben had individualized goals for each member of the group, and he also had a collective group goal for this guided-reading lesson, which was to determine the important part of a passage (a secondary goal). In this case, Ben wanted the students to

get the main idea of the most important part,…to break it down to that one word that was the most important today. Because if they can identify that one word or phrase that really sticks out, usually it’s the most important—almost always the most important part of the section.

Thus, Ben used a questioning strategy (a choice related to instruction) to elicit the most important part of the passage (the goal) during enactment. Like the example with Jack, Ben’s reflective process revealed an opportunity to make an adjustment during enactment based on his formative assessment of their less-than-satisfactory level of success according to the goal. Ben explained his decision-making:

I had to back up the scaffold a little bit and ask them to tell me with one word…. I was prepared to do that. But, I was hoping I wouldn’t have to. I wasn’t getting—I wasn’t hearing what I wanted to hear. That’s why I initiated that.

Additionally, Ben recognized the students had not yet achieved full mastery of this goal. He said, “But, still. I mean, they still need practice because…it was again, like kinda pulling teeth…[for] them to determine the important part.” Because it was difficult for students to
achieve the goal for this lesson, Ben determined they would need additional practice following the same enactment process to gain a level of proficiency he would be fully satisfied with.

This vignette provided representative examples of how Ben planned his enactment for individual and small groups of students (which included the elements curriculum, instruction, and assessment) according to his assumptions for how to successfully attain his goals. This vignette also detailed Ben’s reflective process of first considering what occurred during enactment and then evaluating the level of success of his enacted if-then logic. The example of his interaction with Jayden showed how successful outcomes in relation to his goal required no changes to his assumptions, plans, or enactment. The example of his interaction with Jack showed how unsuccessful outcomes in relation to his goal required tweaks to his assumptions, plans, and enactment both in the moment and for the future. Lastly, the example of the whole group showed how modest outcomes in relation to his goal required more iterations of the enactment process according to the same assumptions and plans. While there are numerous examples from throughout the study to support these findings, this vignette captures the essence of the interaction among Ben’s goals, his enactment, and his reflection within the framework of a single lesson.

To summarize the analysis of Ben’s reflective process, the data indicated he first considered what occurred during enactment and then he evaluated the success of the enactment based on his perception of how effectively the enactment process served to meet his goals. If Ben was satisfied with the outcomes according to his goal(s), he would proceed according to his existing assumptions, plans, and enactment. If Ben was dissatisfied with the outcomes according to his goal(s), he would adjust his assumptions, plans, and enactment in order to better meet his goals.
Figure 10 is an expanded view of Ben’s reflection in relation to the other elements of the theoretical model. Ben’s reflection is depicted as an overlay on top of a portion of the enactment circle that surrounds his primary and secondary goals as a way to show that Ben reflected upon how well his enactment served to achieve his goals. In the model, reflection does not overlap any elements of the belief system as the data did not support a strong direct connection between Ben’s reflection and his belief system. In other words, the topics of reflection during the course of this study did not include beliefs, values, attitudes or opinions. Therefore, the model posits that Ben’s goals and enactment function as the conduits that help one better understand the various elements of his belief system.

Description of the Overall Theoretical Model

The overall conceptual model derived from the findings of this case study is represented by the graphic in Figure 11.
This model shows the relationship amongst Ben’s beliefs, his primary goal, his values, his attitudes, his opinions, the enactment of the ELA CCSS in his classroom, and his reflection. Starting from the center, the core of the model depicts the essential connection between Ben’s educational beliefs and his primary goal. Ben’s goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that will empower all students to become independent, lifelong
learners was undergirded by his central educational beliefs that all children can learn, that the teacher is ultimately responsible for student learning, that he is capable of facilitating learning for all of his students, and that everyone can develop a love of reading.

Ben’s central educational beliefs were part of a larger belief system, which included his values, his attitudes, and his opinions. These entities are presented in the model as concentric circles that radiate from his core beliefs as a way to show how deeply held each respective entity was and the relative importance each had in relation to Ben’s goals and the actions he took through the enactment process to achieve his goals. As such, Ben’s beliefs are at the heart of the model as they were the most important construct of his belief system, they had been solidified over time and through experience, and they were the most resistant to change; whereas, by comparison, moving out from the core, Ben’s opinions were of lesser consequence, had been formed more recently, and were the most susceptible to change, which has them positioned as the entity of the belief system that is the farthest from the center of the model. Ben’s primary goal was focused more on his big-picture sense of purpose of how he could set his students up for a lifetime of success, and his central beliefs supported that goal. As Ben’s opinions of the ELA CCSS were not as closely held as his central beliefs, nor were they contradictory, Ben was able to maintain his beliefs and his primary goal regardless of the transition from one set of curricular standards (the GLCEs) to another (the CCSS).

Ben’s enactment included the interaction he had with his students according to the choices he made with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Ben’s enactment was the point of demarcation that moved him from thought to observable action as he attempted to achieve his goals, which were reflective of his belief system.
In the model, Ben’s reflection encircles his goals and overlays his enactment as his internal reflective thought process consisted of his consideration of what occurred during the enactment process and his evaluation of whether adjustments to his enactment were required based on his perception of the success of the enactment in relation to his goal(s). In other words, as Ben reflected upon the outcomes of his enactment of the ELA CCSS, he evaluated how successful he was at meeting his goal(s). If the results were satisfactory, he continued on the same path of enactment; however, if the results were unsatisfactory, he made calculated adjustments in order to better achieve the goal(s). Ben appeared to be in a state of virtually continuous reflection before, during, and after instruction as he assessed students’ progress and the success of his enactment.

As Ben’s beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions were congruent with his primary goal, they combined to form the why that underlay Ben’s professional practice. Ben’s goals represented what he was trying to accomplish, the enactment process represented how he attempted to achieve the goal, and through reflection, Ben determined how well the enactment process served to achieve the goal and if adjustments to his enactment were needed.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

Context of the Study

In recent years, two approaches to educational reform have come to prominence: the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and an emphasis on high-stakes teacher evaluation. As a result, these reform movements have led to changes in the field of education, and, by doing so, have drastically increased the pressure on the instructional leaders who supervise teachers. Among countless other duties, they now must ensure teachers adequately prepare students to meet the CCSS as they concurrently evaluate teacher effectiveness according to checklist systems that are not aligned to the CCSS. But, what is the intended outcome of these reforms?

To explain the purpose of the CCSS, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012) website asserted:

High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations to ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life upon graduation from high school, regardless of where they live.

The logic behind the adoption of the CCSS appears to be that standardizing rigorous learning standards will ensure success for all students. However, according to Lumpe, Haney, and Czerniak (1998), the standards themselves will not guarantee success; rather, success will be determined by how the curriculum that is designed to meet the standards is enacted in the classroom. And, as teachers’ beliefs influence their perceptions and judgments, which affect their behavior (Clark, 1988; Nespor, 1987), it behooves instructional leaders to seek understanding about why teachers behave the way they do. Thus, understanding teachers’ belief
systems is tantamount to improving their teaching practices (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Fenstermacher, 1979).

Unfortunately, using an approach that seeks a deeper understanding of teachers’ educational beliefs as a pathway for teacher development has not been the focus of contemporary carrot and stick teacher evaluation systems. In fact, a recent *U.S. News & World Report* article attempted to explain the purpose of this new era of high-stakes teacher evaluation:

The [teacher evaluation] system is intended to encourage high-performing teachers to stay and to induce low-performing teachers to leave…. Federal programs also incentivized states to tie those evaluations to compensation and find ways to reward great teachers with bonuses while creating pathways out of the profession for ineffective teachers. (Camera, 2016)

As such, the system of high-stakes teacher evaluation is based on punishments and rewards in order to remove ineffective teachers and retain effective teachers. The logic behind this high-stakes teacher evaluation model appears to be that having the best teachers in America’s classrooms will lead to increased student achievement, a notion that seems rooted in common sense. However, is the current teacher evaluation method the most effective way to improve teacher effectiveness and ensure our best teachers are teaching our students? In an interview, Educational reformer Michael Fullan said, “A huge apparatus is in place to identify the five to seven percent of teachers who shouldn’t be teaching. [Yet,] One hundred percent of teachers are involved in a superficial system in order to catch five percent” (Borris, 2014). Moreover, teacher evaluation expert and author Kenneth Peterson (2014) added, “The truth is that there is scarce research to suggest that evaluation causes teacher growth.”
So, how can instructional leaders help improve the teaching practices of the 93-95% of teachers who are worth keeping? According to Fullan, “Capacity building is about how we help teachers get more effective” (Borris, 2014). Furthermore, “as a teacher learns more about what needs to be improved and how he or she might proceed, this knowledge can impact further reflection in the midst of teaching, thus improving teaching practices” (Madsen, 2005, p. 3). Accordingly, instructional leaders are uniquely positioned to help a teacher build his or her capacity and effectiveness by understanding the underlying mechanisms (beliefs, goals, reflection) that are connected to the observable aspects of the teacher’s enactment.

**Overview of Purpose, Methods, and Research Questions**

At its core, this qualitative study sought to provide insight into why a teacher would make various decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to meet the ELA CCSS. Thus, the intention of the study was to explore the interaction between the why (the teacher’s belief system and goals), the how (the enactment), the what (the ELA CCSS), and the how well (determined by the teacher’s reflection) of a teacher’s practice. To do so, I utilized a longitudinal, embedded, single-case study strategy to collect detailed information through interviews, observations, and artifact collection from an elementary school teacher enacting the ELA CCSS in his classroom over the course of a semester. Although the focus of the study was on developing a deeper understanding of the connections amongst a teacher’s educational belief system, goals, enactment, and reflection, the underlying hypothesis (although not part of the study itself) was this kind of understanding was crucial to improving teaching practices.

As a case study, the findings are not generalizable beyond the case, but the patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994) that emerged from the study became the foundation for my working theories to plausibly describe the phenomenon of this single case. Therefore,
this dissertation is both an in-depth story of a fifth grade teacher, Ben, and a presentation of the grounded theory that emerged from my analysis of the data.

An evolution of the study’s purpose. At the onset of the study, my purpose was to understand the influence of Ben’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his classroom. Because qualitative research is inductive in nature, my research questions guided my analysis is a general way while the purpose of the study remained my foremost consideration as I attempted to develop an emerging understanding the complexity of the interaction among the phenomena.

To begin, I sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What educational beliefs appear to be central to the teacher’s belief system(s)?
2. What are the teacher’s theories-in-use related to the ELA CCSS?
3. How are the ELA CCSS enacted in this teacher’s classroom?
4. How do the teacher’s beliefs/belief systems appear to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS?
5. How does the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action appear to influence his educational beliefs and behaviors?

Through reflexivity during the data analysis phase, I became aware of a linear bias that was reflected in how I had organized the material in my literature review and in the wording of the purpose statement itself. Similarly, the research questions also reflected that same linear bias as my original purpose statement. The linear, one-way nature of my thinking prior to conducting the study was particularly evident in Research Questions 4 and 5 through the emphasis on the “influence” of the “beliefs/belief systems” on “the enactment of the ELA CCSS,” and the “influence” of “the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action” on “his educational
beliefs and behaviors.” The phrasing of these questions belied my assumption of a one-way influence of beliefs on enactment and the one-way influence of reflection on beliefs and enactment. The awareness of this bias, in light of the mounting evidence from the study, changed my outlook and perspective, which resulted in a much more dynamic interpretation of the complex interactions among the teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, enactment, and reflection.

Furthermore, a key omission from the original purpose statement and research questions was the importance of the teacher’s goals. Although goals barely surfaced in my exploration of the literature on beliefs and belief systems, Nespor (1987) did discuss that in order to understand “why teachers organize and run classrooms as they do,” attention must be paid “to the goals they pursue” (p.325). Likewise, the analysis of the data uncovered the importance of Ben’s goals in relation to the other key elements of the study. Ben’s goals served as a window to his unconscious and in many ways were utilized as a proxy for the elements of his educational belief system. Furthermore, the weight of the data indicated an interactive relationship among Ben’s belief system (his central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions), his goals (primary and secondary), his enactment, and his reflection. This explanation ran counter to the logic behind the original purpose statement and research questions, which reflected my assumption that the constructs of Ben’s belief system and the contents of his reflection would influence his enactment of the ELA CCSS in a more linear, cause and effect manner. Thus, partway through the data analysis phase, the purpose of the study began to evolve based on the accumulation of evidence. A more apt purpose of the study became to understand the interaction among Ben’s goals, his educational belief system, his enactment, and his reflection.
Connections to Theory

The diagram at the end of Chapter 2 (Figure 1) represented my attempt to synthesize the various theories from my literature review that I thought would have implications for the study. However, both during and after the actual study, I put aside that conceptual framework and attempted to understand and then describe the phenomenon according to the analysis of the evidence, which yielded the grounded theory for the model found at the end of chapter 4 (Figure 11). Nonetheless, several aspects of the findings are aligned with theories from the literature, including those found in Figure 1, particularly the composition of the belief system and the tenets of action theory. Those connections will be discussed in more detail in the subsections that follow.

It is important to note, however, that the grounded theory resulting from this study made connections amongst a teacher’s belief system (central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions), a teacher’s primary and secondary goals, a teacher’s enactment, and a teacher’s reflection in a way that had not been derived from previous studies. Other studies have focused on perhaps one or two of these topics, but after an exhaustive literature review, I remain unaware of any studies that have investigated all of these key concepts at one time. Because this study sought a depth of understanding across a breadth of concepts, the longitudinal, single-case study design was an effective means of exploration for the sake of a plausible explanation.

Conclusion 1: The elements of Ben’s belief system were consistent with the theories proposed by Rokeach (1968) and Pajares (1992). According to Rokeach (1968) and Pajares (1992), an individual’s belief system consists of central beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions. Rokeach (1968) contended central beliefs are the most important beliefs in the belief system, values are the ideals one holds most dear, attitudes are clusters of beliefs around a specific object
or situation, and opinions are verbal expressions of public beliefs, attitudes, or values. The findings from this study regarding the constructs that appeared to be present in Ben’s educational belief system fit within the frameworks of these definitions. The model represented in Figure 11 depicts Ben’s educational belief system as a series of layers with his central beliefs positioned at the core of the educational belief system as they are the most important and deeply held beliefs in his belief system. Each subsequent layer (values, attitudes, and opinions) is held less deeply in the belief system and has a decreasing level of importance within the belief system. While the definitions of the elements of Ben’s educational belief system were derived from, and consistent with, the theories from the literature review, the visual depiction of these constructs in the model of the study (Figure 11) was part of the grounded theory that emerged from the data analysis of the evidence from the study.

**Conclusion 2: Ben’s enactment and reflective processes were consistent with action theory.** A major component of the original conceptual framework (Figure 1) consisted of Argyris and Schon’s (1974) action theory, specifically theories-in-use, the underlying strategic maps people unconsciously develop to plan, implement, and review their actions. Argyris and Schon (1974) posited that “theories-in-use…include assumptions about the self, others, the situation, and the connections among action, consequence, and situation” (p. 7). One’s theories-in-use are often implicit or tacit: “they exist even when we cannot state them” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 11). People design action through their theories-in-use to achieve intended consequences and to monitor the effectiveness of their actions (Argyris and Schon, 1974). The findings from this study were consistent with the theories-in-use process Argyris and Schon (1974) described in which individuals design action in order to achieve intended outcomes followed by an evaluative reflection of the results of the actions. Throughout the study, the
intended consequences Ben hoped to achieve were his primary and secondary goals; the actions were the observable aspects of enactment, the interactive instructional process among Ben and his students, guided by curriculum and assessment, in pursuit of achieving his goals and the CCSS (Ball & Cohen, 1996); and, he monitored the effectiveness of his actions by reflecting on the outcomes of the enactment process.

According to Argyris and Schon (1974), “A full schema for a theory of action” can be represented as follows: “in situation $S$, if you want to achieve consequence $C$, under assumptions $a_1…a_n$, do $A$” (p. 6). The overriding theory of action that described Ben’s fifth grade classroom in which he faced the challenge of achieving the ELA CCSS in the first year of implementation following a decade of working to achieve the GLCEs (situation $S$) was in order to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all students to become independent, lifelong learners (consequence $C$), with the beliefs that all students can learn, that the teacher is ultimately responsible for student learning, that he is capable of facilitating learning for all students, and that everyone can develop a love of reading (assumptions $a1, a2, a3, a4$) while placing value on literacy, student independence, lifelong learning, continual improvement, active thought, active expression, relationships, community, structure, routines, expectations, efficiency, and authenticity, Ben created the conditions for successfully achieving his goal in the classroom through the enactment process, which involved the workshop model and inquiry method of instruction that integrated reading and writing and included read alouds, book clubs, student conferences, and turn and talks.

Additionally, Argyris and Schon’s (1974) action theory includes one’s reflective evaluation of the effectiveness of one’s actions. Likewise, Garman (1986) described reflection as an active process in which teachers consider their actions and the resulting consequences of

The “in the moment” changes made to address a problematic situation leading to the evolution of the lesson are a result of the “reflection in action” process, which involves the teacher reading the cues and interactions of students while executing the lesson and making adjustments accordingly. As a result, the teacher can troubleshoot and differentiate instruction to meet student needs or address external conditions. (p. 45)

Thus, reflection-in-action can lead teachers to make immediate adjustments within a given lesson in order to best meet student needs. Ben regularly used reflection-in-action to determine what instructional changes might lead to a higher level of success for meeting his goal(s).

The other type of reflection Schon (1983) identified was reflection-on-action, which occurs after a particular activity has taken place when one thinks back over what happened, evaluates one’s actions along with the success of the activity, and considers whether changes could have resulted in different outcomes. Argyris and Schon (1974) asserted the teacher’s primary considerations while reflecting upon his actions include constancy (the desire to keep constant his theory-in-use and the behavioral world he has created) and how effective the theory-in-use and the enactment were in producing the desired outcome(s). Ben followed a similar process as he reflected upon the enactment during our four post-observation conversations. He would often describe what occurred during the lessons, and then evaluate the level of success of
the enactment in meeting the goal(s). If he were dissatisfied with the outcomes, he would consider changes to future enactment opportunities.

According to Pajares (1992), if the teacher were to deem the outcome(s) of the enactment to be effective, the teacher would maintain constancy (Pajares, 1992). However, if the teacher determined the outcome(s) of the enactment to be unsatisfactory, the teacher would engage in elements of Taggart and Wilson’s (2005) reflective thinking model by recognizing a problem or error and then framing (or reframing) the problem, leading down a path of either single-loop or double-loop learning. According to Argyris (1997), single-loop learning corrects errors by changing actions while maintaining the existing governing variables. On the other hand, double-loop learning corrects errors by changing the underlying governing variables and then the actions (Argyris, 1997, p. 10). This is part of an accommodation process in which new information causes existing beliefs to be replaced or reorganized (Pajares, 1992). In the end, double-loop learning requires teachers to surface, examine, and alter the beliefs and assumptions that undergird their prevailing theory-in-action (Marx, 2010).

In this case, Ben seemed to derive solutions to the problems he identified within a single loop in which his governing variables remained intact as he altered his behavior during enactment in order to more effectively meet his goals with his students. According to Nespor (1987), a teacher’s goals are of critical importance when he makes a decision or confronts a problem. In many ways, this single-loop solution tendency may be the result of the tight congruence between Ben’s goals, his theories-in-use, his enactment, and his reflection.

However, as Ben’s attitudes and opinions were held less deeply than his central beliefs and values, his instructional shift from the workshop model to the inquiry method of instruction could perhaps have indicated the seeds of double-loop learning in which some of his governing
variables at the attitude/opinion levels possibly started to change with his behaviors, as well.

Nonetheless, based on the observable evidence from the case, I was unable to determine with any certainty if there were indeed alterations to his governing variables, in large part because I inferred the majority of his belief system based on what he said and did (Pajares, 1992).

In addition, despite an exhaustive analysis process, no evidence emerged to support a direct connection between Ben’s reflection and his educational belief system. Instead, his reflective process was consistent in that he would share his recollection of what had occurred during the lesson and then he would evaluate the degree to which his students had attained the goals. He would then determine to proceed according to his existing assumptions or to make an adjustment to his enactment. As such, Ben’s goals functioned as the observable jumping off point for the choices he made during enactment, and his goals set the bar of success for his reflective evaluation of the enactment process with his students.

Conclusion 3: The link between Ben’s self-efficacy beliefs and his goals was consistent with the literature on self-efficacy and goal theory. As stated previously, the concept of a teacher’s goals did not emerge with any significance in the initial literature review, which instead focused more specifically on a teacher’s educational beliefs and belief systems, the enactment process, and reflection. However, the initial review of the literature did reveal a connection between a teacher’s self-efficacy and goals. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). Locke and Latham (1990) asserted that an individual selects a goal based on “what the individual thinks can be achieved and what he or she would like to achieve or thinks should be achieved” (p. 122). Thus, a teacher’s self-efficacy and other central beliefs are crucial to their goal setting. Bandura (2013) stated, “People’s beliefs in
their capabilities influence the level of goals people set for themselves. The stronger the self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves.” (p. 151). Lee, Sheldon, and Turban (2003) found that teachers who exhibited low levels of confidence in their capabilities generally adopt a goal-avoidance orientation, which is associated with a lower level of teaching performance in comparison to teachers with higher self-efficacy who tend to set high goals for themselves and their students. Similarly, Zimmerman, Bandura, and Marinez-Pons (1992) claimed that teachers who have high self-efficacy adopt cognitive processes in which they set rigorous goals they commit to. They added that teachers with high self-efficacy display motivational processes in which they accept responsibility for student achievement and attribute failure to a lack of effort rather than ability. Likewise, Locke and Latham (1990) found one’s commitment to a goal “is enhanced by self-efficacy and viewing the goal as important” (p. 265).

The findings from the study are consistent with the work of these theorists as Ben exhibited a high level of self-efficacy throughout the study, most notably through the emergence of two of his central beliefs: a) that he was responsible for his students’ learning and b) that he could successfully facilitate their learning. Thus, a vital link surfaced between the central beliefs that were inferred from Ben’s words and actions, the types of rigorous goals he set, and the high level of commitment he showed towards achieving the goals he set for his students.

**Conclusion 4: Ben’s values, attitudes, and teaching practices during enactment were consistent with constructivist learning theory.** This conclusion, like Conclusion 3 above, was not reflected in my initial conceptual framework (Figure 1). Nevertheless, I did include a section on constructivist theory in my review of the literature because of the connections between constructivism and the CCSS. According to Doolittle (1999), teachers can promote constructivist learning by ensuring that learning opportunities are authentic, that content and
skills are relevant to the learner and can be understood within the framework of the learner’s prior knowledge, that teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors, that teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content, that students should be assessed formatively in a manner that informs future learning experiences, and that students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware.

Furthermore, Bork (2000) asserted that constructivist learning is based on highly interactive conversation, while also being individualized, adaptive to students’ current needs, creative (through constructing and discovering), focused on problem solving rather than memorization, highly interactive, built around internal motivation, and focused on peer learning in small groups.

Through an analysis of the data from the study, Ben’s values, attitudes, and teaching practices during enactment were representative of constructivist theory. He valued authenticity, student independence, lifelong learning, active thought, and active expression. Additionally, Ben exhibited a positive attitude towards the teacher being a facilitator of learning, towards the differentiation of instruction based on students’ needs, and towards the formative assessment process. Ben also held the workshop model, the inquiry method of instruction, and the ELA CCSS in high regard. In Ben’s classroom, the mini-lesson portion of the workshop model of instruction included a connection to prior learning, and the guided practice and independent practice portions gave students numerous opportunities to learn in small groups, both of which were indicative of constructivism. Ben’s use of the inquiry method of instruction provided students numerous opportunities to exhibit creativity and to examine multiple perspectives. Furthermore, the CCSS Mission Statement stated, “The standards are designed to be robust and
relevant to the real world” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). Likewise, Ben’s enactment was consistent with what educational policy analyst James Shuls (2013) predicted when he said the CCSS would influence instructional practices because they “are built on constructivist principles and are being implemented, by and large, by constructivist means.”

**Practical Implications**

As discussed previously, a question that has been omnipresent throughout contemporary reform efforts is *How can we improve the quality of teaching and learning?* Likewise, a priority for me as a principal has been, and continues to be, to facilitate teacher learning and growth as a way to increase student achievement. The logic model for this priority for me as a principal as well as for educational reform at large is that more effective teaching practices equate to higher levels of student learning. While some reform efforts focus on teacher preparation, because I am a practicing principal with a predominantly veteran staff, the focus of this study was on a case involving an established teacher as that is the population I work so closely with. In consideration of the grounded theory that emerged from the study as well as the numerous connections of the findings to the literature, the practical implications of this study have been plentiful for me as a practitioner in the field of education. As such, this study has been valuable and satisfying as it has increased my understanding related to concepts I am interested in, and because the findings have the potential to help me and other instructional leaders on a practical level in our efforts to improve teaching in order to maximize student learning and achievement.

**Recommendations for educational leaders working with teachers who are similar to Ben.** In acknowledgment of the limitations of conducting a single-case study, the findings are not generalizable beyond this case. Nonetheless, this was a remarkable case that was consistent with the extant literature in a number of ways. If this case is, in fact, a representative case that is
an exemplar of the literature, then instructional leaders may want to consider the recommendations that follow when working with teachers who have a similar profile to Ben. The recommendations are based on what I learned from the study, from Ben, and from the review of the literature. While Ben is not representative of all teachers, he is representative of some of the teachers I have worked with throughout my career in education. Nonetheless, the recommendations may not be as valuable to instructional leaders as they work with teachers who are not as skilled, as reflective, nor as sound in their pedagogy as Ben proved to be. Along those lines, there may be other ideas that may be more beneficial to instructional leaders as they interact with teachers whose profiles are dissimilar to Ben’s. But, assuming this case was an exemplar for the literature, the following ideas serve as my recommendations, tentative as they may be.

Recommendation 1: Seek a deep understanding regarding the interactions amongst the educational belief systems, goals, enactment, and reflection of teachers who are similar to Ben. For the most part, since the adoption of the ELA CCSS, teachers have had some latitude with their curricular, instructional, and assessment choices to most effectively help their students achieve the CCSS. With this freedom to make instructional choices comes the possibility that teachers will make decisions that vary from their counterparts as “people’s beliefs…can create different psychological worlds, leading them to think, feel, and act differently in identical situations” (Dweck, 2000, p. xi). So, although the standards students should attain are uniform, teachers’ practices for preparing students to meet those standards can be quite different. Therefore, how can principals and other instructional leaders facilitate growth amongst teachers when the teaching practices can be so different from one teacher to the next?
Operate outside of the teacher evaluation process when working with teachers like Ben in order to derive this deeper understanding about the interactions amongst teachers’ educational belief systems, goals, enactment, and reflection. Based on my experiences as a principal over the past several years, the high-stakes teacher evaluation process can lead to anxiety, guardedness, mistrust, and consternation. However, through this study, I have learned that a process devoted to a sincere commitment to inquiry for the sake of increasing understanding can have the opposite effects. As such, developing a sense of rapport and trust was tantamount to ensuring Ben felt comfortable engaging in honest, open reflection during the study so I could attempt to make sense of what was occurring inside his mind. Spending so much time together over the course of the semester contributed to our positive working relationship, but the fact that our time together was completely separate from, and unrelated to, the teacher evaluation process likely contributed to his sense of comfort, as well. Plus, I was sincerely interested in understanding him through his words and actions in a way that was inquisitive rather than judgmental.

It is also important to note that prior to the study, Ben was not directly acquainted with me in my role as a principal or as a teacher evaluator. Rather, he only knew me as a researcher within the context of this study. Given how personal a teacher’s educational practice is and how vulnerable it can be for a teacher to surface the elements of his or her teaching practices, it is unlikely that a principal charged with evaluating teachers, even those who have a similar profile to Ben, would have the same amount of success in discovering the connections amongst a teacher’s goals, educational belief systems, and enactment. On the flip side, it was refreshing for me to step out of my role as a principal and as an evaluator as I focused on developing a greater degree of understanding about teaching and learning in Ben’s classroom. In my role as a principal and teacher evaluator, I had never been able to spend as much time talking to and
observing a teacher as I was able to do with Ben over the course of this study. I was also freed from the responsibility of judging his performance according to descriptors on a one-size-fits-all rubric that was disconnected from him as a teacher and from the ELA CCSS, as well.

Although I had originally hoped I might be able to make use of the findings of the study more directly in my role as a principal, I do not believe that will be likely due to the pressures on principals and teachers caused by high-stakes teacher evaluation systems. Rather, if this study were indeed a representative case, engendering a process of openness, honesty, and trust would require an involvement from someone from outside the teacher evaluation process, which most likely eliminates building principals from being able to do so. As such, other instructional leaders inside or outside of the organization, such as instructional coaches or staff developers, would need to be the ones to lead the teacher improvement process. As Peterson (2014) claimed, “There is scarce research to suggest that evaluation causes teacher growth.” Therefore, a mechanistic system of teacher evaluation will not prompt an improvement in teaching practices. On the other hand, by focusing on a deep understanding of teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, and enactment, these instructional leaders could be more effective in facilitating a reflective process with teachers like Ben that promotes learning and growth, which could potentially lead to more effective instructional practices and higher levels of student achievement.

Replicating the process of inquiry from this study while working with teachers like Ben could develop this type of reflective process. The study design consisted of a series of pre-observation conversations, classroom observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions, and it concluded with a philosophical interview. I used open-ended questions that gave Ben the opportunity to freely share his thoughts with me, and I used follow-up questions to probe for
more detail. As I gleaned so much from Ben through this study regarding his central beliefs, his values, his attitudes, his opinions, his goals, his enactment, and his reflection, this process could be replicated with other teachers who fit a similar profile in order to better understand the machinations that underlie their teaching practices, as well. In other words, this process worked with Ben, and it could possibly work for other teachers who are like Ben, as well.

Ironically, the series of pre-observation conversations, classroom observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions I had with Ben were akin to what often occurs as part of the teacher evaluation process. However, a key difference between this study and the teacher evaluation process is the diverging purposes of each. While teacher evaluation is focused on judging a teacher’s performance to weed out the weakest teachers and to retain and incentivize the strongest teachers, this study was designed to increase understanding about why a teacher made certain choices about curriculum, instruction, and assessment to achieve goals and standards. This understanding could then become a stepping-stone for initiating improvements in teaching and learning, which will be discussed more specifically later in this chapter.

*To gain this type of deep understanding, attend to the goals teachers like Ben hold, as their goals may be windows into their educational belief systems and add insight into their choices about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.* A key finding from this study was the importance of Ben’s goals in relation to his teaching practices. Through an analysis of the data, Ben’s goals appeared to be aligned to the elements of his belief system, they were congruent to his enactment, and they were at the center of his reflective process. Dressel (1982) claimed beliefs and values influence an individual’s thoughts, goals, and actions. However, Webb (2010) stated teachers’ goals are an understudied link in the chain from their knowledge, beliefs, and decisions about students’ learning opportunities through the enactment process. So, although the
domains of teacher knowledge, beliefs, and behavior have received considerably more research attention, teachers’ goals are a critical link between these areas (p. 5). Likewise, Schoenfeld (1998) contended a teacher’s instructional decision making is based on their knowledge, beliefs, and goals (p. 3).

While the contents of Ben’s belief system were generally identified through inference, the preponderance of evidence of what Ben said and did supported the inferences about what constituted his beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions. Pajares (1992) asserted that to understand one’s beliefs requires making inferences about individuals’ underlying states, inferences fraught with difficulty because individuals are often unable or unwilling, for many reasons, to accurately represent their beliefs. For this reason, beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do. (p. 314)

Gaining an understanding about a teacher’s educational beliefs can provide insight into why teachers make the choices they do during enactment. The results from numerous studies “suggest a strong relationship between teachers’ educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices” (Pajares, 1992, p. 326). According to Richardson (1996), “Teacher attitudes and beliefs…are important considerations in understanding classroom practices” (p. 102). Teachers’ beliefs, particularly those beliefs about how students learn, about students’ abilities, and about the teacher’s role in the learning process, undergird their decisions about the most effective ways to teach students (Brownell, Jordan, & Klingner, 2005). This is particularly important in today’s educational climate, which is characterized by a strong focus on teacher effectiveness.
Although Ben’s true beliefs resided internally and were unobservable, his continual emphasis on his primary goal to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners became a window into his educational belief system. Gaining clarity about Ben’s primary goal, as well as his more specific secondary goals, served as the lynchpin to understanding why he made the choices he did about curriculum, instruction, and assessment during the enactment process, which was the most observable aspect of the study. During the post-observation conferences, Ben described his perspective of what occurred during the observations and then reflected on how successful his enactment was in achieving his goals. As such, Ben’s goals functioned as the through line that connected his belief system to his enactment, and his enactment to his reflection. According to Baird (1973), a teacher’s practices reflect the teacher’s educational beliefs and values, along with the goals they want students to attain. Similarly, Shavelson and Stern (1981) asserted the importance of knowing teachers’ goals in order to better understand their behavior. Webb (2010) substantiated that claim by recognizing what teachers choose to do in the classroom is influenced by their goals for instruction. Teachers’ goals are critical to students’ opportunities to learn. Teachers choose what is to be learned, how it is to be learned, and when it is to be learned (p. 3). Or, more succinctly, a teacher’s behavior is directed by his or her goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). If this case was indeed an exemplar of the literature, then attending to the goals of teachers like Ben may deepen the understanding instructional leaders have regarding those teachers’ educational belief systems, enactment, and reflective processes.
Recommendation 2: Use the deep understanding acquired by engaging teachers like Ben in a highly reflective process to help them recognize the congruence, or obtain tighter congruence, amongst the elements of their educational belief systems, goals, and enactment.

While most teachers’ reflection occurs within the realm of internal thought, the study design called for Ben to make his thinking visible by verbalizing his thoughts. My presence likely influenced Ben to reflect more deeply and intentionally than how he might have done so had I not been present. But, as reflection is an integral part of learning and growth, an instructional leader could encourage other teachers like Ben to engage in a reflective process that has a similar effect by asking open-ended questions before and after observations in a cycle of prolonged engagement.

According to Flanders (1970), teachers may be more effective if they were aware of the many factors affecting their classroom behavior. Meyerson (1977) argued that teachers should reexamine their beliefs as an essential factor for their continued growth. Therefore, through reflective discourse, the role of the instructional leader can be to help teachers identify inconsistencies and strive for tighter congruence amongst their beliefs, their goals, and their enactment. The findings from this study, as well as several other studies, suggest the entry point for helping teachers attain this kind of congruence may be through their goals (see Flanders, 1970; Meyerson, 1977; Dobson & Dobson, 1983; Locke & Latham, 1990; Webb, 2010).

For starters, instructional leaders should provide teachers with feedback in relation to the goals they set as Locke and Latham (2006) noted one of “the key moderators of goal setting are feedback, which people need in order to track their progress” (p. 265). This feedback should be rooted in the notion of recognizing the existing congruence or achieving tighter congruence among teachers’ educational beliefs and their enactment. Dobson and Dobson’s work (1983)
supports this approach as they also found a connection among teaching beliefs and practices. They suggested the beliefs a teacher has about teaching contribute to a sense of purpose that appears to drive the teacher’s behaviors. They found very few teachers had developed internally consistent beliefs about teaching. Their concern was that “teaching practice without the support provided by a well-developed philosophy (set of beliefs), proceeds at random, blindly. Teaching without purpose becomes mere activity to ‘get things done’ with little consideration of means-end compatibility.” The “sense of purpose” Dobson and Dobson (1983) focused on seems to be analogous to what I have labeled goals. Similar to my recommendation, Dobson and Dobson (1983) asserted that teachers would be most effective when their beliefs and behaviors are congruent. Moreover, Kessinger (1979) claimed, “any real improvement in the schooling process will occur only when each person’s beliefs and feelings are in harmony with his/her behaviors” (p. 5).

Therefore, according to Locke and Latham (1990), engaging teachers in reflective conversation by building on teachers’ deeply held goals and helping them think about and achieve them…could quicken the rate of teacher development in positive ways. This effort could help teachers more quickly develop strategies to meet their goals, or help teachers more quickly see the limitations of their strategies and conceptions of teaching. (p. 139)

As such, it appears a highly effective way for instructional leaders to influence positive changes in teaching and learning is to use the deeper understanding acquired from a process of inquiry with teachers like Ben in order to help them obtain a tighter congruence, or recognize the existing congruence, amongst their educational belief systems, their goals, their enactment, and their reflection.
How this study can exemplify the practical implications associated with seeking a deep understanding regarding the interactions amongst a teacher’s educational belief system, goals, enactment, and reflection in order to emphasize congruence and improve teaching and learning. Participating in this study has been a highly rewarding experience for me based on what I learned and how that heightened level of understanding can be of benefit to me, to Ben, and to other instructional leaders. The intention of the narrative that follows in this section is to solidify the points made in the recommendations by referencing aspects of this particular study.

The investigative process of seeking understanding with an experienced, skilled, reflective, motivated elementary teacher provided me with tremendous insight into the connections amongst the why, how, and what of Ben’s teaching practices. Because of this study, I gained considerable clarity about the various features of Ben’s enactment in the classroom. These were the most observable aspects of Ben’s teaching practice, which, for example, consisted of a daily lesson structure that was fulfilled primarily through the workshop model of instruction but also included a foray into an inquiry method of instruction. Beyond these observable actions, I gained a profound depth of understanding about the underlying goals, beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions that influenced his decision making during the enactment process. In other words, I gained a sense of what made him tick.

Because I carefully studied what Ben said and did, I came to understand that his primary goal was to impart the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower all of his students to become independent, lifelong learners. Through an understanding of his primary goal, I was in a position to better understand why he would possibly choose to move away from the workshop model lesson structure, perhaps his most beloved teaching practice, and instead try the more open-ended inquiry method of instruction. As the data
indicated, he seemed to think that at that point in time, which was near the end of the school year, the inquiry method would give his students the best opportunity to fulfill his primary goal. From everything I had seen, his students were passionate about literacy and they had gained tremendous knowledge and skill during their time with him, which, in combination, represented the successful achievement of the first portion of his primary goal. Nevertheless, before his students left his classroom forever, Ben wanted to ensure they had the tools to be the independent, lifelong learners he had worked so hard to help them become. Therefore, through an inquiry method, he gave them the opportunity to explore reading and writing in a manner that required less and less of his guidance and was fueled more and more by their own curiosity and interest. This inquiry method was one the students could replicate on their own in the summer and throughout the rest of their lives, really.

Even though Ben shared aspects of his rationale with me for using the inquiry method to help achieve the goal of developing independent, lifelong learners, I still sensed a degree of dissonance related to that instructional choice. Ben did not seem to be fully comfortable moving away from the workshop model as it had proven to be such an effective framework for him and his students for many years. At the same time, he seemed encouraged and intrigued by the early returns from the inquiry method in relation to his students’ final independent study project. Nonetheless, it seemed Ben wasn’t fully sure what to think about the choice he had made.

However, after reflecting upon the data and the emerging findings, it appeared this instructional shift into the inquiry method was congruent with the contents of his educational belief system and his primary goal. Therefore, it made perfect sense to me as why he tried the inquiry method as part of the independent study project to finish the school year. Nonetheless, even over time, the dissonance and uncertainty Ben felt about moving from workshop model to
inquiry method seemed to linger in Ben’s consciousness. Although as a researcher my role was not to influence his practices, but rather to understand those practices more clearly, the understanding I garnered about Ben from the study could be used in a productive way with him directly. It seemed that Ben considered the workshop model and inquiry method to be undergirded by differing philosophical underpinnings. If I were to move into the role of an instructional leader who worked with Ben outside of the teacher evaluation process, I could help him find a sense of peace with the inquiry method by showing him how it fit in a congruent manner with his central beliefs, his values, and his primary goal, as does the workshop model. In pointing that out, I could help him realize the inquiry method is not in conflict, nor in competition, with the workshop model. Instead of fearing the inquiry method might replace the workshop model, I could help Ben think of them as companion strategies. In that way, he could become more comfortable with using the inquiry method as a timely, and perhaps even culminating, instructional framework to help his students ascend to the next level of independence and to put to use their knowledge, skills, and passion in a most authentic way. By leveraging my deep understanding of Ben’s educational belief system, goals, and enactment, I could help him work through some of his internal unrest over using this new instructional strategy by helping him recognize its congruence with his central beliefs, his values, and his primary goal. Plus, I could use my knowledge and understanding of his reflective process to further dispel any of his remaining doubts about the inquiry method by engaging him in an evaluation of the results as the strategy appeared to be an effective means to achieve his primary goal. This kind of intervention with a teacher can have value in the short term (with improving Ben’s attitude about the inquiry method) and the long term (with building trust and collegiality)
as we want our most talented teachers to be willing to take some calculated professional risks in order to find even more effective ways to push student learning to greater heights.

Also worth noting here as a benefit to exploring the connections amongst a teacher’s educational belief system, goals, enactment, and reflection in an inquisitive, non-judgmental way is the exhilaration of making sense of complex phenomena in a way that has meaning for oneself and for others. A memorable example to illustrate this point occurred when Ben and I met as part of the member-checking process. This was a vulnerable, yet exciting time for me. I had spent an inordinate amount of time analyzing the data set and writing up the findings for chapter 4, and so while I was enthusiastic about the product I was about to share, I was also a touch apprehensive about whether Ben would think I captured his story in an accurate, impactful way. Thankfully, during this proverbial moment of truth, I was able to witness his wide-eyed excitement over seeing the many aspects of his teaching practice made plain through the narrative that told his story and through the model that succinctly represented the concepts and connections in a visual, inventive manner. It seemed as though I was able to identify, clarify, and make connections amongst certain aspects of his teaching practices that even he had not been able to fully elucidate previously. By reading my work, it was almost like some of the natural fog that concealed aspects of his subconscious mind was starting to dissipate, allowing more detail to surface regarding what he did, how he did it, and why he did it.

In addition, I felt our personal connection had deepened even further as Ben seemed to feel thoroughly understood and valued as a professional in a way he had not felt before. Through the investment of the time and effort that went into the study, along with the results, it appeared Ben was able to feel his worth as an exemplary teacher who had the potential to impact others. Likewise, the experience of sharing my findings with Ben, and his reaction to those findings, was
profoundly satisfying for me both professionally and personally in a way that I had not experienced before, either. After such an arduous, lengthy analysis and writing process, to have Ben, a teacher I had developed such a keen respect and fondness for, validate my assertions and give credence to the findings meant the world to me. Through the shared experience of the study and the revelation of the findings, Ben and I began to realize some of the payoffs associated with working so closely on a project that was both fulfilling and meaningful. The benefits of this kind of work could potentially extend to other instructional leaders and teachers like Ben who choose to engage in a process of inquiry to develop a deeper understanding about the interaction amongst teachers’ educational beliefs, goals, enactment and reflection in order to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement.

In summary, teaching is a highly complex endeavor, but this study revealed a single, yet exceptional case of an extraordinary teacher, Ben, who was reflective, professional, experienced, committed, and masterful in his craft. Through an open-ended process of inquiry conducted over a prolonged period of time through pre-observation conversations, lengthy observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions in which Ben was able to clearly articulate his thoughts, I gained considerable insight into his teaching practices, his goals, and his educational belief system. All in all, this was a highly valuable process that other instructional leaders could replicate with other teachers who possessed similar characteristics as Ben. Of course, despite whatever similarities they may share, every teacher has unique characteristics. Therefore, the findings may be different for other teachers, even those who also appear to be experienced, skilled, committed, and reflective like Ben. Nonetheless, the information could prove to be just as valuable in assisting instructional leaders in understanding the connection between other teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, enactment, and reflection.
As Ben’s teaching practices exemplified tenets of action theory, goal theory, constructivist theory and the literature around self-efficacy and belief systems supported by several researchers, the hypothesis remains that developing a deep understanding is a prerequisite for effectively facilitating teacher learning and growth in order to positively impact student achievement (Rokeach, 1968; Fenstermacher, 1979; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Clark, 1988; Pintrich, 1990; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Lumpe, Haney, & Czerniak, 1998; Brownell, Jordan, & Klingner, 2005; Madsen, 2005). This type of process should be conducted outside of the teacher evaluation process by someone who is not in a direct supervisory role, such as an instructional coach or a staff developer, in order to foster honest, open conversations about teaching and learning. These instructional leaders may benefit from paying particular attention to the goals teachers like Ben possess as their goals may offer a template for inferring their educational beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions while elucidating their choices about curriculum, instruction, and assessment during the enactment process while also serving as a focal point of their reflective evaluation of the effectiveness of their enactment. By fostering an open-ended process of inquiry and deep reflection with teachers like Ben, instructional leaders may be able to influence tighter congruence among the individual teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, and enactment, which could be the gateway for facilitating teacher learning and growth and higher levels of student achievement.

**Implications for Future Research**

While relatively uncommon, single-case studies can provide a depth of insight that is unlikely to be obtained using other research methodologies. A major benefit of the single-case study resides in its tremendous potential for enhancing our understanding of complex phenomena, particularly around concepts in which the research base is limited. It is also possible
that the grounded theory that emerged from this study could also contribute to enhancing the value other researchers ascribe to, and the interest they have in conducting, longitudinal single-case studies, specifically studies that involve prolonged engagement between a researcher and a teacher. Given the findings from this study and the dearth of research that synthesizes the complex interactions amongst teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, enactment, and reflection, the need exists for researchers to conduct additional single-case studies that seek a deep understanding about the connections between the underlying and observable aspects of teaching.

For one, an anthology of longitudinal single-case studies that focused on remarkable teachers who fit Ben’s profile of being highly reflective, committed, knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced would be a way to consolidate the findings across multiple studies and allow for the contemplation of the findings on more of a meta-level. Likewise, additional research involving teachers who possessed a wide-ranging variation of skills and interests at different stages of their career trajectories would help to build upon the grounded theory across more diverse cases.

In addition, further exploration of the existing research could help to expand upon the findings related to the interaction between what teachers believe, what their goals are, how they go about achieving their goals in terms of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and how they reflect upon what occurs in their classrooms. For instance, existing research suggests there may be differences in these areas among teachers with differing levels of experience and expertise. Brown (1985) asserted that inexperienced teachers may possess incomplete knowledge and vague beliefs about teaching. Borko and Livingston (1989) found that when expert teachers were engaged in post-lesson reflection, they “were selective…, mentioning only those events that they believed had an impact on the accomplishment of instructional goals” (p. 481).
Additionally, during their lessons, expert teachers attended to and processed “information only when they [believed] it [was] relevant to modifying their agendas” (p. 482). Locke and Latham (2006) stated that

Because performance is a function of both ability and motivation, goal effects also depend upon having the requisite task knowledge and skills. Goals may simply motivate one to use one’s existing ability, may automatically “pull” stored task-relevant knowledge into awareness, and/or may motivate people to search for new, complex tasks. (p. 265)

While novice teachers may have a difficult time managing the complex and varied demands of teaching, expert teachers are more able to use their expertise and skill to cut through the extensive information they could attend to and take the actions necessary to achieve their goals (Webb, 2010, p. 37-38).

As the existing research has suggested differences exist between experienced teachers and their novice counterparts, it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the interaction among novice teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, enactment, and reflection. In that way, instructional leaders may gain insight as to how they might be able to help these novice teachers tighten the congruence amongst the elements of their teaching practices as a way to improve their performance and enhance student learning.

Another concept that emerged from the study that weighed on Ben’s mind was his concern about time or the lack thereof. Future research could examine the effects of time on teachers’ instructional practices, as concerns about time seemed to have a fairly significant impact on Ben. He often felt he did not have enough of such a valuable resource. He stated, “Teaching in the workshop model is hard. And, it takes time.” Nonetheless, Ben believed he
could reach all of his students if he had enough time with them. He expressed frustration that his special education students were pulled from his classroom to receive resource room support for two hours of his literacy block each day. Ben believed that through his instructional practices and differentiated instruction, he could “lift” any of his students’ literacy abilities. In addition, Ben expressed how difficult it was to successfully immerse students who had just moved in at the end of the school year in his “community” of learners. Being in a school with a high mobility rate in which students arrived with mere weeks left in the school year made it difficult for Ben to successfully move those students forward in their learning. Ben felt he could make satisfactory progress with at least two months to work with students, but not with two or three weeks. As such, adequate time was a necessary resource for Ben to achieve his goal of imparting the knowledge, skills, and passion for reading and writing that would empower students to become independent, lifelong learners. Likewise, moving from his big-picture goal to the more specific goals of his daily instruction, time was also at a premium as Ben lamented, “I was running out of time. Time was a little bit of an issue today,” and “If we could have only had more time.” This lack of adequate time was a common refrain from Ben throughout the course of the study, which suggests time may be a mediating factor when it comes to understanding teacher decision-making. Further research may be able to reveal more insight into this possibility.

Some other topics potentially worth exploring in the extant literature and in future studies include self-regulatory learning mechanisms, Gibbs’ reflective cycle, Dewey’s reflective thinking process, single-loop and double-loop learning, the action-reflection cycle, and cognitive dissonance theory. Researchers could also design studies that sought to answer the following research questions: How can instructional leaders help teachers to surface their beliefs? What
role do teachers’ pedagogical assumptions play in their decision-making? How can instructional leaders help teachers alter their unproductive beliefs? How can instructional leaders help teachers achieve congruence amongst their educational beliefs, goals, and enactment? How can instructional leaders align teachers’ beliefs and goals with the mission and vision of the institution? What is the connection between teachers’ educational beliefs, goals, enactment, and student achievement? All of these potential research questions funnel towards the same question that continues to drive educational reform and that undergirded this study: How can instructional leaders most effectively influence positive changes in teachers’ practices in order to maximize student learning?

In summation, additional single-case studies could expand upon the depth of understanding researchers and educators have regarding the interaction of various teachers’ goals, educational belief systems, enactment, and reflection. In combination with a synthesis of the existing literature base, future research could triangulate the data across theories and studies, which could perhaps provide more clarity about the link among the underlying and observable aspects of teachers’ instructional practices. As is always the case, further research could potentially yield any number of alternative explanations and hypotheses, any of which could have the potential to benefit researchers and practitioners alike who are motivated to better understand and improve upon teaching and learning.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent (Teacher)

**Project Title:** The Influence of a Teacher’s Beliefs, Belief Systems, and Reflection on the Enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

**Investigator:** Phillip M. Pittman, Eastern Michigan University  
**Dissertation Chair:** Dr. Gary Marx, Department of Leadership and Counseling, Eastern Michigan University

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this single case research study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his classroom.

**Procedure:** I will explain the study, answer any questions, and witness your signature on this consent form. You will receive a duplicate copy of this informed consent, which includes follow-up contact information, if needed.

This study will entail four iterations of audio-recorded interviews with you, video-recorded classroom observations of you enacting the ELA CCSS in your classroom, and post-observation debriefing sessions. I will also take pictures, or collect hard copies, of relevant artifacts throughout the interview/observation/debriefing process. Each of the four observation cycles will be roughly one month apart for four consecutive months. The pre-observation interviews will take approximately 30 minutes each, the observations will be for two hours each (one hour for reading and one hour for writing), and the post-observation debriefing sessions will each be approximately 30 minutes each. The pre-observation interviews and the post-observation debriefing sessions will be held in your classroom during your preparation time or at a time that is most convenient to you as the expectation is not for you to stay after school.

**Confidentiality:** The audio-recording of the interviews will be transcribed by a trained professional who will insure confidentiality. A pseudonym will be assigned to you in the interview transcript, and all identifying characteristics will be omitted. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. At no time will your name be associated with your responses during the interviews. The video recordings will feature you, but not your students. My field notes, the transcripts of interviews, the pictures of artifacts, the video files, and the audio files will be stored electronically and will be password-protected. Any hard copies of artifacts will be stored in a locked file accessible only to the principal investigator during the course of the study. In addition, the results will be stored separately from the consent form, which includes your name and any other identifying information. At the conclusion of the study, the video recordings will be destroyed, as well.

**Expected Risks:** There are no foreseeable risks to you by participating in this study, as all results will be kept completely confidential.

**Expected Benefits:** The findings from this study potentially will help develop a greater understanding of the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection
on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in a teacher’s
classroom, which could help educational leaders to be more effective in facilitating a reflective
process that promotes teacher learning and growth, which can lead to more effective instructional
practices and higher levels of student achievement. The participant may not benefit from this
research study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to
participate. If you do decide to participate, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw
from the study without any negative consequences.

Use of Research Results: Results will be published in a dissertation. No names or individually
identifying information will be revealed. Results may also be presented at workshops,
conferences, or in professional publications.

Future Questions: If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study now or
in the future, you can contact Phillip Pittman at [redacted] or [redacted].

Consent to Participate: I have read all of the above information about this research study,
including the research procedures, possible risks, and the potential benefits. I understand the
content and meaning of this information, which has been explained to me. All of my questions,
at this time, have been answered. I hereby consent and voluntarily offer to follow the study
requirements and take part in the study.

Participant Name:______________________________________________________________

Participant Signature:__________________________________________________________ Date_______

Principal Investigator:__________________________________________________________ Date_______

This research protocol and informed consent document has been reviewed and approved by the
Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (UHSRC) for use from
February 1, 2014 to January 31, 2015. If you have questions about the approval process, please
contact the UHSRC at human.subjects@emich.edu or call 734-487-0042.
Appendix B: Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Approval

March 24, 2014

To: Phillip M. Pittman
   Eastern Michigan University – Educational Leadership

Re: UHSRC # 140208
   Category: Exempt
   Approval Date: March 24, 2014

Title: The Influence of a Teacher’s Beliefs, Belief Systems, and Reflection on the Enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

The Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (UHSRC) has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that your research has been deemed exempt in accordance with federal regulations.

The UHSRC has found that your research meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibility for the protection of human subjects in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit the Human Subjects Study Completion Form (found on the UHSRC website).

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a Human Subjects Minor Modification Form or new Human Subjects Approval Request Form (if major changes will be required) are required (see UHSRC website for forms).

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to human subjects and change the category of review, notify the UHSRC office within 24 hours. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the UHSRC.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the UHSRC office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-0042 or e-mail at gs_human_subjects@emich.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Kristine Aroucho
Faculty Co-chair
University Human Subjects Review Committee

University Human Subjects Review Committee - Eastern Michigan University - 200 Buol Hall
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
Phone: 734.487.6012  Fax: 734.487.0050
E-mail: human.subjects@emich.edu
www.org.emich.edu (see Federal Compliance)

The EMU UHSRC complies with the Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations part 46 (45 CFR 46) under FWA00000030.
Appendix C: Management Plan

This study will entail four iterations of audio-recorded interviews with the participant, video-recorded classroom observations of the participant enacting the ELA CCSS in his/her classroom, and post-observation debriefing sessions. I will also take pictures, or collect hard copies, of relevant artifacts throughout the interview/observation/debriefing process.

A trained professional who will insure confidentiality will transcribe the audio recording of the interviews. A pseudonym will be assigned to the participant in the interview transcript, and all identifying characteristics will be omitted. Likewise, the names of students, the name of the school, and the name of the school district will remain confidential. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. At no time will the participant’s name be associated with his/her responses during the interviews. My field notes, the transcripts of interviews, the pictures of artifacts, the video files, and the audio files will be stored electronically and will be password-protected. Any hard copies of artifacts will be stored in a locked file accessible only to the principal investigator during the course of the study. In addition, the results will be stored separately from the consent form, which includes the name of the school district. At the conclusion of the study, the video recordings will be destroyed, as well.

I will conduct one interview/observation/debriefing session per month (February, March, April, May) in both reading and writing. The interviews will take place prior to the observations. I will observe a lesson in both reading and writing on the same day. The post-observation debriefing sessions will occur following each observation. The philosophical interview will occur after the four observation cycles have concluded.
Appendix D: Protocols

Throughout all of our interactions, I will work to develop trust with the participant. During the interviews, I will work hard not to ask questions that give the participant the sense that I am looking for specific responses as my purpose is to get information from the participant’s perspective. For the interview protocols that follow, I will ask open-ended questions, hoping to garner the information identified through the bullet points. If the participant does not cover the areas I am hoping s/he will, I will work follow-up questions into the conversation.

Pre-observation Interview 1:

Demographic Information (I want to learn about the teacher’s background, history, and experiences that have shaped him/her as an educator)

Tell me about your background.
- Years teaching?
- Years in district?
- Years in other districts? Where?
- Years at school?
- Years at other schools within district? Where?
- Current grade level?
- Years at grade level?
- Other grade levels? Years at each?
- Employment outside of education?
- Career goals and aspirations?

Background Information on Teaching Practices (I want to learn how the structure of the classroom influences the enactment of the ELA CCSS. In addition, I want to learn about the teacher’s instructional practices, his/her students, and what the experience has been thus far in enacting the ELA CCSS)

Tell me about the structures, artifacts, systems, and norms that are important to your teaching practices.
- I will take note of the teacher’s classroom and monitor the teacher’s response for addressing the arrangement of student desks, the visual artifacts throughout the classroom (posters, anchor charts, student work, etc.), and the teacher’s general procedures/practices/expectations.

How do you teach literacy (Reading, Writing, etc.)?

How would you describe your classroom environment and how have you established that environment?

Tell me about your students.
• I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing the students’ strengths and challenges.

Describe your experience thus far this school year enacting the ELA CCSS.
• I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing the successes and challenges of enacting the ELA CCSS.

Pre-observation Interview for Reading and Writing 1 (I want to learn about the teacher’s plan for the lessons I will observe in reading and writing)

Tell me about the lessons I am going to observe in reading and writing.
• I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing what will take place during the lesson, the artifacts that will be used/produced, the activities/assessments that will be included, and how this lesson fits into the larger unit. I will also be interested in whether the teacher discusses specific ELA CCSS.

Observations 1-4 (I want to learn how the teacher enacts the ELA CCSS)

During the classroom observations, I will attend to the following:
• What is the teacher doing?
• What is the teacher saying?
• What are students doing?
• What are students saying?
• What artifacts are involved in the lesson or are relevant to the teacher’s instructional practices? (I will take pictures or collect hard copies of these artifacts)

Post-observation Conferences 1-4 (I want to learn about the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action related to the lessons I observed in reading and writing)

Tell me about your reflections regarding the lessons I observed in reading and writing.
• I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing if the lessons went according to plan, if (and why) the teacher changed direction at any points during the lessons, if (and why) the teacher would make any changes if s/he were to teach the lessons again, if the teacher makes any evaluative judgments about the lesson, and if the teacher discusses his/her next steps.

Pre-observation Interviews 2-4 (I want to learn about what has taken place in the classroom since my last visit, and I want to learn about the teacher’s plan for the lessons I will observe in reading and writing)

Tell me about what has occurred in your classroom since my last visit.
• I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing the successes and challenges related to enacting the ELA CCSS with his/her students in between my visits.
Tell me about the lessons I am going to observe in reading and writing.

- I will monitor the teacher’s response for addressing what will take place during the lesson, the artifacts that will be used/produced, the activities/assessments that will be included, and how this lesson fits into the larger unit. I will also be interested in whether the teacher discusses specific ELA CCSS.

Philosophical Interview (After the final observation and post-observation conference, I want to learn about the teacher’s philosophy of teaching and learning, as well as his/her thoughts about the ELA CCSS)

Thinking about your students’ role as well as your role as the teacher, what is your philosophy of education?

- I will monitor the teacher’s response for vignettes, stories, and examples that help establish the teacher’s philosophy of education, as well as how this philosophy has evolved over time.

What are your thoughts regarding the ELA CCSS?

- I will monitor the teacher’s response in addressing the strengths and challenges associated with the ELA CCSS.
### Appendix E: Chart to Ensure Methods Match Purpose of Study and Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose Statement</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection &amp; Interview Questions</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The purpose of this single case study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his/her classroom. | What educational beliefs appear to be central to the teacher’s belief system(s)? | -Observations  
- Tell me about the structures, artifacts, systems, and norms that are important to your teaching practices.  
- How do you teach reading?  
- How do you teach writing?  
- How would you describe your classroom environment and how have you established that environment?  
- Tell me about your students.  
- Tell me about the lessons I am going to observe in reading and writing.  
- Tell me about your reflections regarding the lessons I observed in reading and writing.  
- Thinking about your students’ role as well as your role as the teacher, what is your philosophy of education?  
- What are your thoughts regarding the ELA CCSS? | -Interview transcripts  
- Analytic memos from interviews and observations  
- Artifact collection  
- Coding |

| The purpose of this single case study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his/her classroom. | What are the teacher’s theories-in-use related to the ELA CCSS? | -Observations  
- Tell me about the lessons I am going to observe in reading and writing.  
- What are your | -Interview transcripts  
- Analytic memos from interviews and observations  
- Artifact collection  
- Coding |
The purpose of this single case study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his/her classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do the ELA CCSS enacted in this teacher’s classroom?                  | - Observations  
| - Tell me about the structures, artifacts, systems, and norms that are important to your teaching practices.  
| - How do you teach reading?  
| - How do you teach writing?  
| - Tell me about your students.  
| - Describe your experience thus far this school year enacting the ELA CCSS.  
| - Tell me about what has occurred in your classroom since my last visit.  
| - What are your thoughts regarding the ELA CCSS?                          | - Interview transcripts  
| - Analytic memos from interviews and observations  
| - Artifact collection  
| - Coding                                                                   |
| How do the teacher’s beliefs/belief systems appear to influence the enactment of the ELA CCSS? | - Observations  
| - How do you teach reading?  
| - How do you teach writing?  
| - How would you describe your classroom environment and how have you established that environment?  
| - Describe your experience thus far this school year                      | - Interview transcripts  
| - Analytic memos from interviews and observations  
| - Artifact collection  
| - Coding                                                                   |
| The purpose of this single case study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his/her classroom. | How does the teacher’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action appear to influence his educational beliefs and behaviors? | -Observations -Describe your experience thus far this school year enacting the ELA CCSS. -Tell me about your reflections regarding the lessons I observed in reading and writing. -Tell me about what has occurred in your classroom since my last visit. -What are your thoughts regarding the ELA CCSS? | -Interview transcripts -Analytic memos from interviews and observations -Artifact collection -Coding |
Appendix F: Informed Consent (District)

Project Title: The Influence of a Teacher’s Beliefs, Belief Systems, and Reflection on the Enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

Investigator: Phillip M. Pittman, Eastern Michigan University
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Gary Marx, Department of Leadership and Counseling, Eastern Michigan University

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this qualitative research case study is to understand the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in his classroom.

Procedure: This study will entail four iterations of audio-recorded interviews with the participant, video-recorded classroom observations of the participant enacting the ELA CCSS in his/her classroom, and post-observation debriefing sessions. I will also take pictures, or collect hard copies, of relevant artifacts throughout the interview/observation/debriefing process.

Confidentiality: The audio-recording of the interviews will be transcribed by a trained professional who will insure confidentiality. A pseudonym will be assigned to the participant in the interview transcript, and all identifying characteristics will be omitted. Likewise, the names of students, the name of the school, and the name of the school district will remain confidential. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. At no time will the participant’s name be associated with his/her responses during the interviews. My fieldnotes, the transcripts of interviews, the pictures of artifacts, the video files, and the audio files will be stored electronically and will be password-protected. Any hard copies of artifacts will be stored in a locked file accessible only to the principal investigator during the course of the study. In addition, the results will be stored separately from the consent form, which includes the name of the school district. At the conclusion of the study, the video recordings will be destroyed, as well.

Expected Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to the participant, students in the participant’s classroom, the school, or the school district by participating in this study as all results will be kept completely confidential.

Expected Benefits: The findings from this study potentially will help develop a greater understanding of the influence of a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection on the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in a teacher’s classroom, which could help educational leaders to be more effective in facilitating a reflective process that promotes teacher learning and growth, which can lead to more effective instructional practices and higher levels of student achievement.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. The participant may choose not to participate. If the participant decides not to participate, he or she can change his or her mind at any time and withdraw from the study without any negative consequences.
Use of Research Results: Results will be published in a dissertation. No names or individually identifying information will be revealed. Results may also be presented at workshops, conferences, or in professional publications.

Future Questions: If you have any questions concerning this study now or in the future, you can contact Phillip Pittman at [Redacted] or [Redacted].

Consent to Participate: I have read all of the above information about this research study, including the research procedures, possible risks, and the potential benefits. I understand the content and meaning of this information, which has been explained to me, and I hereby give consent for Phillip Pittman to conduct his study in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District.

District Representative Name: ______________________________________________________

District Representative Title: ______________________________________________________

District Representative Signature: ___________________________ Date __________

Principal Investigator: ____________________________________________________________ Date ______

This research protocol and informed consent document has been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (UHSRC) for use from February 1, 2014 to January 31, 2015. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact the UHSRC at human.subjects@emich.edu or call 734-487-0042.
Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Phillip Pittman, and I am the principal of [Redacted] Elementary School, which is also within the [Redacted] School District. In addition, I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Eastern Michigan University. To fulfill the remaining requirements of my program, I am studying how a teacher’s educational beliefs, belief systems, and reflection influence the enactment of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. I will be conducting this study with your child’s teacher over the remainder of this school year. To do so, I will visit the classroom for an observation approximately four times before the end of the school year. While I am in the classroom, I will observe and take notes on what the teacher does and says, and what the students do and say, and I will collect pictures or hard copies of any relevant artifacts (blank worksheets, anchor charts in the classroom, etc.) related to the teacher’s practice.

As a way to insure accuracy in reporting the findings, I will also video record the four observations. The purpose of the video recordings is to have an accurate, objective record of what the teacher is doing in the classroom as the teacher is the subject of my research. As the focus of the video recordings will be the teacher, students will not appear in any of the recordings. Similarly, I will not, at any point, collect any personal identification information connected to students such as names, telephone numbers, addresses, email addresses, grades, or any other personal/academic information. During the study, any information from the observations, including the video recordings, will be stored in a secure location and any information in an electronic format will be password protected. At the conclusion of the study, the video recordings will be destroyed. Furthermore, the video recordings will not be used as any part of my dissertation, which will be the final product associated with this study.

If you have any questions or concerns related to this study, please contact me at [Redacted] or PhillipPittman@wlcsd.org.

Thank you for your support,

Phillip M. Pittman