A Program Evaluation of One School’s Third Through Fifth Grade Instructional Practices

Yvette Edwards

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A Program Evaluation of One School’s Third Through Fifth Grade Instructional Practices

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A Program Evaluation of One School’s Third Through Fifth Grade Instructional Practices

Yvette Edwards

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the instructional practices implemented by teachers using the State Standards were effective for instructing students in Grades 3-5 who were economically disadvantaged. The context of this inquiry was an urban elementary school in a large public school district in the United States of America. The need to implement an effective strategy to improve teacher instructional practices to improve student achievement using the State Standards was an issue in schools of the district under study with students who were economically disadvantaged. The need to meet the rigor necessary for students to obtain proficiency on the State Standards Assessment was part of the concern. In my study, I utilized a mixed method approach that included interviews and surveys of teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators who aligned their instructional practices to the State Standards. The outcome of the study indicated that teacher instructional practice impacts student achievement on the State Standards Assessment.
PREFACE

My educational background extends 16 years in the profession. I began my career as a fifth grade elementary school teacher in a Title 1 School. I served in that capacity for seven years before moving to third grade at the advice of my former principal and a desire to learn something new for another seven years. I left the classroom for one year to work with elementary school teachers as a Peer Evaluator. In this role, I had the privilege of observing and evaluating teachers using the State Standards to improve their instructional practice. In 2019, I was promoted to Assistant Principal of Elementary Instruction in a Title 1 School, where 96% of students received free and reduced-price lunch and were economically disadvantaged. In that position, I was responsible for curriculum and evaluating student trends in instruction through their assessment data. It was with this information and facilitating professional learning communities, instructional planning, professional development, and instructional coaching that I, along with the principal, could determine next steps to improve student achievement. This study was important to the school’s stakeholders as it provided an opportunity for them (teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators) to share their perspectives on their instructional practices using the State Standards, as well as to provide clarity on what was and was not working well.

The leadership lessons learned from this study were overwhelmingly insightful to my role as a site-based administrator. Throughout this process, I learned the significance of the administrator’s role in participating in the instructional planning among teachers and coaches. This one act helps teachers to understand the value that planning effectively places on student learning. I learned that when administrators are aware of the standards
being taught in the classroom, they can make sound decisions as to whether the instructional practices provide the rigor necessary to improve student achievement.

Another profound lesson learned was that of having instructional coaches available to provide teachers the support needed to make improvements on their instructional practices. The stakeholders in this study all shared their desire for more support from the instructional coaches and not just at the time of year when state testing was at its peak. The stakeholders confirmed that having more opportunities to collaborate and professionally develop was something that could improve student achievement.

The experience from this study made me a much better educator, instructional leader, and administrator. This study reaffirmed my love for education, but more importantly educating students who are economically disadvantaged. It caused me to reflect on the ideals I started with as an educator that “good instruction is good instruction”; that if students in economically disadvantaged schools are provided with good instruction, they can thrive. This will always be at the heart of my experience as an educator and where I envision my campus and community to be.
I would like to acknowledge a few people in my life whose love, support, and encouragement are the reason I took this journey. First, my parents Kenneth Edwards and Yvonne Edwards who instilled in me at an early age how important an education is. Had it not been for them and the circumstances in which they grew up, I could not have done this today. They did not have a teacher who would see more in them than they could have imagined when they were my age. Second, my son Antonio and my sisters Yolanda, Karen, and Katherine; your endless support and “You Can Do This” has made me a better me. Antonio, no one has sacrificed more of themselves than you. As a son, you accepted me being in school and kept pushing me. You all are the BEST!

I also want to express a sincere amount of gratitude to my cohort, Doni Hodge and Daniel Dickter. We started as a team of five and ended up a team of three. Thank you all for the advice and friendship in this endeavor. You all are not just classmates, but good friends. I want to extend a sincere appreciation for the support, encouragement, and prayers of Dr. Carla Sparks my dissertation chair. Dr. Sparks you came in and saw each of us where we were and what we needed. You continue to be a light in an unprecedented time with sage advice to see us through another day. Thank you for being a blessing. To my committee member Dr. Lorrie Butler, thank you for your guidance in helping to see my dissertation to fruition; Dr. Susan Moxley, thank you for continued support over the last three years as internship supervisor and teacher.

I would like to thank school leaders, teachers, and friends who generously gave of their time to participate, share, and encourage me all the way. Your insight and voice gave life to my research and to my love for this profession. My hope is that this work will lead
to the transformation of how we look at teacher instructional practices and state testing when it comes to students who are economically disadvantaged. Finally, I would like to thank all my students over the last sixteen years whose profound impact on my life continues to make me a better educator and better advocate for them.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

ABC School District (pseudonym) is a large urban school district in the United states, with schools covering every corner of the county, from the poorest of neighborhoods to the most affluent. However, in the latter years of the second decade in the 21st century, the students had difficulty making gains on the State Standards Assessment (SSA), with less than 50% of students performing at proficient levels on the state assessment. Teacher instructional practices that were not aligned to the State Standards impacted how students ultimately performed on an assessment that led to promotion for third graders in reading and credits towards graduation as they continued throughout their school career. The rigor needed for students to successfully pass the SSA in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science may have been tied to how teachers aligned assessments, resources, and tasks for learning for all students. However, some students in economically disadvantaged schools throughout the district were not meeting the proficiency mark on the SSA, and their schools were often placed in the lowest 300 of schools across the state based on poor performance in reading. These schools were also often placed in the lowest 300 if the school failed to earn points towards their state assigned school grade from students in the bottom quartile of proficiency on the SSA. In other words, if a school did not make gains in proficiency or within achievement levels with students from the previous year or from subgroups (exceptional education, African American, English Language Learner, or economically disadvantaged), landing on the lowest 300 list was likely the result.
The problem in context was to determine whether the implementation of teachers' instructional practices provided the rigor necessary for elementary students in Grades 3-5 from economically disadvantaged schools to obtain proficiency levels on the SSA for ELA, math, and science. In other words, did teachers have a working knowledge of the State Standards that enabled them to implement rigorous lessons?

ABC School District was one of the largest urban districts in the country, with nearly 300,000 students. It was one of the largest employers in the county, employing more than 30,000 people. There were approximately 250 schools that serviced a wide variety of student needs and interests. According to SSA scores, 53% of students across the district were at least proficient in math, and 51% were proficient in ELA- reading (citation omitted to protect anonymity).

The district’s vision for learning was to “Prepare Students for Life” with a mission to ensure that students were provided an education and academic support that enabled them to become responsible citizens (citation omitted to protect anonymity). In 2015, the district developed a strategic plan to serve four strategic priorities that served as the core mission: Increase Graduation Rates, Communicate with Stakeholders, Build Strong Culture and Relationships, and Strengthen Foundations of Financial Stewardship (citation omitted to protect anonymity). Since the district was making inclusiveness with community a priority to achieve by 2020, then perhaps the district should have provided quarterly or monthly meetings to monitor progress towards these goals, specifically as they related to elementary schools where students were not scoring at the proficient levels in all subject areas as determined by the annual state assessments. The program for
evaluation in this research study was the use of instructional practices in Grades 3-5 that were used to prepare students for the State Standards Assessment.

**Purpose of the Evaluation**

I began implementing the State Standards during the 2014-2015 school year as a teacher of third grade in an economically disadvantaged school. I had been teaching within the school district in both third and fifth grades for nine years before implementing the new State Standards in reading and math which were based on the Common Core State Standards Initiative 2009 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019). The new standards were introduced to prepare students in Grades 3-5 for the new SSA to replace the state’s former annual assessment, the State Comprehensive Assessment Test (SCAT).

The district began the implementation of the State Standards in preparation for the SSA. For students to be considered satisfactory on the SSA, they had to score a 3 or higher performance level. For third graders, a performance level 1 on the ELA reading portion of the assessment resulted in an automatic retention unless their respective school district gave them an alternative assessment. The proficiency level scores on the SSA ranged from a level 1 to level 5; level 1 - inadequate; level 2 - below satisfactory; level 3 - satisfactory; level 4 - proficient; and level 5 - mastery (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

An achievement level 3 on the SSA indicated the student passed the test and met the requirements for that course. The score, however, did not indicate that the student was proficient in that subject area. The state adopted these achievement levels or performance levels in 2016 as part of the baseline from the 2015 State Standards Assessment (Citation
withheld to protect confidentiality). The figure below illustrates the five levels of achievement on the State Standards Test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>Below Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly likely to need</td>
<td>Likely to need</td>
<td>May need additional</td>
<td>Likely to excel in the next</td>
<td>Highly likely to excel in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substantial support for</td>
<td>substantial support</td>
<td>additional support for</td>
<td>grade/course</td>
<td>next grade/course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the next grade/course</td>
<td>for the next grade/course</td>
<td>for the next grade/course</td>
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*Figure 1.* The five levels of achievement on the State Standards Assessment with their descriptors

The 2014-2015 school year was the first implementation year of the SSA. Before that, the district had a resource guide that listed the topics and standards on the New Generation State Standards (NGSS) assessed on the SCAT. The district elementary department for all subject areas sent a list of essential elements to be covered by each subject area. However, each school could use that resource or develop its school-wide curriculum resource to plan for the SCAT alongside the essential elements.

As part of their instructional practices, teachers implemented the State Standards in their instruction by using the backwards planning model (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998), based on the Language Arts State Standards (LASS), Math State Standards (MASS), and the science standards. The LASS and the MASS replaced the New Generation State Standards, as part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative in 2009 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019), to promote a nationwide group of education standards for students in kindergarten through Grade 12. The state of the district under study established the LASS and the MASS for Grades 3-12 to emphasize a deeper understanding and analysis of content in the areas of language arts and reading, and math. The use of the backwards design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) ensured
teachers were teaching specific standards addressed on the district formative assessments in the fall and winter of each school year for third-fifth grade students. The use of the backwards design model helped teachers to plan with the end in mind, identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). This model was used to help teachers implement lessons that would help their students reach proficiency on the district formative assessments at 60% or higher and subsequently the SSA.

The district elementary reading department provided teachers with a pacing chart covering the standards for all areas of reading (phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension of both literary and informational text) for each quarter of the school year leading up to the SSA. The reading department provided the teachers the suggested text to use, suggested learning activities, and SSA style response questions, which addressed the standards to be taught weekly. The math and science departments also provided the same information along with various activities that the teachers could utilize to prepare students for the formative assessments.

In reading, multiple standards were covered weekly in Grades 3-5 and students were then tested on the standards twice a year using the reading formative assessments administered by district personnel. The first formative assessment was administered in the fall and was based on the previous grade level’s reading standards as content learned or mastered for that grade level. For example, a student in third grade would be administered a test that covered standards taught in second grade for the fall formative assessment. The winter formative assessment would cover third grade standards which the students would have been taught from August through January. These two separate
formative assessments did not cover the same standards or extend to the learning content required on the SSA for that grade level. The same process was applied for students in fourth and fifth grades.

In math, each standard was covered by topic to build on previous learning from the topic before. The standards also identified the learning progression from previous grade levels that the students could apply in the current grade and the progression for the next grade. As students took the first formative assessment in the fall, it covered math content learned in the previous grade. The formative assessment given in the winter resembled content assessed on the SSA in the spring. Schools often used this second formative as the predictor for proficiency in math on the SSA and allowed teachers the additional time to revise their instructional practices to remediate students in preparation for the SSA based on standards that students had not yet mastered.

The science assessment, on the other hand, assessed content taught in Grades K-5 and students were expected to have learned these science concepts upon entry to elementary school. This assessment relied heavily on a students’ ability to read, comprehend, and apply science vocabulary within the context of the questions asked on the SSA. Students would be successful on this assessment only if they had been taught science prior to entering fifth grade. The district science department provided teachers with standards-based mini-assessments, resources, and activities to be implemented according to each topic within a given grade level. It was not a spiral review from year to year, but rather it built on content learned from the previous grade levels. For example, second grade science standards were retaught in fifth grade.
The three subject area assessments did not address the same content using the same number of questions. In other words, on formative Assessment 1 in the fall, students could be asked one question related to one standard. On formative Assessment 2 in the winter, students could be asked multiple questions on the same standard and yet be expected to perform just as well on formative Assessment 2 as on formative Assessment 1 because it measured the current grade level’s standards. In this case student scores generally dropped from formative Assessment 1 to formative Assessment 2 because of a disproportionate number of questions linked to one or more standards or the same standard. Formative Assessment 2 was used as the predictor for proficiency on the SSA with a passing score of 60% or higher. Students obtaining a score of 60% or higher were considered likely to score a level 3 or higher on the SSA ELA reading, math, and science in the spring.

These formative assessment results were then analyzed by the teachers within their professional learning communities (PLCs) to determine the standards upon which to remediate students or enrich students for mastery by the time the SSA was administered. Donohoo (2013) stated that “Collaborative inquiry is a structure in which members of a professional learning community (PLC) come together to systematically examine their educational practices” (p. 2). Within their PLCs, teachers could analyze trends within their classrooms and their grade levels to determine the next steps for instruction. However, the greatest benefit for teachers collaborating on these data would be if the data reviewed within their PLCs aligned with the expectations for student learning. The teachers developed common assessments that reflected how the learning was being improved within their classrooms (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). PLCs would
also allow teachers to share their instructional practices to increase proficiency at a grade level (Jacobson, 2010). Since students were being evaluated on two different types of standards assessments, the likelihood of proficiency on the SSA would be greater if the teachers could see authentic growth from one formative assessment to the next.

The purpose of this program evaluation was to investigate whether the instructional practices implemented by teachers using the State Standards were effective for instructing students who were economically disadvantaged in Grades 3-5. I evaluated one school’s instructional practices utilized in Grades 3-5 that were used to prepare students for the State Standards Assessment to investigate whether the resources, learning activities, and assessment tools met the rigor necessary for students to obtain proficiency on the SSA.

I intended to use my findings to inform the school and district leaders about the impact of teachers’ instructional practices in Grades 3-5 on students who were identified as economically disadvantaged. I intended to use my findings to help leaders make decisions to benefit students who were economically disadvantaged. I also intended to use my findings to help teachers improve their instructional practice to the benefit of all students.

**Rationale**

The main reason I selected instructional practices to evaluate was that teachers were the primary resource implementing instruction in Grades 3-5 across the district. Each district department provided the teachers with the standards to be addressed for each grade level, learning activities, and SSA style response questions that teachers used for teaching and assessment. This approach was designed to implement the standards
before each formative assessment was administered in the fall and winter for students in Grades 3-5.

During the 2015-2016 school year, I was a peer evaluator within the district under study. Part of my role in this position was to evaluate how a teacher’s instructional practice would impact student learning and subsequently raise student achievement. The impact on student learning was based on planning, classroom environment, student engagement and learning, and how well these categories contributed to students' successful learning outcomes. These evaluations occurred twice a year for each teacher assigned to me as a peer evaluator, for two different observation cycles (one 30-minute session and one 60-minute session) during the teachers’ instructional time. While in this position, I traveled to many different schools with varying populations of students and socioeconomic statuses to observe teachers’ impact on student learning using the Danielson Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2007).

The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2007) is based on four domains designed to understand the impact instruction has on student learning. The domains include Domain 1- Planning and Preparation; Domain 2: The Classroom Environment; Domain 3: Instruction; and Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities (Danielson, 2007, pp. 26-31). Education leaders use each of these domains to examine how effective or ineffective teacher instruction ultimately leads to or hinders student learning. The main responsibility of a peer evaluator was to provide teachers with support that would improve student learning. This support would address the areas of instruction needing improvement based on the observations. Teachers were provided opportunities to reflect on their practice, and as their peer evaluator, I provided them additional tools and
resources that they could implement within their classrooms. These resources included assessment rubrics, classroom management tools, and resources for curriculum planning and instruction.

As I met with teachers in Grades 3-5, they often stated that they were not following the pacing calendar; they were behind; and they did not know they had other options to implement the standards for reading, math, and science; or the pacing calendar was what their principals conveyed the teachers had to use. This concern by teachers resulted from a one-size-fits-all model, in which they were all expected to teach the same content at the same pace in every school across the district. That meant the teachers at schools with more affluent children were teaching the same curriculum at the same pace as the teachers at schools with students who were economically disadvantaged.

My second reason for selecting to evaluate instructional practices in Grades 3-5 related to what I found when I returned to the classroom after my position as a peer evaluator was eliminated due to budget cuts. Upon returning to the classroom, I began planning with colleagues who shared the same views about planning for instruction as the teachers with whom I had worked in my role as a peer evaluator. Their shared views conveyed that suggestions from the subject area departments were the sole resources to implement instruction. My colleagues were not familiar with dissecting the State Standards, aligning resources to create rigorous lessons within their classrooms, and improving students’ proficiency on the formative assessments. Neither were my colleagues certain if they would be allowed to implement other resources using the standards, based on the directives of our school administrator who believed their implementation of the standards adequately prepared students in Grades 3-5 for the SSA.
This evaluation was important to the stakeholders, the district, and the educational community. The district was constantly changing, and the number of students living in poverty required the district leaders to address the needs of educating all students in a manner that was relevant to them. Parents, students, and teachers were the stakeholders who worked together to ensure that each party played an important role in the learning process. This evaluation was important to teachers because it provided them insight on the benefit of reinventing their instructional practices, if needed, specifically to meet the needs of the students they taught. If teachers could implement the standards in a way that informed their practice and met the needs of their students, they could impact the proficiency levels on the SSA for both students and state assigned school grades. I intended to use my evaluation to inform teachers and administrators whether current instructional practices were effective with students who were economically disadvantaged and whether any changes were needed to help students attain proficiency on State Standards.

Students may have been impacted by my study because it was designed to help teachers and administrators to better understand the impact of current instructional practices and the possibility of utilizing additional or new instructional practices to increase student achievement through instruction that is rigorous and relevant. This evaluation may have helped decrease the number of failing elementary schools because it was designed to provide a greater understanding of the impact of instructional supports and whether additional academic opportunities were needed. The educational community was likely to support the district when the needs were adequately met for students who
were economically disadvantaged, increasing the number of proficient students within the school district.

The students across the district came from a range of diverse backgrounds with a range of barriers that inhibited their success in schools. In the spring of 2018, the superintendent acknowledged that to “Prepare Students for Life” (citation omitted to protect anonymity), the district needed to focus on how resources, in the form of materials and instructional coaches, were allocated to schools with the highest needs based on students underperforming on the state assessment (citation omitted to protect anonymity). These students did not have the same access to resources as their more affluent peers, or exposure to rigorous learning or experiences that would set them up for success on the SSA. However, students at higher performing schools with more affluent students had these opportunities (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Therefore, the re-evaluation of instructional practices was necessary to dissolve the inequities that were faced in schools that were economically disadvantaged with few instructional resources or instructional coaches. In the school under study, there were 500 students, and 98% of the students were economically disadvantaged, read one or two grade levels below their grade level, and lacked basic math knowledge. The urgency was to provide the necessary help that was key to the success of these children. There was a challenge for students to meet proficiency on the district formative assessments, the SSA ELA, math, and science, and for teachers to receive help in supporting the students.

**Goals of the Program Evaluation**

One goal of my program evaluation was to identify the teacher supports needed to plan instruction using resources that were standards-based for teaching multiple standards
at a time since the SSA assessed students with a variety of standards. A second goal was to ensure that teachers would determine the type of rigorous learning needed to develop common assessments with their colleagues to gauge student mastery. A third goal was to provide teachers adequate professional development required to meet the needs of their students using a rigorous standards-based curriculum for differentiating instruction (Tomilinson, 2001) among the lowest-performing students.

The goals of this program evaluation were related to student learning because teachers needed to be able to identify how to implement standards-based instruction using rigorous resources. They could use the backwards design approach to lesson planning that capitalizes on the achievement level questioning descriptors found on the SSA and information from monthly progress on student iReady data and the formative assessments administered in the fall and winter of each school year. Furthermore, teachers could obtain support from administrators that promoted collaborative autonomy to implement these types of rigorous lessons that were not prescribed by district leaders.

**Exploratory Questions**

These primary research questions that addressed the impact of instructional practices were as follow:

1. What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, educators of students in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program, educators of students who are English Language Learners (ELL), and administrators] report is working with their instructional practices using the State Standards?
2. What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, educators of students in the ESE program, educators of students who are ELL, and administrators] report is not working with their instructional practices using the State Standards?

3. What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, educators of students in the ESE program, educators of students who are ELL, and administrators] report are the greatest challenges with their instructional practices using the State Standards?

4. What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, educators of students in the ESE program, educators of students who are ELL, and administrators] report as ways to address the challenges to improve their instructional practices using the State Standards?

The related research questions that I sought to have answered by the stakeholders involved their perceptions about planning, time, and leadership influences that impacted student learning and the utilization of other resources. Those questions were:

1. What types of planning resources and professional development do teachers perceive they need to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

2. What is the role of the school leadership in supporting teachers in their autonomy to plan lessons that are not prescribed by the elementary department and the district leadership?

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, for student achievement to grow beyond the threshold of 53% (citation withheld to protect confidentiality) in the district under study, the use of current
instructional practices needed to be evaluated. The recommendation that student learning should be the same from school to school using the same instructional practices and pacing ignored the idea that this may not be best practice for all students or student achievement. Instructional practices needed to be planned based on State Standards and resources should provide rigor that prepares students for the best learning possible.

**List of Terms Included in this Study**

The following terms were used throughout this study and are defined here for clarification:

*Economically disadvantaged students-* Students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other public assistance based upon their family’s income (Kids Count Data Center, 2020)

*Economically disadvantaged schools-* Schools with a high number and percentage of students considered economically disadvantaged (Kids Count Data Center, 2020)

*Effective/ineffective Teacher-* those teachers who are skilled/unskilled at raising the achievement levels of their students (Murnane & Steele, 2007)

*Low-quality teacher-* those teachers with limited experience level and lacking knowledge of skills (Jacob, 2007)

*Renaissance School-* schools that have the highest number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch in a school district (Federal Programs, Title 1 No Child Left Behind)
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to explore the research on ineffective teachers; teachers with low expectations for achievement and instructional practices; and principal leadership effectiveness as related to student achievement and the growing achievement gap; and especially in schools with economically disadvantaged children. These themes highlighted the issues concerning one school’s instructional practices implementing the State Standards and the impact on student proficiency and levels of success on the State Standards Assessment when these barriers were present within a school’s instructional reading program.

Teacher Effectiveness

There has been a growing concern regarding students from low socio-economic backgrounds attaining success in their schools or the ability of school districts to close the achievement gap (Ansell, 2011). Effective instruction is dependent on good instructional decisions based on reliable data about the learner’s ability to read (Nel, 2018). For teachers to be effective at teaching, they need tools to teach effectively and the ability to use data skillfully (Nel, 2018). Teacher effectiveness in schools is based on a teacher’s knowledge on how to implement curriculum and how to improve student growth on state assessments (Murnane & Steele, 2007).

In 2001, former President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) which stated: “The major focus of No Child Left Behind is to close student achievement gaps by providing all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education” (2002, para. 3). One of the main
tenets of the law was that schools receiving Title 1 funds must hire and present information to parents regarding staff members that were either highly qualified to teach their children, or out of field teachers (teachers with degrees outside of education or education subject areas) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). These schools were identified to receive Title 1 funds based on their high concentration of students living in poverty. In the district of the school under study, Title 1 funds were used to provide extra support in the classroom in the form of resource teachers, to increase parent involvement, and to purchase resources and technology that would improve student learning.

With the reauthorization of Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 (U. S. Department of Education, 2015), schools and local education agencies must describe how students in economically disadvantaged areas are not disproportionately affected by ineffective teachers and school leaders by determining the root causes and evaluating ways to improve them [Section 1111 (g)1B and 1112 (b)(2)]. To address this problem, State Educational Agencies and Local Educational Agencies can use Title II funds to ensure that this does not occur, by establishing specific initiatives to combat students in economically disadvantaged areas being taught by out-of-field and ineffective teachers.

Title 1 refers to schools and funding given to schools to build opportunity and equity within the learning environment (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). This level of accountability also created the new norm for high stakes testing (Johnson, 2002). The push was to increase the level of reading and math proficiency for students in Grades 3-12. In 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (U. S. Department of Education, 2015), which reauthorized a previous law signed by President Johnson in 1965, that advanced the equity for all students in the nation’s disadvantaged
and high needs schools. ESSA, like NCLB highlights the importance of improving the learning and accountability within economically disadvantaged schools by investing in technology, expanding and sustaining education within preschools, and focusing on college readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Under the ESSA guidelines, states and districts utilizing Title1 funds were now to “supplement-not-supplant” these federal funds so that students in high needs or low-income schools continued to receive the additional resources to succeed (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Danielson Framework (2007) by Charlotte Danielson in coordination with value-added measures (Rand, 2019) known as VAM scores, was used to evaluate teacher instruction to determine ineffective, effective, and highly effective teaching. The Danielson Model was specific to the school district in this research study. In using the Danielson Framework (2007), and the provisions of NCLB, teachers who worked with economically disadvantaged students had to demonstrate effective teaching or be highly qualified based on student proficiency on the state assessments. Although all teachers may be evaluated using VAM scores, NCLB specifically required that schools receiving Title 1 funds must have highly qualified teachers, and parents must be notified of teachers who are “out of field” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Even though this was no longer valid under ESSA, the state in which this study was conducted used teachers’ state VAM in grades 4-12 to determine whether the teachers’ instructional practices were effective or highly effective to remain employed at that school site or within the district (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Instructional practices that did not provide the rigor needed for student mastery on the state assessments
contributed to an increase in the number of low performing students and failing school grades.

As stated in Chapter One, the Danielson Framework (2007) was based on four domains designed to understand the impact instruction has on student learning. The domains included Domain 1: Planning and Preparation; Domain 2: The Classroom Environment; Domain 3: Instruction; and Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities (Danielson, 2007, pp. 26-31). Education leaders use each of these domains to examine how effective or ineffective teacher instruction impacts student learning. For each of the domains, teachers are rated by a set of components that includes “unsatisfactory,” “basic,” “proficient,” and “distinguished.” According to Danielson (2007), “The purpose behind the framework is to provide the public with a guarantee that members of the profession hold themselves to high standards of practice” (p. 3). The Danielson Framework (2007) is used to evaluate a teacher’s instructional impact on student learning. When teachers develop lessons based on the State Standards, the activities and assessments should be designed to achieve the learning outcomes based on the material presented. Subsequently, teacher quality impacts student achievement, and students from economically disadvantaged schools need the most highly qualified teachers, when the truth is, they often have the least qualified teachers (Johnson, 2002).

However, the fact remains that even with these measures in place, it is possible for economically disadvantaged students to continuously lag in closing the achievement gap. The achievement gap in education refers to the disparity in results between education quality between groups of students (Ansell, 2011). Closing the achievement gap has been a difficult task for teachers and school leaders to obtain when they are
unable to provide quality instruction that is equitable for all students, and when there is a lack of resources and poor teacher quality within economically disadvantaged schools.

Wagner (2008a) suggested that there are two types of gaps students in America face—the achievement gap and the global achievement gap, and that both should be closed. He referred to the achievement gap as the quality of education received by most middle class students in America compared to the quality of education of poor and minority students (Wagner, 2008a, p. 9); and the global achievement gap is the best of what all students from every economic background will need to thrive as learners in our society (p. 9). According to Wagner (2008a), one way to close the global achievement gap is to recognize that it is much more than testing but rethinking what our students need across all aspects of life to live in a global society: economically, socially, politically, and technologically (p. 9). Wagner said students are not instructed by qualified educators, who have a profound understanding of the State Standards, to implement quality instruction that leads to successful proficiency in the standardized assessment.

Johnson (2002) suggested that principals and school districts must have a vision of change to lead instructionally and effectively. As the chief instructional leaders leading their schools in an everchanging society, school leaders should advocate for equity in their schools, community, and instruction to better their students.

**Teacher Quality in Economically Disadvantaged Schools**

It is easy to state that teachers in economically disadvantaged schools should be of the highest quality because these are the students who are in the greatest need of quality instruction. For students in economically disadvantaged schools to have any chance of success, they must have highly effective teachers implementing quality
instruction. Hahnel and Jackson (2012) studied the effects of equitable access to effective teaching in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) within a three-year period. Based on their research, they determined that teachers in this district were inequitably distributed and that low-income students had low value-added teachers, compared to their peers in more affluent schools. They also found that this school district retained more of their lower performing teachers based on their years of experience compared to their level of effective teaching. Hahnel and Jackson (2012) also mentioned the district had a practice of allowing these teachers to instruct Black and Latina students more often than their higher income White teachers. They contended that a high value-added teacher helps increase student proficiency levels and keeps students from decreasing to lower proficiency levels (p. 6).

Teachers in economically disadvantaged classrooms lack the curriculum knowledge to implement instruction that will improve student achievement (Johnson, 2002). These teachers range in experience level and often show little evidence of how their teaching has impacted students. In their study for effective teaching for disadvantaged students, Isenberg et al. (2013) investigated effective teaching in ELA and math for Grades 4 through 8 in 29 school districts in four regions. They reviewed teachers’ value-added measures against what they called the Effective Teacher Gap (ETG) and determined students in these districts were not given access to equal and effective teaching compared to their peers in more affluent schools. The ETG compares the average effectiveness of teaching experienced by students in more affluent schools compared to teaching effectiveness experienced by students in economically disadvantaged schools (Isenberg et al., 2013, p. ES-4). Student growth in economically
disadvantaged schools was less than 50% in reading and math compared to that of their peers at 53% and 56% (Isenberg et al., p. ES-6). Their research speaks of how districts and states overlook inequity within and between schools as it relates to access to effective teachers.

The teacher shortage in large urban districts accounted for another reason why students in economically disadvantaged schools are impacted by poor teacher quality and gains in achievement (Jacob, 2007). Jacob maintained teacher shortages in large urban districts resulted in hiring teachers who lack credentials and experience, and the use of long-term substitutes to fill classroom vacancies. Jacob also stated, “This is what makes it hard to hire qualified teachers” (p. 134), because the shortage is essentially based on the lack of effective teachers to hire or teachers the districts are willing to employ. He further contended that teachers in large urban districts who work in poor and minority schools are likely to be inexperienced because they are teaching subjects for which they lack knowledge or are certified to teach (p. 135). They are the last hired and sometimes first fired because of the demands imposed upon teachers who receive little to no support. In addition, Jacob contended principals have a difficult time measuring teacher effectiveness, as it is based on their perceived ideas of the teachers with whom they interact and observe, and principals have their own ideas of a “high-quality” teacher (Jacob, 2007; Cowan et al., 2016). As a result, principals hire teachers with the intention of providing high-quality instruction within their schools, but the lack of experience and content knowledge undermines the ability of some teachers to garner levels of student achievement for mastery to meet the rigor of the curriculum.
Another perspective to consider when looking at low teacher quality is the hiring practices of school leaders and district human resource personnel from an economic standpoint (Murnane & Steele, 2007). Most school districts have a vast talent pool of teachers each year vying for positions in their school districts. However, the teachers applying are looking at more affluent schools for teaching positions. By the time the well qualified teachers are vetted and hired at the affluent schools, there is a small pool of teachers available to teach in economically disadvantaged schools (Murnane & Steele, 2007). This leaves the schools to hire the remaining teachers, provided they have not found positions outside of teaching. Murnane and Steele (2007), contended that rather than leaving vacancies open, school districts will hire ineffective teachers or low skilled talent in order to maintain their current wages for the profession. Work in these schools is often difficult and harder to reward more experienced teachers (p. 36).

Murnane and Steele (2007) also argued financial opportunities may not be the same for an individual with a computer science degree compared to a history teacher. Economically speaking, the cost of what teachers give up when making the decision to teach, does not equate to the opportunities they may have for themselves or the desires they encourage in their students. The researchers also suggested that teachers in economically disadvantaged schools often deal with working conditions that are not present in more affluent schools, as in lack of parental support, larger class sizes, inadequate resources, and the lack of curricular autonomy. Even if teaching in an economically disadvantaged school comes with a pay differential, it does not equate to the pressure imposed upon teachers to make gains with their students, and the fact remains that teacher quality is not effective (Murnane & Steele, p. 20). Student
achievement is contingent upon the effectiveness of the quality of instruction delivered to them. If students are not receiving quality instruction from their teachers, the instruction limits their ability to perform well on state assessments.

**Teacher Expectations**

Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about a student’s ability to learn makes a difference in how successful a student will be within the classroom environment (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018). If a teacher planned instruction at the lowest achievement level based on student data, student background, or his or her own bias, the likelihood for a student to work beyond that level is impacted. When minority and poor students are instructed by teachers who implement instruction at the lowest level, this inherently impedes their level of success, their self-esteem, and their performance in school (Ryan, 2006). Gershenson and Papageorge (2018) maintained there are positive relationships between what teachers expect and what students ultimately accomplish, and it boils down to teachers not recognizing how their beliefs and expectations of students are received or the quality of work students will turn in based on their perceived expectations. They contended teacher expectations matter: the higher the expectations the higher the completion rates of work for students, and even a chance encounter with a teacher can lead to the wrong expectations (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018). In other words, if a student perceived the teacher’s beliefs about their efforts were of low quality, then the teacher would receive low quality work from that student. To explain their research questions more succinctly, they used survey data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), conducted by the U. S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. The study (as cited in Gershenson &
Papageorge, 2018) indicated teachers expected 58% of their White students to graduate from high school and obtain a four-year degree, and only 37% of their Black students to do so. When comparing Black teachers’ expectations to White teachers’ expectations, White teachers were nine percentage points less likely to expect their Black students to obtain a four-year degree, especially if the student was a Black male (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018, p. 6). However, if the teachers they studied were optimistic, their expectations of students were based on whether the teachers felt students enjoyed their class and participation in the learning determined whether the teacher believed the student would complete college. Gershenson and Papageorge (2018) maintained that all teachers are optimistic, but their White students received more of that optimism. “Having a teacher who is twenty percentage points more confident that a student will complete college increases a student’s chances of completing college by three percentage points” (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018, p. 7). They suggested that teacher expectations forecast student outcomes, but also influence self-fulfilling prophecies; and White teachers place Black students at a disadvantage, and therefore, policies intended to place Black students on equal footing with White students increased the racial gap in college completion because of the different set of expectations (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018).

Another example of teachers demonstrating low expectations for students was illustrated in a study conducted by Sylvia Pantaleo (2016), in which she worked with a teacher of second grade students in reading. The teacher reported students were low performing and needed scaffolding to learn (Pantaleo, 2016). The tasks within the study required students to understand the diverse narrative structures and intentionality of the
artwork within the picture book. However, the teacher spent instructional time focused on student knowledge and appreciation of the artwork versus the actual narrative structure. Pantaleo acknowledged that during the study she observed some students attempt the more rigorous tasks of the intended lesson. However, Pantaleo’s experiences working with the students aligned with the teachers’ expectations at the start of the study. In her final thoughts, Pantaleo concluded that as teachers, “we need to consider how and what our policies, curricula, ideologies, and behaviors convey about our expectations for student achievement and engagement in learning” (p. 89). In other words, as teachers, setting high expectations for student learning and achievement go beyond the curriculum that is taught; teacher expectations are conveyed through policies and ideas that they bring into the classroom. When teachers hold low expectations for students it is demonstrated in the instructional planning and the levels at which they engage students in learning.

A final perspective on teacher expectations is related to culturally relevant teaching. Taylor (2010) stated teachers in low-income schools set lower expectations for their students because they are not aware of their own biases or the capabilities of their students because of where they come from or the types of families these students have. Teachers ignore the endless possibilities that should be capitalized on because they do not invest in students but rather focus on the deficits that students have because their families are poor, Latina, or Black. Students need to know that teachers value not only who they are as students but also that teachers value their learning and demonstrate this in the type of instruction they provide within the classrooms (Taylor, 2010). For example, in their case study, Mapp et al. (2009), suggested the teacher beliefs and perceptions were the
largest misconceptions for the teachers within Montgomery County Public School district, and therefore, closing the achievement gap was an elusive goal because no two schools or areas of the district were the same. The leaders did not communicate with parents how teachers would meet their students' needs when district leaders shifted district zones to close the achievement gap. For teachers’ expectations to change, leadership needed to address low achievement within their schools as it related to teachers becoming more culturally competent to take on the challenges that students faced in learning and in their homes. The idea that a teacher’s expectations and beliefs about economically disadvantaged students impacts their learning is at the root of student achievement and a teacher’s impact on instruction. Students do well in environments where the teacher demonstrates they care. However, in an economically disadvantaged school, the push and the expectation of teachers to see students achieve on rigorous state assessments carries more influence for the student if teachers set high standards for learning (Taylor, 2010).

**Instructional Practices**

Teachers’ instructional practices impact the way students learn and apply knowledge within economically disadvantaged schools. The impact teachers have on students influences how well students perform on standards-based curriculum and assessments. Darling-Hammond (2012) suggested that in creating a system for effective teachers it takes teachers aligning State Standards with teaching standards and expressed in performance terms. In other words, teachers must go beyond just knowing the standards and identify what the learners should be able to do based on those standards (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Saavedra and Opfer (2012) suggested that there are nine
tenets that teachers can apply in instructing students effectively to prepare them as 21st century learners. Those tenets are “relevant, cross-curricula, critical thinkers, learning transfer, teaching students how to learn, addresses misconceptions, collaborative, exploits technology, and creative” (p. 11). Teachers planning with the standards in mind and implementing practices that allow students to view the world differently and acquire new knowledge could provide the opportunities necessary for students in economically disadvantaged environments to close the academic achievement gap.

The use of professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004) or PLCs, is also another means by which teachers can improve their instructional practices. PLCs are defined as “a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students” (Great School Partnerships, 2014). Within PLCs, teachers have opportunities to build on each other’s learning and teaching styles and implement them within their classrooms to determine what students learned or did not learn (Hoaglund et al., 2014).

**Principal Effectiveness within Economically Disadvantaged Schools**

Principals at economically disadvantaged schools face challenges in moving their schools from low performing to high performing (Betelle et al., 2012). They are often moved from high performing schools based on the achievement levels of their students, with little to no support (Betelle et al., 2012). Upon taking their assignments at economically disadvantaged schools, the principals found they were ill-equipped to manage the nuances of learning and implementing instructional mandates that would increase teacher effectiveness while yielding gains for students. To effectively carry out this role, principals need job-embedded training by former administrators who can help
enhance the skills needed to improve student learning (Warren & Kielson, 2013). The benefit of having a leadership coach provides the principal with a shared experience because the coach has had experience working at the school level and with the same demographics of students (Warren & Kielson, 2013). An example of one type of training to implement, would be to determine teachers’ perceptions about their students and how well they understand the standards by which they teach. Warren and Kielson (2013), contended that the quality of a principal’s work is second only to the quality of teachers and the influence it has on student achievement, since they account for 25% of the school level impact on student achievement (Kearney, 2011).

Principals are the primary instructional leaders at their school sites, and therefore, have the responsibility to ensure students are receiving instruction at the highest level. However, when thrust into schools that are academically, economically, and instructionally challenging it is difficult to lead teachers in a way that provides optimal support for optimal learning, engage parents in the learning process, and keep students motivated to reach levels of success that are otherwise not meant for them to achieve (Warren & Kielson, 2013). Principals in these schools must challenge their own ideas about what works best in their schools by learning the standards by which students are assessed. Spiro (2013) stated that effective schools are learning oriented: they set high standards, and rigorous goals for every student (p. 28). When leaders challenge their faculties to go above and beyond what is necessary to acquire rigorous learning by promoting professional development, that encourages true understanding of the standards holding themselves and their faculty accountable for not meeting the needs of their students. Spiro (2013) maintained that effective principals keep track of their teachers’
professional development and monitor instruction by providing effective and substantive feedback to improve student learning. Principals set the tone as the instructional leader, and this includes understanding the standards, providing differentiated professional development, and ensuring that all students are provided quality instruction within the classroom. Based on my personal experience, as the instructional leader, principals are the architects of learning at their sites and they determine who needs the support or coaching necessary to guarantee student success within the classroom.

**Social Justice Leadership**

One of the primary concerns for school leaders in economically disadvantaged schools is that they are not prepared to lead as social justice educators (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Jean-Marie et al. (2009) proposed that leading schools where low income and minority students are plagued by societal woes and are not given the same or equitable opportunities as their peers in more affluent neighborhoods requires school leaders to become advocates against policies and programs that hinder students. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) argued that school leaders need to become better advocates of policies that impact their students, especially at the district level and within their communities. School leaders must also be better architects at designing curriculum instruction within their school sites that propels students to the next level and prepares them for the injustices within society that they will encounter in and out of the school (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Furthermore, Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) contended that school leaders must do more than manage schools. They must lead in their schools by directing student learning and inventing new creative roles regarding how they handle these societal challenges, which is at the heart of social justice work (p. 209).
task to obtain equity for students in poverty is key for leaders of social justice to advocate when it comes to students in economically disadvantaged schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 214). To improve the instructional practices and implementation of quality instruction at their schools, school leaders need to advocate for what works at their schools. Principals must be willing to explain to district leaders that allowing them to make decisions that impact their students helps to improve student achievement in their schools.

**Conclusion**

To understand how student achievement is to be improved within economically disadvantaged schools, educators must first start looking at teacher quality, teacher expectations, instructional practices, principal effectiveness, and social justice leadership. These themes highlighted within this literature review explain how teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness influences student learning and student achievement. School leaders play the most important role in creating environments that promote all stakeholders’ learning and high expectations. When administrators and teachers allow their own perceptions of students based on the students’ zip code, they hinder their own ability to teach and lead, and students suffer. School districts must become agents of change that allow and support equitable policies that promote advancement of learning for all students.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design Overview

The purpose of my study was to evaluate the implementation practices in Grades 3-5 in one Title 1 elementary school in a public school district in the United States. This school was racially identifiable with over 80% of the student population as African American and eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). African Americans and economically disadvantaged students were sub-groups at this site who made little to no gains on the State Standards Assessment (SSA) in the previous two school years. I taught previously all subject areas in Grades 3 and 5 at another Title 1 school within the same school district. I was serving as the assistant principal at the school under study. I also wanted to gather instructional staff and leaders’ perceptions regarding the rigor of their instructional practices related to student proficiency on the English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science portions of the SSA.

I focused on students’ low proficiency levels within this economically disadvantaged school based on the implementation of the State Standards in Grades 3-5. Through my research, I provided a deep understanding of teachers’ instructional practices and their knowledge of implementing rigorous instruction aligned with the Language Arts State Standards, Mathematical State Standards, and Science Standards. As part of the newest district initiative to make learning equitable for all students in economically disadvantaged schools, the district leaders implemented the Achievement Schools Initiative in 2018 (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). This initiative provided fifty of the lowest performing schools across the school district with the resources needed
to provide an equitable education to the district’s schools with the greatest need. These schools were also on the state’s list for persistently low performing schools for the previous four years (citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

My research is related to the four strategic priorities that served as the core of the district’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan: Increase Graduation Rates, Communicate with Stakeholders, Build Strong Culture and Relationships, and Strengthen Foundations of Financial Stewardship” (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). One of the key performance indicators for graduation success and college readiness was the scores of students in Grade 3 reaching a passing level or above on the ELA portion of the SSA (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). My research highlighted teachers’ instructional practices implementing the State Standards in ELA, math, and science to promote proficiency on the SSA.

My research informed how leadership and faculty within economically disadvantaged schools implement rigorous instruction within the elementary classroom using the State Standards. This research also helped to create shared accountability on how to improve student achievement by promoting a better understanding of the standards for faculty and administrators, specifically in how resources and assessments are aligned to the State Standards to obtain proficiency in reading, math, and science. Spiro (2013) stated that effective schools are learning oriented; and that setting high standards and rigorous goals for learning is essential. Spiro (2013) also maintained that effective principals keep track of their teachers’ professional development and monitoring instruction, by providing effective and substantive feedback to improve student learning. My research further highlighted the importance of teachers and school
leaders obtaining a strong understanding of how to implement the State Standards within reading, math, and science instruction and develop their instructional practice with rigorous resources.

Based on my personal experience from collaborating with teachers to plan for instruction, I observed the lack of clarity on how to align instruction using the State Standards in reading, math, and science, thereby utilizing the district’s suggestions to implement instruction within their classrooms. I asked the teacher participants in the study to share their experiences with implementing the lessons using the State Standards; their confidence level in understanding the State Standards; and whether they were confident in their ability to align resources and assessments that were not provided by the district with the State Standards. I asked the leadership participants (which included instructional coaches and school administrators) to share their experiences in assisting teachers with implementing the State Standards, and their ability to align resources and assessments with the State Standards that were not provided by the district.

Participants

There were three stakeholder groups in this program evaluation. The first group included teachers, teachers of Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and teachers of English Language Learners (ELL) who planned and implemented the curriculum. The second group included the instructional coaches, and the third group included the school administrators at the site.

I invited participants who taught in Grades 3-5 at one elementary school that served economically disadvantaged students. The students at this site were in the Success Schools Initiative, which was implemented by the school district leaders in the 2018-
2019 school year. The Success Schools’ goal was to provide “Equity – it's about giving students what they need” and placing the right resources, leaders, educators in classrooms of students with the highest needs (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). I used a combination of surveys and interviews to gather information from the participants based on their instructional practices with implementing the State Standards.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

The evidence used to answer my research questions included the school’s SSA data from 2017-2019 school years from the State Department of Education. There I was able to analyze student proficiency and learning gains on the SSA based on the implementation of the standards. I also used information from the surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers, instructional coaches, and site-based administrators.

**Surveys.** I offered a survey to all teachers at School A, that showed trends, perceptions, and experiences regarding their instructional practices in implementing the State Standards. I provided the survey to teachers upon completion of the informed consent to participate. The survey questions were structured so that the first three sections were based on the Likert Scale and the remainder were open-ended questions. I provided teachers a self-addressed envelope to enclose the completed survey and return it to me. I offered teachers the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured interview to provide greater detail regarding their perceptions and instructional practices with implementing
the State Standards. The survey was open to teachers at School A who had taught in Grades 3-5 at any point in their careers and had worked in Title 1 schools.

**Teacher survey.** I surveyed nine teachers (See Appendix A) from School A ranging in age from 22-60+, both male and female, who taught reading, math, and science to students in Grades 3-5; to include the four ESE teachers and one ELL teacher, who provided support in all three academic areas.

**Administrator survey.** I surveyed two administrators (See Appendix F) and their two instructional coaches (See Appendix C); within the same age range of 22-60+, both male and female, who evaluated and coached teachers with their instructional practices in Grades 3-5.

**Instructional Coach interviews.** In each interview, it was my goal to obtain information on teacher experiences in implementing the State Standards in Grades 3-5 and their perceptions about their instructional practices and the support received from the instructional coaches and administrators. I interviewed the instructional coaches to obtain information on their perceptions of the impact that teacher implementation of the standards had on student mastery in reading, math, and science. They provided the teachers support to build their instructional practice for students in Grades 3-5. I interviewed the administrators who had worked with these teachers and evaluated their instructional practices using the State Standards.

**Teacher interviews.** I interviewed 10 teachers from School A (See Appendices B and J), some of whom were the same teachers who took the survey, ranging in age from 22-60+, both male and female. This included teachers who taught reading and language arts, math, and science to students in Grades 3-5, as well as the ESE and ELL teachers,
who provided support in within those content areas. The data I collected from the interviews focused on the perceptions and beliefs of teachers and their instructional practices using the State Standards on their autonomy.

**Administrator interviews.** I invited one administrator from Elementary School A (See Appendices E and L), the former Assistant Principal (See Appendix E), and two instructional coaches (See Appendices D and K) within the age range of 22-60+, both male and female, who evaluated and coached instructional practices within the schools to participate in interviews. The current Assistant Principal was not included in the research, as I was serving in that role. The data collected from the interviews focused on the perceptions and beliefs the leadership team observed in supporting teachers’ instructional practices utilizing the State Standards.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted all interviews via telephone or via Zoom virtual platform rather than face-to-face for all participants’ safety. All interviews were 25-30 minutes in length, with follow-up questions via email if needed. I conducted the interviews at the participants’ convenience.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

I analyzed the school’s State Standards Assessment testing data based on the State Department of Education's information with descriptive statistics. I reviewed the changes in school grades over the previous two years. I analyzed data by subject and grade level from the 2017-2019 school years to determine patterns in student proficiency based on teacher implementation of the State Standards. Based on the similarities and patterns within the themes from the surveys and interviews from this program evaluation, I was able to draw conclusions and make recommendations that may provide insight into how
teachers can improve their instructional practices by implementing the State Standards. I highlighted any additional information provided within the surveys and interviews that was relevant to this program evaluation. I did not use any data analysis software to interpret the results from the survey or the interviews.

**Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this program evaluation I made every effort to conduct this research with ethical considerations given to the participants according to the guidelines of the State Department of Education Code of Ethics (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality), the Public Schools Office of Strategy Management of the district under study, the National Louis University Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) Criteria for Ethical Research (National Louis University, 2019), and the American Educational Research Association Code of Ethics (AERA Council, 2011).

Participation was voluntary for all invited participants, and no one was coerced to participate. The information I collected did not impact participants in an evaluative manner. I provided each participant with an invitation to participate in a program evaluation of one school’s instructional practices implementing the State Standards in third through fifth grades at our first face-to-face meeting at their school sites. I provided them with an Informed Consent form to sign and return at the meeting. Upon receiving the signed consent forms, I provided a copy of the paper survey, with a self-addressed envelope to return.

During the face to face meeting, I invited teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches to participate in semi-structured interviews to be scheduled at a separate time. I provided information regarding the research study and an Informed
Consent form. All information I collected was confidential, and participants could
discontinue their participation at any time throughout the process with no adverse
consequences.

The teachers' survey collection was anonymous and was solely dependent on the
participants returning a completed survey. The only indication of who returned the
surveys was that of the instructional coaches and the administrators as their surveys were
specifically noted based on the number of participants in those roles at the school site.
The teacher surveys were anonymous and I only asked about years of teaching and years
of teaching in a Title 1 economically disadvantaged school. There was no harm imposed
on any of the participants based on the survey input. The interviews addressed only
perceptions and experiences implementing the State Standards.

Limitations

The program evaluation limitations included my personal experiences regarding
my instructional practices with implementing the State Standards and my bias, as a
school administrator, on how I believed teachers should implement the standards. I
believed that teachers should go beyond the curriculum guides to implement rigorous
lessons using the State Standards as part of their instructional practices and that school
leaders should support the autonomy of this implementation. I also believed that teachers
in economically disadvantaged schools should identify a range of strategies that would
enhance their instructional practices to meet their students' needs. Another limitation
within this study was that the study was conducted at one school site, with a limited
number of teacher participants for both the survey and the interview.
Conclusion

I collected both quantitative and qualitative data for my program evaluation. The data were based on participant surveys, interviews, and state assessment data. These data contributed to a deep understanding of how instructional practices in implementing the State Standards impacted student achievement in economically disadvantaged schools. This understand may guide future implementation for students in economically disadvantaged schools.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The findings from my program evaluation provided answers to my research questions on the instructional practices of teachers who implement the State Standards in economically disadvantaged schools. I analyzed responses from interviews and surveys of teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. I compare these data with students' data in reading, math, and science as assessed on the State Standards Assessment in Grades 4 and 5 at the school under study from the 2017-2019 school years.

Findings

I separated my findings into three areas, surveys from teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators; interviews with teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators; and state testing data from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. The surveys were broken up into three parts using the Likert Scale as well as open-ended questions to offer opportunities for the participants to share information based on their experiences. Part One of each survey included questions regarding demographics for years of experience in teaching, coaching, and leading; years teaching, coaching, and leading in a Title 1/ Renaissance school; and lastly years of utilizing the State Standards as a teacher, coach, and school administrator. Renaissance schools are schools that have the highest number of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002) Part Two consisted of Likert Scale type statements about the state standards, and the number of statements ranged from six to 11 based on the participant role: teacher, instructional coach, or school leader. Part Three consisted of additional Likert Scale type statements on leadership support with the number of
statements ranging from two to four based on the participant role: teacher, instructional coach, or school leader. They were followed by open-ended questions. The findings begin with information provided in the surveys and interviews from each group and ending with the state testing data from the 2017-2019 school years.

**Surveys.** The sections below are based on the survey information collected from the teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators based on their personal experiences within their respective roles. Each participant group I surveyed were asked questions regarding demographics, experience in Title 1/Renaissance schools, and their knowledge of State Standards. I also asked a few open-ended questions to glean additional information.

**Teacher Surveys.** I provided twelve teachers surveys (See Appendix B) based on those who returned a signed consent form to participate; nine teachers returned the survey completed; resulting in a 75% return rate. Part One of the teacher survey was related to teacher demographics. On Question A, I asked, “How long have you been teaching?” The minimum teaching experience reported was three years for one teacher (noted on the survey), three teachers had six years of experience; one teacher had 16 to 20 years of experience; and four teachers reported having more than 21 years of experience in the classroom. On Question B, I asked, “How long have you taught in a Title 1/Renaissance School?” The minimum reported by one teacher was less than five years. Three teachers reported six to 10 years of experience; one teacher reported between 11 to 15 years; one reported 16 to 20 years, and three teachers reported having 21 or more years within a Title 1/Renaissance school. On Question C, I asked, “How long have you taught using the State Standards?” Four teachers reported having taught using the State Standards five
years or less; two teachers reported six to 10 years; one teacher reported 11 to 15 years; and two teachers reported 16 to 20 years.

On Part Two of the teacher survey, I surveyed teacher knowledge and skills using the State Standards. This section was comprised of six statements using the Likert Scale ratings of 1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4-Agree; and 5- Strongly Agree as possible responses. On Statement A, I prompted teachers with, “I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.” One teacher answered neutral, six teachers answered agreed; and two teachers answered that they strongly agreed about their working knowledge of the State Standards. On Statement B, I prompted teachers with, “I know how to align resources using the State Standards.” Eight out of nine teachers agreed that they knew how to align resources with the standards; and one teacher strongly agreed. On Statement C, I prompted teachers with, “I know how to design lessons that are based on State Standards.” Six out of nine teachers agreed, and three out of nine teachers strongly agreed that they could design lessons using the State Standards. On Statement D, I prompted with, “I know how to develop common assessments using the State Standards.” Eight out of nine teachers agreed, and one teacher strongly agreed. On survey Statement E, the teachers responded to “My district provides support in how to use the State Standards.” One teacher answered neutral; three answered agree, and four teachers answered strongly agree. On Statement F, I prompted teachers with, “The State Standards are difficult to understand.” One teacher strongly disagreed; five disagreed and three were neutral. Overall, with Statements A-F on teacher knowledge and use of the State Standards to plan, align, and develop assessments using the State Standards, the teachers’
responses showed that most of them agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good working knowledge of how to use the State Standards for instruction.

On Part 3 of the survey, teachers responded to statements about leadership support. Within this section I provided teachers two prompts. On Statement A, I prompted teachers with, “The leadership team helps me plan rigorous lessons using the State Standards.” One teacher disagreed; five teachers agreed with this statement and three teachers strongly agreed that they received help in planning rigorous instruction using the State Standards. On Statement B, I prompted teachers with, “The leadership team understands the State Standards.” One teacher stated neutral, one teacher agreed with this statement; seven teachers strongly agreed that their leadership team understood the State Standards.

I asked teachers three additional open-ended questions based on their experiences. On Question 1, I asked, “What types of planning resources do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” The overarching theme highlighted by teachers in this section was that they needed materials that are rich in text, strategies, tools for analyzing student work, and other resources such as printers to meet the needs of their students, so that all students could have access to the learning materials. They also said they believed that they needed resources that allowed them to assess the different needs, learning styles, and types of learners to construct viable assessments using the State Standards. Question 2 was, “What types of professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” The overarching topics needed for professional development perceived by teachers were rigor and engagement, culturally relevant/equity, unpacking
standards, collaborative planning, and assessment for student achievement. Question 3 was, “Is there anything else you would like me to know?” This provided teachers the opportunity to share any other experiences that may be helpful to me. Two themes stood out the most, with one regarding behavior and lack of a schoolwide discipline plan. Some of the participants believed behavior contributed to a loss of instruction for their entire classes and that school leaders did not provide adequate and fair consequences for student misbehavior. The second most common response was that teachers were not preparing students with disabilities optimal learning for the home environment from which they came. One teacher expressed concerns that the students who were at high risk academically (ESE or ELL) and lived in poverty often underperformed on district and state assessments because their teachers lacked knowledge on how to differentiate their instruction and make it suitable for all students to learn.

**Instructional coach surveys.** There were two instructional coaches at the site who participated in the survey. Part One of the instructional coach survey was related to teaching demographics. On Question A, I asked, “How long have you been a teacher?” The minimum teaching experience reported was six to 10 years for one coach, and the second coach with 16 to 20 years of experience. On Question B, I asked, “How long have you been an instructional coach?” Both reported five years or less. On Question C, I asked, “How long have you led/taught in a Title 1/Renaissance School?” Both coaches shared six to 10 years of experience. On Question D, I asked, “How long have you implemented instruction programs at your school?” One coach answered five years or less, and the second coach answered six to 10 years.
Part Two of the instructional coach survey was about the State Standards, and the coaches responded to seven statements on the Likert Scale related to their knowledge of the standards, teacher knowledge of the standards, and their roles as coaches with helping teachers plan lessons using the State Standards. On Statement A, I prompted the coaches with, “I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.” Both coaches agreed that they had a good working knowledge of the State Standards. On Statement B, I said, “Teachers know how to align resources using the State Standards.” One coach disagreed, while the other coach answered neutral on teachers aligning resources using the State Standards. In Statement C, I said, “Teachers know how to design lessons that are based on the State Standards.” Both coaches answered neutral on the teachers’ ability to design lessons using the State Standards. On Statement D, I prompted the coaches with, “Teachers know how to develop common assessments using the State Standards.” One coach answered neutral. The other coach disagreed that teachers knew how to develop common assessments using the State Standards. On Statement E, I said, “The district provides support to teachers in how to use the State Standards.” Both coaches agreed that support was given by the district. On statement F, I said, “The State Standards are difficult to understand.” One coach answered neutral, and the other coach agreed that some of the standards were difficult for the teachers to understand. On statement G, I said, “As the instructional coach I plan rigorous lessons with the teachers at my school.” One coach answered neutral and the other coach agreed that she helped plan rigorous lessons with their teachers.

In Part Three of the survey, I referenced leadership support. In this portion of the survey, I provided four additional Likert Scale type statements about the support
provided by leaders. For Statements A-C, I made the following statements, “Teachers at my school are given support to use other resources to implement instruction.” “The leadership supports teachers by utilizing resources suggested by the district.” “The professional development provided to teachers help them implement instruction autonomously.” Both coaches agreed with this support. On Statement D, I said, “My administrator decides how instruction will be implemented at our school to improve student achievement.” One coach disagreed and the other answered neutral.

I then asked, instructional coaches three open-ended questions based on their personal experiences. The first question was, “What types of planning resources do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with State Standards?” Coach 1 answered accountability for planning discussions, instructional guides, and data to show teachers' understanding of the standards and their students' knowledge. Coach 2 answered scheduled planning days for specific content and coaches and optional planning support templates. Question 2 was, “What types of professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” Coach 1 answered, “Professional development that identifies what both rigor and engagement look and sound like within the classroom.” Coach 2 answered, “Professional development on backward lesson planning design, questioning and discussion, assessment techniques for before/during/after learning; as well as professional development geared towards data analysis and next steps.” Question 3 was, “Is there anything else you would like me to know?” Coach 1 left this question blank. Coach 2 answered “Teacher motivation and determination to see change within schools like ours and within our communities. Thinking outside the box required a mindset shift.”
Gershenson and Papageorge (2018), said attitudes and beliefs about a student’s ability to learn makes a difference in how successful a student will be within the classroom environment.

**Administrator surveys.** For the administrator survey, I interviewed both the principal and the former assistant principal. Part One of the survey addressed leadership demographics and their experience within Title 1/Renaissance schools. The survey question asked, “How long have you been in leadership?” The minimum years of experience were 0-5 years. The maximum reported was more than 21 years as a site-based administrator (the participant indicated this on the survey). On Question B, I asked, “How many years have you lead or taught in a Title 1/Renaissance school?” The minimum experience reported was six to 10 years, and the maximum reported was 21 plus years teaching and leading in a Title 1/Renaissance school. In Question C, I asked, “How long had you taught prior to becoming an administrator?” Both administrators had six to 15 years of experience within the classroom prior to becoming administrators. On Question D, I asked, “How long had you implemented the State Standards at your schools?” One administrator reported six to 10 years and the second administrator reported 16 to 20 years of implementing the State Standards at their schools.

On Part Two of the administrator survey I asked the administrators to respond to six statements about the State Standards using a Likert Scale. In statement A, I said, “I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.” Both administrators agreed that they had a good working knowledge of the State Standards. Statement B was, “My teachers know how to align resources using the State Standards.” Both administrators answered neutral as to whether their teachers knew how to align resources using the State
Standards. Statement C was, “My teachers know how to design lessons using the State Standards.” One administrator answered neutral and the other administrator agreed that teachers knew how to design lessons using the State Standards. In Statement D, I said, “My teachers know how to develop common assessments using the State Standards.” One administrator disagreed with this statement and the other answered neutral on whether teachers knew how to develop common assessments using the State Standards. For Statement E, I prompted the administrators with, “The district supports teachers in how to use the State Standards.” They answered neutral or agreed to whether the district supports teachers in using the State Standards. The survey Statement F was, “Some of the State Standards are difficult for teachers to understand.” Both administrators responded with agree or strongly agree, as to some of the State Standards being difficult for teachers to understand.

Part Three of the survey was about leadership support using the Likert Scale. Statement A was, “The leadership team prefers that teachers plan using the State Standards.” Both leaders agreed or strongly agreed that the leadership team preferred teachers plan their instruction using the State Standards. Statement B was, “Teachers at my school are encouraged to use other resources to implement instruction at the school. Both administrators strongly agreed that teachers were encouraged to use other resources to implement instruction at their school. Statement C was, “The professional development offered at their sites help teachers implement instruction autonomously.” One administrator answered neutral. The other agreed that the professional development provided to teachers helped them implement instruction autonomously.
The administrators were then asked four open-ended questions based on their personal experiences. The first question I asked was, “What types of planning resources do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” Administrator 1 answered: content-rich reading curriculum and rich text to improve vocabulary for students in poverty. Administrator 2 answered: strong academic coaches have specific skills and knowledge of interpersonal skills to prepare and motivate teachers, in addition to time to conduct, lead, and train teachers.

In Question 2, I asked, “What type of professional development do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” Administrator 1 answered: the new reading curriculum and suggested Expeditionary Learning (EL Education, 2020) and Core Knowledge (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2020). Administrator 1 also suggested additional training with follow up from leadership and coaches. Administrator 2 answered: professional development that explains the standards, the hierarchy of the content, and understanding true engagement.

In Question 3, I asked, “What is or should be the role of the school leadership in supporting teachers in their autonomy to plan lessons and implement?” Administrator 1 stated that “Leadership should provide teachers and students resources to be successful.” Administrator 2 said that “Leadership should design schedules that permit time to plan collaboratively; personnel skilled in specific subject areas and methods to teach; recruit and secure personnel who willing continue their learning and feel responsible for the learning of their peers.”

In Question 4, I asked if the administrators had any other information to provide the researcher. Administrator 2 stated that “Money is always needed to counter
limitations resulting from the contract. Teachers often do not want to plan based on the additional time needed to put in the work.”

**Interviews.** For the interviews, I sampled three different groups based on the informed consents returned. Eleven teachers expressed an interest to participate in the interview; however, ten participated and returned signed informed consent forms. For the leadership team, all four participants agreed to participate, the two instructional coaches and the two administrators.

**Teacher interviews.** On the teacher interview questions, I focused on implementation of the State Standards through planning, understanding, and developing assessments. I also looked at professional development, support from leadership and the instructional coaches. I asked the teachers a total of 10 questions; one question I omitted based on its close alignment to a question on assessment.

On Question 1 of the teacher interview, I asked, “How well do you understand the State Standards? Please explain.” One hundred percent of the teachers agreed that they had a good understanding of the standards and liked how the standards were broken down for them. Twenty percent of those teachers mentioned that using the Blauman and Burke (2014) text was especially helpful in describing teacher actions and student actions for each standard. This was a guide that helped teachers understand the standards, types of questions, and expectations for student learning about the standard when teaching.

On Question 2, I asked, “When planning instruction, how do you align assessments to the State Standards?” Sixty percent of the teachers responded that they aligned assessments with the curriculum or what students had previously learned; 20% of the teachers used the SSA item specifications to create questions or the learning objective
On Question 3, I asked teachers, “What types of professional development have you taken in the last two years that have improved your understanding of the State Standards? Explain.” Thirty percent of the teachers stated that their most recent trainings were that of iReady, National Board, or Common Core State Standards at the time of its inception; 20% of the teachers reflected on standards-based training taken at their previous schools; and the remaining 50% had either taken only a content specific training, behavior training, or only what was required of them at the start of onboarding upon being hired into the district.

Question 4 was, “Have any of the professional trainings you received resulted in follow-up coaching cycles with your instructional coaches? Explain.” Forty percent of the teachers acknowledged that they received this help initially until testing season came around and then the coaching support was pulled away from the teachers of primary grades and was devoted to testing of students in the intermediate grades; or that there was little follow up between the coaches and the administration after professional development was given. The other 60% explained that the coaches were helpful in modeling a lesson, providing feedback, and helping them to identify strengths and weaknesses of the lesson taught.

For Questions 5-8, I asked the teachers questions related to the role of support provided by their instructional coaches in the areas of explaining, planning, scheduling, and helping them to differentiate lessons utilizing the State Standards. On Question 5, I asked, “How helpful were your instructional coaches when it came to explaining the State
Standards to you?” One hundred percent of teachers interviewed stated that the coaches were knowledgeable about the standards and could explain them.

On Question 6, I asked, “How helpful were your instructional coaches when it came to scheduling coaching cycles with you?” Eighty percent of the teachers stated that the “coaches were helpful, approachable, and committed”; however, 20% of the teachers stated that not all of the veteran teachers received support they needed or there was no clear schedule or follow-up from the coaches.

On Question 7, I asked, “How often have your instructional coaches worked with you to plan differentiated lessons for your students?” Fifty percent of the teachers stated they met with their coaches to plan weekly; 10% of the teachers stated once or twice a month, or more often at the beginning of the year; 30% stated either alone, very little, or it was inconsistent, and they often left with nothing planned; and 10% indicated that depending on the time available the instructional coach worked with them to plan differentiated lessons.

On Question 8, I asked “How often have your instructional coaches assisted with small groups to improve proficiency?” Forty percent of the teachers relayed that assistance occurred weekly or twice a month depending on district assessments, MTSS interventions, and district training; 60% relayed that assistance happened very little, only for their content area, IEP goals, or the needs of students.

On Question 9, I asked, “In what ways do you feel your administration has an understanding or working knowledge of the State Standards?” In response, 100% of the teachers stated that the administrators had a working knowledge of the standards, led data
chats with facts, provided teachers with solutions, and were skilled in various areas of the standards.

Question 10 was, “Is there anything else you would like to tell me?” For this question teachers provided a variety of responses to add context towards their instructional practices using the State Standards. Some of their responses included the following:

- Vertical planning as key for schools with high turnover,
- Identifying vocabulary students need to know,
- Balance for both primary and intermediate teachers who could benefit from coaching- teachers need more support,
- Professional development on culturally relevant teaching and training on how to teach students of color.

**Instructional Coach interviews.** Through the instructional coaches’ interview questions, I focused on teacher planning and coaching utilizing the State Standards, professional development, and support from leadership. I asked the coaches eight questions and both coaches participated in the interview. Since the coaches were responsible for different subject areas within the same content, as one teaches reading and the other writing, I referred to them as Coach 1 and Coach 2 in this section of this chapter.

On Question 1, I asked, “How often are you able to help teachers plan lessons and common assessments using the State Standards?” Coach 1 stated, “Teachers sought help for learning targets and with question and discussion techniques. Then they became overwhelmed and no longer wanted help.” Coach 2 stated, “In the past, I always worked
with teachers in fourth and fifth grades, and K-3 at the beginning of the year. Currently, I do not meet with teachers as often and how well they are assessing the standards.”

On Question 2, I asked, “Do you feel the teachers you support have a working knowledge of the State Standards?” Coach 1 said, “On a scale of 1-5, they have some knowledge, but there’s room for interpretation and that may not be the best for teachers.” Coach 2 said, “Some, those that do create lessons that allow them to assess students and the opportunity to see what they need. Others, not so much because they do not have comfort with the content and are reluctant to try or become overwhelmed and push it aside.”

On Question 3, I asked, “In your opinion, are the teachers planning lessons that will lead to proficiency on the State Standards Assessment? Explain.” Coach 1 stated, “No, because there is a lack of rigorous lessons planned. Learning is still more teacher directed than the time given for students to take ownership.” Coach 2 stated, “If teachers can meet the focus of the lesson, it gives them the opportunity to practice regularly and give feedback to their students.”

On question 4, I asked, “What types of professional development have you offered to teachers that would help them improve their practices as teachers?” Coach 1 stated:

Planning, the Danielson Framework (Danielson, 2007) helps teachers to understand the connections between the two. I have facilitated Culturally Relevant PD one on one with teachers depending on the teacher’s goals for that lesson; data PD, and last year Visible Learning (Fisher et al., 2016) was the highlight of PD because it brought attention to effect size.”
Coach 2 stated, “I have facilitated the writing rubric training, which is based on the State Standards Assessment. For K-2 teachers, training involves teaching with crafts for traditional writers’ workshop, and data to target student needs.”

For Question 5, I asked, “When completing coaching cycles with your teachers, have you noticed any change in the way future instruction and planning is implemented using the State Standards? Explain.” Coach 1 stated, “Unfortunately, no, because coaching cycles were not started and ended as they should.” Coach 2 stated, “Yes, I noticed a change in their confidence and the way they were teaching being honest with students. There was change in the data, where it was noticeable that students were applying the craft and teachers could identify it.”

Question 6 was, “How does your administrator support your expertise in helping teachers align instruction using the State Standards?” Coach 1 stated, “They allow for autonomy, and they are good listeners, very supportive. They encouraged the hard conversations with the teachers; that was not always the best for me as the messenger but geared towards teacher development.” Coach 2 stated, “They are very supportive and encouraging; they allow one to one conversation and holding some accountable.”

On Question 7, I asked, “What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” Coach 1 stated, “At the beginning of the year, we were all on the same page. Administration should convey for teachers; teachers should be leading planning and integrating PD with technology.” Coach 2 stated:

Vocabulary, use of background knowledge and comprehension when applying reading standards to show a blend of it across the curriculums, especially for
students in low SES (socioeconomic status) schools. We must embed perseverance because they struggle to go beyond the standards to get them there. Differentiated strategies on how to gather specific things about students.

Question 10 was, “Is there anything else you would like to tell me?” For this question, the instructional coaches provided a variety of responses to add context toward teacher instructional practices using the State Standards. Coach 1 stated:

I am fearful that the new State Standards will pose a whole new set of challenges because there is a potential for lack of rigor. How do we build student engagement and teacher buy-in requiring them to be critical thinking and whether we are building life-long learners?”

Coach 2 stated:

Both as a Peer Evaluator and now as a coach, I saw the difference in how students at our school compared to other schools have a different set of vocabulary and backgrounds. Our students lack the technology, equal opportunity, and exposure that students at higher SES schools have. They need a fair game on the same playing field. Their parents are trying but they also need the support to help their kids.”

Administrator interviews. The administrator interview questions focused on teacher planning, assessment, professional development, and administrators’ observations of teacher practice utilizing the State Standards, including the challenges and successes. I asked both administrators eight questions, and both administrators participated in the interview. Since the administrators were responsible for leading instruction, monitoring
student learning, and teacher development based on the standards, for the interviews, I referred to them as Admin 1 and Admin 2 in the survey section of this chapter.

On Question 1, I asked, “What have you observed as a challenge that your teachers have when designing lessons using the State Standards?” Admin 1 stated, “Planning could be spent using questioning of the objectives, not looking at the text for the first time. Placing the ownership on kids and doing less teacher talk and getting the kids to collaborate.” Admin 2 stated:

There is a lack of understanding for the learning required and what the outcomes should [look] like (rigor needed). Teachers often do not understand the continuity of content or the progression from grade to grade beyond the current grade they teach.

On Question 2, I asked, “What are some of the successes you have observed with your teachers when designing lessons using the State Standards?” Admin 1 stated, “With remote learning, teachers are collaborating with coaches.” Admin 2 expressed, “The willingness to search for answers or other resources.”

For Questions 3-5, I asked the administrators questions related to professional development, the way professional development is offered, and the observed application of the training within their classrooms. On Question 3, I asked, “In what ways do you feel that the professional development offered by the district is prescribed to help your teachers or is differentiated to help teachers needing to implement rigorous lessons using the State Standards?” Admin 1 stated, “The district is good on planning task alignment and assessment. However, what is defined as rigorous? What does it mean or look like…? What does it look like when planning?” Admin 2 stated:
Not at all. It is up to teachers based on their professional development need; their individual professional development plan; or during teacher evaluations with principals. Nothing monitors the connection or requirement between PD and practice. Systems put in place in other areas monitor next steps. Other than that, there is no accountability.”

Question 4 was, “In what ways have you required that teachers meet with you or the instructional coaches to reflect on professional development offered at your site?” Admin 1 stated, “We surveyed our teachers to create a protocol and wanted action steps; teachers identified what was needed.” Admin 2 stated, “None other than meeting with non-tenured teachers to make an informal plan or how they want it to reflect.”

Question 5 was, “In what ways have you observed your teachers apply the learning within their classrooms and share their results?” Admin 1 stated, “During remote learning admin, when [they] attended the planning sessions, they provided support to coaches. It is seen in walkthroughs and maintains fidelity. This was something I had not done all year.” Admin 2 stated, “If it is not a program everyone is using, then we observe them to see how it is applied.” She also relayed that sometimes the program vendor provided additional follow-up, but not the teachers by choice. Hence, there was no fidelity unless the learning was initiated at the school, by school personnel. There was an opportunity to allow for safe practice and monitoring.

On Question 6, I asked, “As the instructional leader at your site, what is your understanding of the State Standards, and what do you expect when looking at teacher instructional practices?” Admin 1 stated:
The State Standards are supposed to assess problem solving, critical thinking, and building students’ skill. It is our curriculum, and it drives everything we do, and for our students it gives guidance to teachers on what students need to learn and apply over time. Teachers should plan with the standards in mind, not as an afterthought. Example: Text first- find the resources that align with the standard.

Admin 2 stated, “The State Standards are a subset of the national standards. My expectation is that teachers understand the critical learning and how they build on another and design instruction that would engage students.”

Question 7 was, “What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?” Admin 1 stated, “Depends on teachers and what is needed. Teachers should collaborate with coaches for teacher planning and clarity. Does the task align with the standard? Is it rigorous? We need more examples of what rigor looks like.” Admin 2 stated, “The resource of time, human capital, knowledge of culture, teacher collaboration, and reward system that motivates collaboration.”

Question 8 was “Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?” For this question, the administrator 1 provided a variety of responses to add context towards their perceptions on teacher instructional practices using the State Standards. Admin 1 stated:

I am concerned about our standards now. The reading data is stagnated within the district, and we need a different approach in ELA for economically disadvantaged students. Resources always go to the intermediate grades and not primary. With a lack of quality texts and building background knowledge to promote citizenship,
standards do not promote that; but a text first curriculum that focuses on vocabulary and builds background knowledge could.

**Testing data 2017-2019.** This section of the research focused on the testing data for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. The data included reading and math for students in Grades 3-5, writing in Grades 4-5, and science in Grade 5 based on the State Standards Assessment (SSA). The data identified the points earned by each category tested within the subject areas and the performance level for the school, district, and state levels on the SSA.

**Reading data.** Table 1 illustrates the third-grade reading data on the 2018 SSA. As part of my analysis, I compared the state, district, and school data based on the mean (average) points earned by category on the SSA. On the third grade reading SSA there were four categories in which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency, if they earned the possible points in that category. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details (15 possible points), craft and structure (16 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (eight possible points); and language and editing tasks (11 possible points). Table 1 shows that 221,791 third graders were tested across the state on the 2018 SSA; the district tested 17,900 students; and the school tested 58 students. Under the category for key details, the state and the district earned an average of 8/15 points, and the school earned an average of 7/15 points possible. Under craft and structure, the state earned an average of 10/16 points; the district and the school earned an average of 9/16 points. For integration of knowledge and ideas, the state and the district earned an average of 4/8 points, and the school earned an average of 3/8 points. For the language and editing tasks, the state earned an average of 8/11 points; and the district and
the school earned an average of 7/11 points possible within this area. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the category for integrating knowledge and ideas with the school at 38% (3/8) of the points possible, and the district and the state at 50% (4/8) of the points possible. The school-wide scores were lower than the state-wide scores in all four categories.

Table 1.

*Mean Points Earned by Content Area for Third Grade Reading in 2018 on the SSA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students and Mean Points by Content Area</th>
<th>Number Points of Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>221,791</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,990</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 2 shows the 2019 SSA third grade reading data and the mean points earned by content area. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details (15 possible points), craft and structure (17 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (12 possible points); and language and editing tasks (six possible points). Table 2 shows that 216,823 third graders across the state were tested on the 2019 SSA; the district under study tested 17,761 students; and the school under study tested 74 students. Under the category for key details, the students across the state earned an average of 8/15 points; students in the district under study earned an average of 7/15 points; and students at the school under study earned an average of 5/15 points. Under craft and structure, the state
and the district earned an average of 10/17 points, and the school earned an average of 8/17 points. For integration of knowledge and ideas, the state earned an average of 6/12 points, the district earned an average of 5/12 points, and the school earned an average of 4/12 points. For the language and editing tasks, the state and the district earned an average of 5/6 points, and the school earned an average of 4/6 points possible within this area. The lowest areas for points earned for the state, school, and the district were in two categories: integrating knowledge and ideas and key idea and details. For integrating knowledge and ideas, the school was at 33% (4/12) of the points possible, the district was at 42% (5/12), and the state was at 50% (6/12) of the points possible; and for the category of key idea and details, the school was at 33% (5/15) points; the district was at 46% (7/15) points possible; and the state was at 53% (8/15) points possible. The school was below the state average in all four categories.

Table 2.

Mean Points Earned by Content Area Third Grade Reading on the SSA in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Points of Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>216,823</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,761</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 3 shows the 2018 SSA fourth grade reading and writing data and the mean points earned by content area. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details
(15 possible points), craft and structure (13 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (13 possible points), language and editing tasks (13 possible points), and text-based writing (10 possible points). Table 3 shows that 213,895 fourth graders were tested across the state on the 2018 SSA; the district tested 16,957 students; and the school tested 61 students. Under the category for key details, the state and the district earned an average of 7/15 points; the school earned an average of 6/15 points possible. Under craft and structure, the state, district, and the school earned an average of 8/13 possible points. For integration of knowledge and ideas, the state, district, and the school earned an average of 6/13 points possible. For the language and editing tasks, the state and the district earned an average of 9/13 points; and the school earned 8/13 an average of points. Under text-based writing the state, district, and the school earned an average of 5/10 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district were in two categories: key ideas and details and text-based writing. For key ideas and details, the state and the district earned 47% (7/15) of the points possible, and the school earned 40% (6/15) of the points possible; in the second category for text-based writing, the state, district, and the school earned 50% (5/10) of the points possible. The school underperformed the state and district in two of the categories.
Table 3.

4th Grade Reading and Writing Data SSA in 2018: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students and Mean Points by Content Area</th>
<th>Number Points of Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
<th>Text Based Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>213,895</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,957</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 4 shows the 2019 SSA fourth grade reading and writing data and the mean points earned by content area. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details (15 possible points), craft and structure (13 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (13 possible points); language and editing tasks (13 possible points), and text-based writing (10 possible points). Table 4 shows that 211,342 fourth graders were tested across the state on the 2019 SSA; the district tested 16,966 students; and the school tested 51 students. Under the category for key details, the state earned an average of 8/15 points, the district earned an average of 7/15 points; and the school earned an average of 6/15 points. Under craft and structure, the state and the district earned an average of 9/13 points, and the school earned an average of 7/13 points. Under text-based writing the state earned an average of 5/10 points, the district earned an average of
6/10 points, and the school earned an average of 4/10 points. For the 2019 SSA the school scored 1-2 points lower than the state and the district in all areas assessed on the reading and writing assessments. The school underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 4.

4th Grade Reading and Writing SSA in-2019: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Points of Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
<th>Text Based Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,342</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,966</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 5 shows the 2018 SSA fifth grade reading and writing data and the mean points earned by content area. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details (15 possible points), craft and structure (13 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (12 possible points); language and editing tasks (10 possible points), and text-based writing (10 possible points). Table 5 shows that 209,371 fifth graders were tested across the state on the 2018 SSA; the district tested 16,711 students; and the school tested 66 students. Under the category for key details, the state and the district earned an average of 8/15 points, and the school earned an average of 7/15 points. Under craft and structure, the state and the district earned an average of 9/13 points, and the school earned an average of 8/13 points. For integration of knowledge and ideas, the state and the
district earned an average of 7/12 points, and the school earned an average of 6/12 points. For the language and editing tasks, the state, district, and the school earned an average of 7/10 points. Under text-based writing, the state earned an average of 6/10 points, the district and the school an average of 5/10 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district were seen in two categories: key ideas and details and text-based writing. For key ideas and details, the state and the district earned 53% (8/15) of the points possible, the school earned 46% (7/15) of the points possible; in the category for text-based writing, the state earned 60% (6/10) of the points possible, and the district and the school earned 50% (5/10) of the points possible.

Table 5.

5th Grade Reading & Writing SSA in 2018: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
<th>Text Based Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>209,371</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,711</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 6 shows the 2019 SSA fifth grade student reading and writing data and the mean points earned by content area. Students were assessed in these areas: key ideas and details (18 possible points), craft and structure (15 possible points), integration of knowledge and ideas (10 possible points); language and editing tasks (7 possible points), and text-based writing (10 possible points). Table 6 shows that 218,818 fifth graders were
tested on the 2019 SSA; the district tested 17,197 students; and the school tested 65 students. Under the category for key details, the state earned an average of 9/18 points possible, the district earned an average of 8/18 points; and the school earned an average of 7/18 points. Under craft and structure, the state, district, and the school earned an average of 10/15 points. For integration of knowledge and ideas, the state and the district earned an average of 5/10 points, and the school earned an average of 4/10 points. For the language and editing tasks, the state and the district earned an average of 6/7 points, and the school earned an average of 5/7 points. Under text-based writing, the state, district, and the school earned an average of 6/10 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district were seen in two categories: key ideas and details and integration of knowledge and ideas. For key ideas and details, the state earned 50% (9/18) of the points possible; the district earned 44% (8/18) of the points possible, and the school earned 39% (7/18) points possible; in the second category of integration of knowledge and ideas, the state and the district earned 50% (5/10) of the points possible, and the school earned 40% (4/10) of the points possible.
Table 6.

Mean Points Earned by Content Area in 5th Grade Reading and Writing SSA in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>Craft and Structure</th>
<th>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</th>
<th>Language and Editing Tasks</th>
<th>Text Based Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State 218,818</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 17,197</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 65</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Mathematics Data

Table 7 identifies the third grade data on the 2018 math SSA. As part of my analysis, I compared the state, district, and school data based on the mean (average) points earned by category on the SSA. On the third-grade math SSA there were three categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations, algebraic thinking, numbers in base ten (26 points possible); and numbers and operations-fractions (9 points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (19 points possible). Table 7 shows that 220,988 third graders were tested on the 2018 SSA statewide; the district tested 18,150 students; and the school tested 58 students. Under the category for operations, algebraic thinking, numbers in base ten, students across the state earned an average of 20/26 points, students across the district earned an average of 18/26 points, and students at the school earned an average of 17/26 points. Under the category of numbers and operations-fractions, the students across the state earned an average of 6/9 points, and students across the district
under study and at the school under study earned an average of 5/9 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the students across the state earned an average of 11/19 points, students across the district under study earned an average of 10/19 points, and students at the school under study earned an average of 9/19 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district were in the measurement, data, and geometry category. Students across the state earned an average of 57% (11/19) of the points possible, students across the district under study earned an average of 52% (10/19) of the points possible, and students at the school under study earned an average of 47% (9/19) of the points possible. The school under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 7.

3rd Grade Math SSA in 2018: Mean Points by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking, Numbers in Base Ten</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State 220,988</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District 18,150</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 58</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 8 identifies that 216,371 third graders were tested on the 2019 math SSA in the state; the district tested 17,764 students; and the school tested 72 students. On the 2019 third grade math SSA there were three categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations, algebraic thinking, numbers in base ten (27 points possible); numbers and operations-
fractions (nine points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (19 points possible). Under the category for operations, algebraic thinking, numbers in base ten, the state earned an average of 19/27 points, the district earned an average of 18/27 points, and the school under study earned an average of 15/27 points. Under numbers and operations-fractions, the state earned an average of 6/9 points, the district earned an average of 5/9 points, and the school under study earned an average of 4/9 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the state earned an average of 12/19 points, the district earned an average of 11/19 points, and the school under study earned an average 8/19 points. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the measurement, data, and geometry category. The state earned 63% (12/19) of the points possible, the district earned 57% (11/19) of the points possible, and the school earned 42% (8/19) of the points possible. The school under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 8.

3rd Grade Math SSA in-2019: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking, Numbers in Base Ten</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State 216,371</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District 17,764</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 9 identifies 215,383 fourth graders were tested on the 2018 math SSA in the state; the district tested 17,184 students; and the school tested 61 students. On the 2018
fourth grade math SSA there were four categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations and algebraic thinking (11 points); numbers in base ten (11 points possible); numbers and operations-fractions (14 points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (18 points possible). Under the category for operations and algebraic thinking, the state earned an average of 8/11 points, and the district and the school under study earned an average of 7/11 points. For numbers in base ten, the state earned an average of 8/11 points, the district earned an average of 7/11 points, and the school under study earned an average of 6/11 points. Under numbers and operations-fractions, the state earned an average of 9/14 points, the district earned an average of 8/14 points, and the school under study earned an average of 7/14 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the state and the district earned an average of 11/18 points, and the school under study earned an average of 9/18 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the measurement, data, and geometry category. The state and the district earned 61% (11/18) of the points possible, and the school earned 50% (9/18) points possible. The school under study underperformed the state in all categories.
Table 9.

4th Grade Math SSA in 2018: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking</th>
<th>Numbers in Base Ten</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>215,383</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020.

Table 10 illustrates that 210,377 fourth graders were tested on the 2019 math SSA in the state; the district tested 17,019 students; and the school tested 55 students. On the 2019 fourth grade math SSA there were four categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations and algebraic thinking (11 points); numbers in base ten (11 points possible); numbers and operations-fractions (14 points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (18 points possible). Under the category for operations and algebraic thinking, the state earned an average of 7/11 possible points, the district earned an average of 6/11 points, and the school under study earned an average of 5/11 points. For numbers in base ten, the state and the district earned an average of 7/11 points, and the school under study earned an average of 6/11 points. Under numbers and operations-fractions, the state and the district earned an average of 8/14 points, and the school under study earned an average of 6/14 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the state and the district earned 11/18 points, and the school earned 8/18 points. The lowest areas of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the numbers and operations with fractions.
category. The state and the district earned 61% (11/18) of the points possible, and the school earned 44% (8/18) of the points possible. The district under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 10.

4th Grade Math SSA in 2019: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking</th>
<th>Numbers in Base Ten</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State 210,377</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District 17,019</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 55</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 11 illustrates 211,705 fifth graders were tested on the 2018 math SSA in the state, the district tested 16,884 students, and the school tested 66 students. On the 2018 fifth grade math SSA there were three categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations, algebraic thinking, and fractions (22 points); numbers and operation, numbers in base ten (15 points possible); numbers and operations-fractions (15 points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (18 points possible). Under the category for operations, algebraic thinking and fractions, the state earned an average of 12/22 points; the district earned an average of 11/22 points; and the school under study earned an average of 9/22 points. For numbers and operations and numbers in base ten, the state earned 9/15 points, the district earned 8/15 points, and the school earned 6/15 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the state and the district earned 9/18 points, and the school earned 7/18
points. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the measurement, data, and geometry category. The state and the district earned 50% (9/18) of the points possible, and the school earned 39% (7/18) of the points possible for proficiency on this section of the 2018 SSA math assessment. The district under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 11.

5th Grade Math SSA in 2018: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking</th>
<th>Numbers in Base Ten</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,705</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,884</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020.

Table 12 illustrates 219,218 fifth graders were tested on the 2019 math SSA in the state; the district tested 17,247 students; and the school tested 64 students. On the 2019 fifth grade math SSA there were three categories on which students were assessed and could demonstrate proficiency. Students were assessed in these areas: operations, algebraic thinking, and fractions (21 points); numbers and operation, numbers in base ten (15 points possible); numbers and operations-fractions (15 points possible); and measurement, data, and geometry (18 points possible). Under the category for operations, algebraic thinking and fractions, the state and the district earned an average of 11/21 points, and the school under study earned an average of 8/21 points.
For numbers and operations and numbers in base ten, the state and the district earned an average of 9/15 points, and the school under study earned an average of 7/15 points. For measurement, data, and geometry, the state and the district earned an average of 9/18 points, and the school under study earned an average of 7/18 points. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the measurement, data, and geometry category. The state and the district earned 50% (9/18) of the points possible, and the school earned 39% (7/18) of the points possible for proficiency on this section of the 2019 SSA math assessment; this was also the same mean points earned in this category on the 2018 SSA. The school under study underperformed the district in all categories.

Table 12.

5th Grade Math SSA in 2019: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Operations, Algebraic Thinking</th>
<th>Numbers &amp; Operations-Fractions</th>
<th>Measurement, Data &amp; Geometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>219,218</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,247</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Science data. The following tables identify data for the science SSA that was only administered to fifth graders. The science SSA assessed all content taught from grades K-5 and assessed four areas: nature of science (10 points possible), earth and space science (16 points possible), physical science (16 points possible), and life science (14 points possible). The assessment was layered in reading comprehension and
application of science content. Table 13 illustrates that 211,927 fifth graders were tested on the 2018 science SSA in the state, the district tested 16,797 students, and the school tested 67 students.

Under the life science area, the state and the district earned an average of 7/10 points, and the school under study earned an average of 6/10 points. For earth and space science, the state and the district earned an average of 10/16 points, and the school under study earned an average of 9/16 points for this category. Under physical science the state earned an average of 12/16 points, the district earned an average of 11/16 points, and the school under study earned an average of 10/16 points. For life science, the state and the district earned an average of 10/14 points, and the school under study earned an average of 9/14 points. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district was in the earth and space science category. The state and the district earned 63% (10/16) of the points possible, and the school earned 56% (9/16) of the points possible for proficiency on this section of the 2018 SSA science assessment. The school under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 13.

5th Grade Science SSA in 2018: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Science</th>
<th>Earth and Space Science</th>
<th>Physical Science</th>
<th>Life Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points Possible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,927</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,797</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020
Table 14 identifies 218,715 fifth graders were tested on the 2019 science SSA in the state, the district tested 17,201 students, and the school tested 65 students. Under the life science area, the state and the district earned an average of 7/10 points, and the school under study earned an average of 5/10 points. For earth and space science, the state and the district earned an average of 11/16 points; and the school under study earned an average of 9/16 points for this category. Under physical science, the state and the district earned an average of 11/16 points, and the school under study earned an average of 9/16 points. For life science, the state earned an average of 10/14 points, the district earned an average of 9/14 points, and the school under study earned an average of 8/14 points. The lowest area of points earned for the state, school, and the district were in earth and space science and the physical science categories. The state and the district earned 69% (11/16) of the points possible respectively in both areas, and the school earned 56% (9/16) points in both areas on the 2019 SSA science assessment. The school under study underperformed the state in all categories.

Table 14.

5th Grade Science SSA in 2019: Mean Points Earned by Content Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Nature of Science</th>
<th>Earth and Space Science</th>
<th>Physical Science</th>
<th>Life Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students and Points by Content Area</td>
<td>State 218,715</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 17,201</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 65</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020
Achievement Level Points

The proficiency level scores on the State Standards Assessment (SSA) ranged from a level 1 to level 5; level 1 - inadequate; level 2 - below satisfactory; level 3 - satisfactory; level 4 - proficient; and level 5 - mastery (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). An achievement level 3 on the SSA indicated the student had passed the test and met the requirements for that course. The score, however, did not indicate that the student was proficient in that subject area. Tables 15-21 show the percentage of points for each achievement level on the 2018 and 2019 SSA in reading and in writing among fourth and fifth grade students, in math among students in Grades 3-5 five, and in science for students in Grade 5 only.

Reading achievement. Table 15 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA third grade reading assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 57%, across the district under study was 53%, and at the school under study was 33%. The percentages of students across the state scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 29%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 9%. The percentages of students across the district under study scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 23%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 18%, and level 5 - 7%. The percentages of students at the school under study scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 21%, level 2 - 47%, level 3 - 16%, level 4 - 12%, and level 5 - 5%. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 was 302, for the district under study the mean scale score was 300, and for the school under study the mean scale score was 296. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area. Learning gains in third grade applied only to a retained student who
increased in points within a level or improved by one achievement level from the previous testing year.

Table 15.

3rd Grade Reading SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>221,791</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,990</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 16 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA third grade reading assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 58%, the district under study was 52%, and the school under study was 23% on the 2019 SSA. The percentages of students across the state scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 22%, and level 5 - 8%. The percentages of students across the district scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 7%. The percentages of students at the school scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 45%, level 2 - 32%, level 3 - 15%, level 4 - 8%, and level 5 - 0%. The mean scale score across the state in 2019 was 302, the district under study was 299, and the school under study was 289. Between the 2018 and 2019 school years, the percentage of students at the school scoring at a level 3 or higher decreased by 10% on the reading SSA; a level 3 or higher is required for all third-grade students to be promoted to the fourth grade.
Table 16.

3rd Grade Reading SSA in 2019: Percentage of Each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>216,823</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,761</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 17 identifies achievement levels on the 2018 SSA fourth grade reading and writing assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 56%, the district under study was 55%, and the school under study was 51%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 21%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 21%, and level 5 - 8% across the state. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 22%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 8% for the district. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 18%, level 2 - 31%, level 3 - 36%, level 4 - 11%, and level 5 - 3%. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 across the state was 312, the district was 312, and the school was 309. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area.
Table 17.

4th Grade Reading/Writing SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>215,757</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,964</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 18 identifies achievement levels on the 2019 SSA fourth grade reading and writing assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 58%, the district under study was 55%, and the school under study was 24% on the 2019 SSA. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 19%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 21%, and level 5 - 9% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 21%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 9% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 42%, level 2 - 35%, level 3 - 15%, level 4 - 9%, and level 5 - 0% for the school. The mean scale score for the state was 313, the district was 312, and the school was 298. Between the 2018 and 2019 school years, the percentage of students scoring at a level 3 or higher decreased by 27% for the school on the reading and writing SSA.
Table 18.

*4th Grade Reading and Writing in 2019: Percentage of each Achievement Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,342</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,966</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 19 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA fifth grade reading and writing assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 55%, the district under study was 51%, and the school under study was 35%. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 25%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 9% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 23%, level 2 - 26%, level 3 - 25%, level 4 - 18%, and level 5 - 8% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 38%, level 2 - 27%, level 3 - 20%, level 4 - 9%, and level 5 - 6% at the school. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 for the state was 322, the district was 320, and the school was 311. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area.
Table 19.

*5th Grade Reading and Writing SSA 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,019</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,723</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 20 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA fifth grade reading and writing assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 56%, the district under study was 54%, and the school under study was 38% on the 2019 SSA. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 21%, and level 5 - 8% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 21%, level 2 - 25%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 8% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 26%, level 2 - 35%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 9%, and level 5 - 3% for the school. The mean scale score for the state was 322, the district was 321, and the school was 314. Between the 2018 and 2019 school years, the percentage of students scoring at a level 3 decreased by 6% for the school on the reading and writing SSA, and the percentage of students scoring at a level 2 from 2018 to 2019 increased by 8%. 
Table 20.

5th Grade Reading and Writing SSA 2019: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>218,818</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,197</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Mathematics achievement. Table 21 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA third grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher for the state was 62%, the district under study was 55%, and the school under study was 45%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 19%, level 2 - 19%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 23%, and level 5 - 11% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 21%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 8% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 31%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 31%, level 4 - 14%, and level 5 - 0%. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 was 301, the district was 298, and the school was 291. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area. Learning gains in third grade applied only to a retained student who increased in points within a level or improved by one achievement level from the previous testing year.
Table 21.

3rd Grade Math SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>222,815</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>18,153</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

The data in Table 22 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA third grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 62%, the district under study was 55%, and the school under study was 45%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 19%, level 2 - 19%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 23%, and level 5 - 11% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 21%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 8% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 31%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 31%, level 4 - 14%, and level 5 - 0% for the school. The mean scale score for the state in 2019 was 302, the district was 298, and the school was 284. Between the 2018 and 2019 school years, the percentage of students scoring at a level 3 or higher for the school decreased by 20% on the math SSA; the percentage of students scoring a level 1 increased by 16 points on the 2019 math assessment.
Table 22.

3rd Grade Math SSA in 2019: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>222,815</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>18,153</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 23 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA fourth grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 62%, the district under study was 57%, and the school under study was 48%. The percentages of students who scored at the various levels were level 1 - 22%, level 2 - 16%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 22%, and level 5 - 13% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 18%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 11% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 38%, level 2 - 15%, level 3- 38%, level 4 - 7%, and level 5 - 11%. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 was 315, the district was 312, and the school was 304. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area. Learning gains in third grade applied only to a retained student who increased in points within a level or improved by one achievement level from the previous testing year.
Table 23.

4th Grade Math SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>217,354</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,191</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 24 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA fourth grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher in 2019 on the SSA fourth grade math assessment across state was 58%, the district under study was 57%, and the school under study was 45%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 19%, level 2 - 23%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 21%, and level 5 - 9% for the state. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 26%, level 2 - 17%, level 3 - 25%, level 4 - 19%, and level 5 - 12% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 47%, level 2 - 20%, level 3 - 22%, level 4 - 22%, and level 5 - 2% for the school. The mean scale score for the state in 2019 was 313, the district was 312, and the school under study was 299. Between the 2018 and 2019 school years, the percentage of students scoring at a level 3 or higher decreased by 15% on the SSA fourth grade math assessment at the school under study, and the percentage of students scoring a level 3 decreased by 18 points on the 2019 math assessment.
Table 24.

4th Grade Math SSA Data: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,342</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1    2  3  4  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,019</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57  26 17 25 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33  47 20 22 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 25 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA fifth grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher for the state was 61%, the district was 54%, and the school was 30%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 19%, level 3 - 24%, level 4 - 22%, and level 5 -14% for the state. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 21%, level 3 - 24%, level 4 - 20%, and level 5 - 11% for the district. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 38%, level 2 - 32%, level 3 - 15%, level 4 - 8%, and level 5 - 8%. The mean scale score for the state in 2018 was 324, the district was 321, and the school was 310. The scale score was determined by the number of points gained for proficiency or learning gains in each subject area. Learning gains in third grade applied only to a retained student, who increased in points within a level or improved by one achievement level from the previous testing year.
Table 25.

5th Grade Math SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>213,417</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,897</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 26 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA fifth grade math assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 56%, the district under study was 54%, and the school under study was 31%. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 21%, and level 5 - 8% for the state. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 26%, level 2 - 20%, level 3 - 22%, level 4 - 19%, and level 5 - 13% for the district. The percentage of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 38%, level 2 - 31%, level 3 - 16%, level 4 - 9%, and level 5 - 6% for the school. The mean scale score for the state in 2019 was 322, the district was 321, and the school was 309.
Table 26.

5th Grade Math SSA in 2019: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>218,818</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,247</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Science Achievement

Table 27 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2018 SSA fifth grade science assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher across the state was 55%, the district under study 52%, and the school under study 30%.

The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 20%, level 2 - 25%, level 3 - 28%, level 4 - 13%, and level 5 - 13% across the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 23%, level 2 - 25%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 12%, and level 5 - 14% for the district under study. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 48%, level 2 - 22%, level 3 - 13%, level 4 - 4%, and level 5 - 12%. The mean scale score across the state in 2018 was 202, the district was 201, and the school under study was 191. The scale score was determined by the number of points earned for proficiency; a level 3 or higher was the passing score on the science SSA.
Table 27.

*5th Grade Science SSA in 2018: Percentage of each Achievement Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>Level Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>211,927</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 25 28 13 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>16,797</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 25 26 12 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48 22 13 4 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Table 28 identifies the percentage for each achievement level on the 2019 SSA fifth grade science assessment. The percentage of students scoring a level 3 or higher in across the state was 53%, the district under study 51%, and the school under study 26% on the 2019 SSA. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 23%, level 2 - 25%, level 3 - 27%, level 4 - 13%, and level 5 - 12% for the state. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 25%, level 2 - 24%, level 3 - 26%, level 4 - 13%, and level 5 - 12% for the district. The percentages of students scoring at the various levels were level 1 - 46%, level 2 - 28%, level 3 - 12%, level 4 - 8%, and level 5 - 6% for the school. The mean scale score for the state in 2019 was 202, the district was 199, and the school was 189. Between the 2018 and 2019 the school’s percentage of students scoring at a level 2 increased by 6 points and the level 5 scores decreased by 6 points on the science SSA.
Table 28.

5th Grade Science SSA in 2019: Percentage of each Achievement Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Percentage of level 3 or higher</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>218,715</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>17,201</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data reflected in tables 1-28 are from the State Department of Education, 2020

Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies

This program evaluation focused on instructional practices of teachers in Grades 3-5 in one Title 1 school within the district under study. It identified the impact on student learning based on the implementation of the State Standards for two subgroups within the school. These subgroups included African-American students and students on free and reduced-price lunch who were expected to score a proficiency level of three or higher on the State Standards Assessment. The district’s mission was to Prepare Students for Life. As part of the district’s five-year strategic plan, reading proficiency in third grade was to increase and there was to be a high school graduation rate of 90% by 2020. The 4C’s, contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies are a systemic approach to thinking about the challenges and goals of a school district (Wagner et al., 2006). As a result, I created an AS-IS diagnostic analysis of the underlying concerns with instructional practices in Grades 3-5 and used it to describe those concerns for my evaluation using the 4Cs (see Appendix G).
Context. Context refers to the skill demands needed to produce a desired change and is dependent on societal, state, federal, and community expectations (Wagner et al., 2006). To plan for the context, school leaders need to understand the environment and the contextual information that lead to informed decisions to create change. The context of my evaluation was connected to lack of student achievement based on the State Standards. My research question, “What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report are the greatest challenges with their instructional practices using the State Standards?” was directed at the context of the school’s problem for a lack of proficiency on the State Standards Assessment.

One of the components of the State Standards Assessment was that proficiency was based on students scoring a performance level score of three or higher (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The proficiency level scores on the State Standards Assessment (SSA) ranged from a level one to level five; level one - inadequate; level two - below satisfactory; level three - satisfactory; level four - proficient; and level five - mastery (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). However, for students to obtain this level of proficiency, the teachers’ instructional practices in implementing the State Standards must demonstrate a clear understanding of the standards. The school data for the 2018 and 2019 school years showed 60% of student proficiency levels were below satisfactory or a level 3 for all tested content areas, compared to the state and district performance levels of 1 and 2 which were at 50% for all content areas tested. Each year, when taking the state assessment, schools received points towards proficiency of level 3 or higher; however, during the school years of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 the state, district, and the school continued to show a decline in mean scale scores each year in
every content area. Therefore, the challenge in context was the instructional practices used in implementing the State Standards.

School leaders operated their programs of learning based on what they perceived to be needed within their schools to provide optimal learning for students. In doing so, they looked at how teachers planned for learning - the amount of rigor and engagement with aligning the tasks based on the standards. If the teachers did not plan with these in mind, it limited the opportunity for students to meet the expectations on the State Standards Assessment. The rigor and engagement pointed to the fact that teachers’ perceptions of what these students could or could not achieve was based on the environment they came from or their socioeconomic status. Milner (2015) contended that teachers need to understand their subject matter in ways that help them to teach in rigorously and developmentally appropriate ways. The students are limited by their experience level or background knowledge, lack of vocabulary, and the continuity of the standards. Teachers do not recognize that standards build beyond the current grade level, and therefore, do not plan accordingly for student learning. Part of the planning process is identifying what students know or need to know to be successful at learning (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Another challenge was that teachers when planning, did not spend time collaborating with one another to share in the learning of how to grow students academically and improve their instructional practice.

**Culture.** Culture refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system (Wagner et al., 2006). In other words, culture addresses the reality of what is happening within the organization. In this arena of change, the school and the district leaders must focus on what is happening. My research
question was: What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report is working with their instructional practices using the State Standards? In this case, teachers were stating that they understood the standards and could plan, align, and create assessments using them to improve student learning. In asking this question, I realized the reality of planning and support for planning played an important role in student achievement. This was the opportunity to have well organized planning meetings with instructional coaches, collaboration, and follow through when developing coaching cycles. It also addressed how schools with incidents of high poverty often succumb to high teacher turnover or low-quality teachers. Change in leadership also affects the school culture and creates a mass exodus of teachers to avoid new leadership and new cultural changes within the school. The lack of relevant materials to create the rigor and engagement needed in developing a culture of learning for all students and teachers impacts the way instruction is implemented within the classroom.

The culture of teachers planning and collaborating with one another creates an opportunity for what Wagner et al. (2006), call a community of practice. “Communities of practice are characterized by a shared passion, commitment, and identification with a group’s purpose. They promote engagement by providing forums for professionals to learn, grow, and become more effective at their craft” (p. 75). In order to determine whether teachers are engaging in these communities of practice, teachers should be willing to identify and reflect on the type of support that is needed or available for them to adequately improve student learning and their own learning. At the school under study student proficiency was not just about how well the teacher understood the standards, but
also how well the teacher utilized the support of colleagues to enlarge the capacity to
improve learning for all students.

There was also the concern of not having adequate materials or relevant materials
to plan rigorous or engaging lessons. Parents and the community expected that all
students in the district had access to the same materials and resources to improve
learning. However, the disadvantage for students in high poverty schools was not that
they lacked access to the same materials, it was that the materials being provided
reflected a one size fits all model, and that was not reflective of the student population or
their ability to achieve at their optimal level. Students in the school under study lacked
the experience level or background knowledge and vocabulary to compete with students
in higher socioeconomic schools, but this was due in part to teacher planning. At the
school under study, the teachers often suggested that lack of student performance was
because of lack of motivation and effort, but not their planning.

Another aspect of culture is that of change in leadership that impacts how learning
is implemented. Change in leadership affected the culture and climate of the school and
the community. This led to changes that stakeholders were not used to and led to a new
set of trust to build or created mistrust. The students at the school under study did not
have the same school leadership since entering at kindergarten nor the same teachers. The
teachers left to follow the previous leader they knew and respected, thus leaving the
community without a sense of guidance for how students would continue to see academic
success. The school under study also required more state involved direction to ensure
accountability in instruction, planning, and data analysis based on the decrease in school
grade in the 2019 school year, which indicated more accountability in teacher planning and monitoring of student data, about which the teachers were not happy.

**Conditions.** Conditions are the tangible and external structures of time, space, and resources; this can also include expectations of assessments, contracts, laws, and policies (Wagner et al, 2006). My research question was: What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report are the greatest challenges with their instructional practices using the State Standards? The level of teacher participation in planning was directly impacted by state funding, instructional materials, planning time, and the teacher contract posed a challenge in their instructional practices using the State Standards. For example, the state educational leaders provided guidance for how the funding for resources in the schools could be used. The state provided funding for materials and additional instructional coaches; however, the state did not release the money until three-fourths of the year had been completed, or a couple of months prior to state testing. This posed a challenge for the principal, teachers, and the students because the district assessments were ongoing and showed the need for additional support from academic coaches, but the funding was not present to provide adequate help. Each time the principal submitted her request for materials, it was returned to be amended because the vendor could not be used.

A second example was that of providing resources that would engage students in rigorous learning. The district leaders and the school board members chose to allow some economically disadvantaged schools to use a School Improvement Grant for culturally relevant materials but did not allow for all the economically disadvantaged schools to benefit from new instructional materials because they deemed the practice to be a pilot
program and too expensive to purchase for all of those schools. This created a condition that did not allow for students to obtain proficiency.

Another condition that impacted teachers’ instructional practice was planning time and the teacher union contract. Teachers’ willingness to plan or have sufficient time posed a challenge to their instructional practice. During the interview, one of the administrators relayed that teachers did not have the “time needed to prepare rigorous instruction aligned with the standards.” This lack of time could have been due to the amount of paperwork teachers were required to complete, the amount of time needed beyond the workday, and the time to find resources (Murphy, 2016). The teacher union contract also impacted time. The contract included language that gave the option for teachers not to plan beyond what was required or outside of their paid time. This lack of time for planning led to students not receiving effective instruction to prepare them for success on the state assessments.

**Competencies.** Competencies are the skills and knowledge educators possess to influence student learning (Wagner et al., 2006). My research questions were: What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report as ways to address the challenges to improve their instructional practices using the State Standards? What types of planning resources and professional development do teachers perceive they need to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards? In their survey and interview responses, the participants addressed how to improve their instructional practices by identifying the need for a better understanding of what rigor and engagement looked and sounded like. They wanted more opportunities to plan and collaborate with their colleagues, because that helps to improve student learning
collectively and allows them the opportunity to share in the learning with one another (DuFour, 2004). Professional learning communities (PLCs) allow teachers to engage in dialogue that promotes a better understanding of what students know and need to know to prepare for state assessments. Collaborating also promotes the opportunity to provide students with relevant knowledge to build on their personal experiences.

As an administrator, the mandates set forth by the district and the state to move students forward academically and improve the school grade was an imperative. Time, human capital, and resources played a huge role in how that happens (Murphy, 2016). The principal, as the primary instructional leader, should be both knowledgeable of the standards and teacher practices. The principal in the school under study had attempted to make investments in professional development focused on student engagement and had also enlisted teacher buy-in on the types of engagement trainings they believed were necessary. The principal had a prescribed method for implementing professional development that focused on student achievement, which she monitored weekly through data chats with teams and prescribed next steps; and she met with her instructional coaches regularly to assess the needs of teachers and provide them support as needed.

**Interpretation**

I investigated the impact of teacher instructional practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards. Based on my findings, teacher instructional practices did have some impact on student achievement on the State Standards Assessment, despite the teachers’ perceptions of their ability to understand and plan for learning using the State Standards. The impact was found in what teachers perceived as the strategies about which they had to make more informed decisions, planning rigorous and engaging lessons for students,
and their ability to collaborate with one another to create greater opportunities for learning among their students.

In reviewing the testing data from the Spring 2018 and 2019 state assessments, each year students across the state, the district, and the school decreased their mean scale scores in every subject. Each subject area had a set of possible points in each of the content categories that neither the state, the district, nor the school met at 100%; in fact, scoring at 60% of the possible points appeared to be the benchmark for proficiency (refer to Tables 1-28). To break this down further, I examined the scores by grade level from the Spring 2018 and 2019 state assessments. In 2018, out of a total possible 1000 points for a school grade, third grade ELA mean scale scores in the state was 302 points with 57% of third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. The mean scale scores for the district under study was 300 points with 53% of third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. The school’s mean scale score was 296 points with 33% of third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. In 2019, the state’s mean scale score in third grade remained at 302 points, but with a 1% increase in the number of third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. The district decreased by one point in the mean scale score at 299 points and also decreased by one point in the number of third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher to 52%. The school’s mean score dropped seven points to 289 points with 23% of the third graders scoring at a level 3 or higher.

The fourth grade ELA scores indicated similar changes from 2018 to 2019 scores, as well. The state’s scale score in 2018 was 312, with 56% of students scoring at a level 3 or higher. The district’s scale score was 312, with 55% of the students scoring at a level 3 or higher. The school’s scale score was 309, with 51% of the students scoring at a level 3
or higher. In 2019 the state’s scores in fourth grade increased by one point to 313, and 58% of the fourth graders scored at a level 3 or higher. The district’s score remained the same as 2018; however, the school’s mean score decreased by 11 points to 298 and 27% of fourth graders scored at a level 3 or higher on the ELA SSA.

The 2018 fifth grade ELA scores reflected a state mean score of 322 with 55% of students scoring at a level 3 or higher. The district’s mean score was 320, with 51% of the fifth graders scoring a level 3 or higher. The school’s mean scale score was nine points lower than the district and 11 points lower than the state at 309, and 35% of the students scored at a level 3 or higher. In 2019, the state’s mean score remained the same, and increased in one point or 56% of the fifth graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. This was likely because there was a change on the reading and writing Mean Points Earned by Content Area for 2018 and 2019 SSA testing data (see tables 5 and 6). The average points possible increased and/or decreased by 2-3 points for at least four of the content areas assessed but did not impact the mean scale score earned. The district’s mean score increased by one point to 321, and the percentage of fifth graders who scored at a level 3 or higher increased by three points. The school, however, saw a decrease in the scale scores by seven points to 314 and by 16 points to 38% of the fifth graders scoring at a level 3 or higher. This was a trend reflected from both years that showed a decrease in points earned from assessments over the two years at the school level on the SSA.

The changes in the school data from 2018 to 2019 reflected one of the concerns addressed in the participant interviews regarding high teacher turnover and change in leadership. Through their interviews, they indicated that these changes impacted the amount of support that was given to them at school due to a loss of help from the
instructional coaches. In the interviews, the teachers relayed that teachers often quit in the middle of the year, or the vacancies were not filled from the beginning leaving the instructional coaches to support the substitutes on campus more than certified teachers. They also stated that the previous year they were assigned a new principal who brought new staff members, and by the end of the year a new assistant principal, and some staff members chose to leave with that former leader as well. The teachers mentioned a change in leadership, new leadership styles, and the awareness of student knowledge and relationships impacted the culture of learning.

I believe that these were just a few factors that impacted instructional practices using the State Standards. The school itself was part of the district magnet program and should have, like most magnet schools, attracted a diverse group of learners from all parts of the county. However, the school was centrally located in one of the city’s largest housing projects, the student population was over 80% African American, over 80% of the students were on free and reduced-price lunch or economically disadvantaged, and the school had a history of leadership changes every three years. Furthermore, most of the students lived in a school board area where they often were not represented by their school board leader. The students had yet to have the same administration in the entire six years of attending the school from grades K-5, and the community continued to have to rebuild trust with the new changes each time, not allowing for culture to build at the site.
Judgements

My primary research questions were:

- What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report is working with their instructional practices using the State Standards?
- What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report is not working with their instructional practices using the State Standards?
- What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report are the greatest challenges with their instructional practices using the State Standards?
- What do the stakeholders [teachers, instructional coaches, ESE, ELL, and administrators] report as ways to address the challenges to improve their instructional practices using the State Standards?

My related research questions were:

- What types of planning resources and professional development do teachers perceive they need to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?
- What is the role of the school leadership in supporting teachers in their autonomy to plan lessons that are not prescribed by the elementary department and the district leadership?

The data collected through the surveys, interviews, and state testing provided valuable insight about barriers existing with teacher instructional practices. The first four
research questions outlined the understanding of the standards and the challenges with the standards that impacted learning. The purpose of the program evaluation was to better inform policymakers about how instructional practices at one Title 1/Renaissance school using the State Standards impacted students in Grades 3-5 and the barriers that prohibited quality teaching and learning to happen. Isenberg et al. (2013), spoke to the inequity in teaching that states and districts overlook with schools in poverty.

The results of the interviews and the data were somewhat positive, and the participants acknowledged that they had a good working knowledge of the State Standards, but they also suggested that there was a need to define what rigor and engagement looked like, that they needed opportunities for collaboration and to work with their instructional coaches. The participants also acknowledged that teacher turnover and lack of materials was a challenge, especially when working with students from economically disadvantaged homes who did not have access to resources or help required to be as successful as their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

The other barrier addressed the state test scores on which the school, district, and the state showed decreases in possible points by grade level and subject areas. This was an opportunity for the district to advocate on the school’s behalf. The lack of resources in human capital and instructional materials impacted what and how teachers aligned resources for student learning. In addition, the district leaders should argue that a 60% proficiency rate in state testing should be re-examined because it presents a problem statewide about the standards or the instructional practices of every educator across the state.
My secondary research questions focused on professional development and support from leaders. For the most part, the participants believed they had the support from leaders to plan rigorous lessons; they could be autonomous. They had the autonomy to teach; however, time, the collaboration needed to plan effectively, and the access to coaching were barriers. Professional development also posed a barrier because many of the participants had not received any formal trainings by choice or requirement beyond what was offered at the site for new programs, or through new teacher orientation. Additional professional development should be a requirement when teaching students in poverty. Teachers need annual professional development, that will help them continue to improve their teaching practices with the fidelity to implement, monitor, and provide safe practice. Darling-Hammond (2012, p. 10) suggested that in creating a system for effective teachers it takes teachers aligning standards with teaching standards that are expressed as performance standards; what teachers should know and be able to do to support student learning. Another barrier was not having access to the instructional coaches because they were often in classrooms teaching to supplement instruction for classes taught by substitutes rather than coaching.

**Recommendations**

An analysis of the participant interview data and survey data revealed several key findings which can serve as a guide for how to improve teacher instructional practices using the State Standards.

1. Teachers should participate in professional development that clearly defines rigor and engagement. Unpacking the standards for the current grade level they teach requires knowledge of the continuity of standards. What did they
learn previously and what do they need to know for the next grade? Planning is essential for students to reach proficiency if they will be successful on the state assessments. Professional development should come with more fidelity than it currently does. Participants acknowledged that they had not participated in many trainings outside of what they had received at school for iReady or when first hired into the district. Ongoing professional development in economically disadvantaged schools should be a requirement to build sustainable teaching practices.

2. Collaboration with colleagues and instructional coaches is needed to gauge full understanding of the standards to avoid misinterpretation. The instructional coaches represent the “experts” in the field. Part of their role is to differentiate learning for teachers who need the support, and also to provide support to veteran teachers who want to develop further as teachers. Leaders should always be present in those planning sessions to hold each teacher and instructional coach accountable for the practices implemented within the classroom.

3. The district leaders and the teachers’ union bear responsibility in ensuring that best practices for students are met at every level in every school. The district leaders should ensure that schools that serve economically disadvantaged students have more than two instructional coaches to provide support to those students. Without that support the school continues the cycle of poor performance on the state assessment. District leaders should provide the funding and the rewards for teachers who work in these schools. When the
union relays that it supports best practices for students but also allows teachers the opportunity to push back when they are asked to do the work required in economically disadvantaged schools puts students at a disadvantage, not the teachers.

4. Providing relevant instructional materials that connects students with their own experiences is important. The participants noted that their students cannot relate to the materials with which they are presented. They do not come to school with an extensive vocabulary to tackle the content they are learning, and they do not have access to resources such as technology and science materials that their peers in higher SES schools have. This puts them further behind. One teacher mentioned that we needed to provide more “support to our parents, who are doing the best they can, but still need help.”

So how do we move forward? Equity in our teaching practices and in how we lead in schools where economically disadvantaged students are impacted by barriers over which they have no control is important. My analysis on instructional practices addresses that the larger problem stems from the inequity of the testing and decisions made at the district and state levels that impact how things are done at the school under study and likely at schools that resemble this one. Data do not indicate that students cannot learn or lack the ability to learn but show that the policies and procedures for learning pose a bigger problem. To allow students to be taught by low-quality teachers (Jacob, 2007) without expecting a failing grade indicates a problem that could be remedied.

I believe the school district has an opportunity to take the findings of this program evaluation to improve the instructional practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards
to improve the learning for all students in economically disadvantaged schools. Providing opportunities for equitable practices is the intended result of this program evaluation. The survey, interview, and testing data provided evidence that systemic barriers impact students at this elementary site and possibly similar elementary sites that serve low-income communities.

I found an overwhelming agreement from the participants that collaboration, rigor, engagement, time, and relevant instructional materials were the most considerable barriers to improving student learning. I would go further to recommend that district leaders examine the impact a change in leadership has on a school, such as the resulting loss of teachers, changes in student relationships, and a cycle of rebuilding trust with the stakeholders (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The school under study in this program evaluation, like most schools in the lowest 300 in the state, has seen its share of leadership changes over fifteen years. The students experienced numerous substitute teachers in grades K-5, with many substitute teachers in the high-stakes testing grades. The school had fewer instructional coaches in every content area than the neighboring schools with the same demographics that had double the number of instructional coaches. The neighboring schools also had fewer students with diverse learning needs such as emotional behavior disorders or varying exceptionalities, making up about 40% of the tested students in Grades 3-5 at the school under study (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Each year, school stakeholders spend time rebuilding the climate, culture, and capacity with teachers and students to promote the best learning.
Conclusion

Based on my analysis of the interviews, survey, and testing data, the context, cultures, conditions, and competencies for instructional practices in Grades 3-5 for the educational environment in which this research took place, I determined that the instructional practices alone are not the main factor impacting student learning using the State Standards. There are recognizable systemic barriers that could be remedied to create much needed change in schools with economically disadvantaged black and brown children that will be addressed within the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

To-Be-Framework

Through my program evaluation of one school’s instructional practices using the State Standards, I determined that the instructional practices alone were not the main factor impacting student learning using the State Standards. Other recognizable systemic barriers impeded the students' success at the school under study and likely other economically disadvantaged schools within the district under study. I believe addressing the issues could lead to more informed decision making in instructional practices, professional development, leadership, and equity for students in economically disadvantaged schools. My change leadership plan attempts to shed light on how making these changes could improve student achievement, teacher instructional practices, and revamp how state testing penalizes poor schools for a lack of achievement without providing adequate funding for them to grow (Roza, 2010).

Envisioning the Success To-Be

My vision of the To-Be for the success of one school’s instructional practices using the State Standards includes a set of new ideals for contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies (see Appendix H for the complete To-Be organizational chart). In my To-Be organizational analysis, school district leaders will recognize the importance of how their policies impact teacher instructional practices in economically disadvantaged schools and student proficiency on the State Standards Assessment. Also, school district leaders, the community, and the stakeholders will begin to understand that without a true commitment to improving student achievement in economically disadvantaged schools, the students will continue to decline in performance. In other words, it will take a village to move student achievement and not just a school, the teachers, or the administration.
Future context. In my experience as an educator in the district under study for the past fifteen years, I learned that one of the requirements for teaching in a Title 1/Renaissance school was that teachers participate in ongoing professional development, and this was an integral part of the fabric for continuous improvement at Title 1/Renaissance schools. This idea of constant improvement means that there will be an annual implementation of professional development on how to improve student achievement on the state assessments and teacher instructional practices for students in these schools. Teachers also completed individual professional development plans annually. These plans demonstrated instructional practices and strategies implemented to ensure student academic success.

Through my research, I raised two critical points in the surveys and interviews by teachers and administrators regarding instructional practices – rigor and engagement. The question was “What is it and what does it look like?” Rigor is the setting of high expectations in learning and learning outcomes for students (Wagner, 2008b). The expectation will be that students can master the content by using their critical thinking skills and personal experiences to learn new ideas and concepts. It is through that rigorous learning where student engagement is intended to flourish. An ideal future context will include teachers having a deeper understanding of what rigor and engagement looks like and sounds like within student learning and how it transfers to mastery as assessed on the state assessment. It will not include teaching to the test but creating a rich learning environment that promotes student learning for their future ahead. An ideal future context will also include teachers, students, and administrators understanding the shared vision of how students can achieve this.
Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) also maintain their importance in this future context. Teachers need sufficient time to plan and collaborate with colleagues about what is working and what needs to be changed in their instructional practice and student learning. They should have opportunities to share in learning by observing one another’s craft and teaching styles. They should also work together to create everyday tasks aligned to the State Standards to build on that rigor and engagement they seek. In those instances, student achievement is possible, and teachers will witness improvement as they are building their craft, working towards common goals within the classroom and across grade levels. In an ideal future context, time will be dedicated to PLCs and will be purposeful. It will be an opportunity for all members to learn from one another and make change that impacts student learning for the better (DuFour, 2004).

Limited knowledge of what students know or need to know will also change in an ideal future context. This includes all stakeholders, not just the teachers, but parents and students as well. If parents are provided with the learning progression necessary for their child or children to be successful on state assessments, their involvement will change. Parents will have a clear understanding of why and how to improve student test scores while learning at home. Their involvement will be tantamount to student success and the success of the school. Teachers and administrators will provide parents training throughout the year to continue to build on existing parent involvement and partnerships within the school. Often parents are not aware that one of the reasons the school is underperforming is because they have not been told or advised on how they can also serve the school in this effort (Block, 2008).
In an ideal future context, the district magnet office will play a substantial role in attracting a diverse clientele to the school. This is not to say that students from the neighborhood will not have this opportunity too, but that the opportunity to attend the magnet school will hold the same weight as it does at the other magnet schools within the district that have a more diverse population more parent involvement, and more opportunities to have a presence in the community than the school under study.

**Future culture.** Teachers’ instructional practices will increase when teachers are provided job-embedded support by the instructional coaches. There will be less teacher turnover and fewer changes in leadership than in the past. The culture of the school will change when teacher embedded support becomes fluid. In other words, it will happen decisively and with intentionality. District leaders will make this an important part of moving schools from failing to high performing. They will also be more inclined to allow time for necessary implementation of changes to occur under new administrators' leadership rather than expecting the changes to occur in one year.

In an ideal future culture, the instructional coaches' role will be to provide job-embedded training to teachers at all levels based on both the teachers' and students' needs. Teachers will be encouraged to see their coaches as the experts on campus with the knowledge necessary to help them obtain student achievement. To do that, coaches must be given the time needed to coach. Their time will be dedicated to coaching teachers, planning with teachers, and collaborating on increasing teachers' instructional skills. This will help the teachers grow, and students learn. Coaches will also know that they are essentially carrying out the mission of improving student achievement and that support
comes from the school leadership. School leaders’ role in creating time for coaching with fidelity will ensure that teachers are given the support they need.

High teacher turnover is another contributing factor to a lack of student achievement. In an ideal future culture, this will happen less often because hiring teachers will be to identify what these teachers are qualified to do and their ability to build capacity within the classroom and the school. No longer will there be hiring to have bodies in the classroom, but to ensure that we have the right bodies in the classroom.

Murphy (2016) contended that when leaders are strong in not choosing teachers who are weak or might undermine the school’s vision and values, then capacity building is enhanced. Students need teachers who intend to build school culture. This also holds true in hiring less substitutes to fill vacancies in high-stakes testing grades, leaving instructional coaches to perform those classroom duties. In an ideal culture, school district leaders will place leaders in economically disadvantaged schools with a proven record for building capacity and raising student achievement in low performing schools. These leaders will also be given the gift of time to make improvements, and the district will defend this change when meeting with the state education leaders. In an ideal future culture, the school district leaders will become advocates for why and how the necessary changes will impact student achievement. In an ideal future culture, district leaders will invite parents and other stakeholders to the decision-making table about how their schools should be changed and become better (Block, 2008).

**Future conditions.** The external factors affecting teacher instructional practices include time, funding, teacher contract, instructional materials, and human capital. These factors contribute to the success of schools, and more importantly, in Title 1/Renaissance
schools. In future conditions, school district leaders will adhere to implementing these resources with fidelity for all schools.

Time allotted for teachers to participate in PLCs and planning with their colleagues is essential for student achievement. Teachers need the time to plan and collaborate. This time with one another must be intentional. School leaders must participate in the collaboration, so that teachers see the value in their work (Murphy, 2016). In an ideal future condition, school district leaders and the teachers’ union will work out conditions to better compensate for collaboration time within their contract. As an ideal future condition, magnet schools will also readjust bell times earlier so that teachers can do collaborative planning. The time needed to plan and collaborate effectively will be implemented in such a way that it does not infringe on the teachers’ life outside of school. This will also create opportunities for teachers to attend professional development events after work and for them to participate in off-campus trainings during working hours that are feasible for them.

Funding in an ideal future condition will be readily available to meet the school's needs. The conditions by which schools receive resources and instructional coaches are through state and federal funding from Title 1 or School Improvement allocations. These resources are aligned with the school’s improvement plan. An ideal future condition will have the district fund additional instructional coaches. For example, the academic intervention specialist’s role is pivotal in enhancing students’ reading skills in first and second grades; without that resource, when students go to third grade, the difficulty in reading for meaning will hinder their progress on the SSA. This is the human capital needed to help schools move forward.
Another ideal future condition will be to invest in a culturally relevant curriculum that students can relate to and connect to their personal experiences. In my program evaluation, teachers and administrators agreed that their students, as well as themselves, needed to have a rich curriculum that enhanced their students’ critical thinking skills and vocabulary. An ideal future condition will allow schools to purchase programs that offer these rich learning opportunities for students and the professional development required to enhance teacher competency in those areas.

**Future competencies.** Throughout my program evaluation, there were a few things that teachers and administrators believed they need to improve student learning. They believed they need to know what rigor and engagement looks like, and they need professional development that targets student engagement and cultural relevancy. They need time for planning and collaboration, and they need to know what students know and need to know.

An ideal future competency includes an understanding of rigor and engagement based on the work of Wagner (2008a) when he speaks of preparing students for the global achievement gap, instead of the academic achievement gap. Wagner (2008a) defined “the global achievement gap is the difference between what our best public schools are teaching and testing versus what all students need to be successful in our global economy” (p. 8). An ideal future competency will address the 21st century skills students will need for the jobs that will exist in the future. Teachers have the desire to implement rigorous and engaging lessons. They need the skills and tools necessary to do that. Suppose the resources and tasks created by the school district are based on the State
Standards. In that case, teachers will need to know how to implement the lessons with rigor and engagement in mind.

This will be done by the level of support provided by the instructional coaches. An ideal future competency will put coaches and teachers at the forefront of this work. Coaches will work with teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses within a lesson and guide them to improve that lesson. In turn, the school leaders will provide accountability for teachers to feel supported but also share in the learning from the coaching cycle. This work will not be done in isolation. This work will also be reflected in student test scores.

Professional development in ideal future competencies will not be just school centered, but also individualized based on the level of support each teacher needs. For this to be possible, school leaders will meet with their teachers to discuss their professional goals. This will occur more often than just at the final evaluation, but at least twice a year. Having these conversations will change the way teachers view their work and practice. However, for this to happen with fidelity, the school district leaders will also increase the professional development offered to teachers to improve their practice. Professional development will be offered frequently because teachers need to improve their practice often to adjust to changes in society and diverse student needs.

Student learning progression requires all stakeholders’ knowledge; if no one knows what students need to know or have learned, then student achievement is fruitless. An ideal future competency is that every stakeholder will know how to move students forward academically. As mentioned before in the future context section, when parents are aware of what their children should know or need to know to be successful at school
it improves their participation and the willingness to continue the learning at home (Purinton & Azcoitia, 2016). If parents are taught how to understand the State Standards, they will provide better support. This will lead to better partnerships and parental involvement at the school level. In turn, they will help to shift the community’s participation in moving the school toward greater success. An ideal future competency will allow for parents to be better advocates for their children and demand more action and resources from the school district. An ideal future competency is that the school district and elected officials will increase their support for economically disadvantaged schools and not just when it comes to the students underperforming, but from the standpoint that these students lack equity and there is a solution to fix it.

**Conclusion**

As part of my program evaluation, I discovered several issues that impact teacher instructional practices in their school. Through my change leadership plan, I seek to address how these changes can be addressed for the school under study and other similar schools with similar challenges. Through my change leadership plan, I also seek to address how district leaders can reallocate resources to ensure students at economically disadvantaged schools have opportunities for success and teachers are given adequate support to implement instruction in these schools. In the next chapter, I will lay out strategies necessary to improve teacher instructional practices and remove some of the barriers mentioned in this chapter to enhance student achievement in an economically disadvantaged school.
CHAPTER SIX

Strategies and Actions for Change

As I think about the recommendations made in Chapter 4 of this program evaluation as they relate to the challenges in my As-Is 4Cs diagram (See Appendix G), as well as with my Vision of Success To-Be diagram (See Appendix H), I believe that I must plan a series of realistic steps to implement that will lead the school under study and similar schools to success. An analysis of the challenges facing the school is a starting point. The next step is to identify research-based strategies and actions to help make the school's vision in this study come to fruition.

According to Kotter and Cohen (2002), I must first create a sense of urgency. This urgency begins with the school principal. First, the principal and I will look at the school’s State Standards Assessment (SSA) data from the 2018 and 2019 school years in the areas of English Language Arts, math, and science for students in Grades 3-5, to determine the level of proficiency by grade level in each subject area, compared to the state, district, and school levels of proficiency. Second, we will discuss the teacher instructional practices that would lead to a decline in student proficiency on the State Standards Assessment. Once the principal reviews the State Standards Assessment data and teacher instructional practices, she will be able to create a sense of urgency among the leadership team to include the instructional coaches and the assistant principal. This group will become the guiding coalition, which is step two in Kotter and Cohen’s change leadership plan.

A guiding coalition is a committed group of individuals who have the connections and credibility required to lead the change mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5. They will help
to create the change vision, as it relates to Kotter and Cohen’s step three. According to Kotter and Cohen (2002), “The vision says something that helps to clarify the direction in which an organization needs to move” (p. 8). Along with the instructional coaches and the assistant principal, the guiding coalition will include teachers and parents essential to creating change at the school and improving student academic achievement on the State Standards Assessment.

I plan to work with the guiding coalition to create opportunities for more professional development for teachers, coaching cycles between teachers and instructional coaches, and workshops for parents that will help to improve their understanding of the learning that will need to take place at home in order for students to achieve academic success. The professional development will be ongoing and required for teachers who teach in an economically disadvantaged school. Coaching cycles will be tiered, so that all teachers can benefit from reflective teaching practices and can improve student academic achievement that will lead to proficiency on the SSA. The parents will participate in a workshop at least three times a year to ensure continuous involvement in student learning and academic growth at the school level. These opportunities for growth between and among the stakeholders will become an essential part of the school culture and build trust within the community.

Another layer of developing the change vision involves working with school leaders and the guiding coalition, to create a vision that defines strategies specific to how to best meet the needs of the school and improve teacher instructional practices. The vision will define how using the recommendations from Chapters 4 and 5 that increase the need for professional learning communities, additional resource teachers/instructional
coaches, allotted time for planning with fidelity, and curriculum resources that are culturally relevant for student learning. In addition to this, the change vision will include the impact a change in leadership has on the school community and culture. The guiding coalition will work with district leaders to identify effective ways for the coalition members to become a part of the decision-making process when leadership changes will impact the school.

Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) fourth step of leading change is to communicate the vision. This requires obtaining the commitments necessary to create the change. Working alongside the guiding coalition, the principal and I will develop a common vision on what rigor and engagement looks like within one’s instructional practice. Once the coalition members have written statements that specifically outline strategies on professional development, professional learning communities, coaching cycles, and rigorous and engaging curriculum planning, then we can communicate that information to the faculty and other stakeholders. Once the vision has been communicated with the stakeholders and the Vision of Success has been made clear to them, we can move toward the fifth step of change according to Kotter and Cohen (2002).

Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) fifth step is to empower the stakeholders to create action and remove barriers. One barrier that impedes student learning is the lack of time to plan with instructional coaches. I believe that by implementing Kotter’s first four steps, we will be able to encourage school leaders to make this a necessary part of building instructional capacity within the schools. Building in time for the instructional coaches to work with teachers provides better learning for students, is a better use of the
coaches’ expertise, and increases the teachers’ knowledge of how to improve student learning.

Another barrier to remove and for which to create action is the time provided to collaborate within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This collaboration empowers teachers to share ideas, create better learning opportunities, and become more reflective about their own learning and student learning in general. Making these changes will provide the professional development that allows teachers to develop rigorous and engaging learning opportunities for students. This happens when teachers can utilize learning from their PLCs, professional development, and coaching cycles to empower their students.

In working with the guiding coalition to become empowered, I will work with the families and the district decision makers on how funds for the school can be used to purchase additional instructional coaches, provide professional development, provide parent workshops, and purchase culturally relevant resources. These resources help improve student learning and help parents become aware of how they can bridge student learning from school to home. One of the reasons this step is important, is because the fifth step of change is about empowerment. Empowerment moves the community to advocate for what is best for the children within the school. It will also allow the guiding coalition to become a part of the decision-making process when leadership changes are made. When leadership changes are made at the school site, as a result of school grades, the guiding coalition can work with district leaders to determine the type of administration that will sustain the growth or help to create the improvements that need to be made in the school academically and culturally to help move the school and the
community in the right direction. The guiding coalition should be invited (Block, 2009) to take part in the conversation that will build on trust required to influence positive change within the school.

Block (2009) suggested that “community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge interdependence. To belong is to act as an investor, owner, and creator of this place” (p. 3). Steps one through five by Kotter and Cohen (2002) will allow for the type of community which Block suggested and I envision the school to be; however, there are some necessary components the stakeholders will need to continue to build on the empowerment step. Block (2009) referred to these as possibility, ownership, and commitment conversations. The possibility of conversation leads us into the future and moves us away from the past (Block, 2009). For example, in the past, this school community had not been at the heart of decision-making for changes that impacted their students or the leadership changes that eroded the school's trust and culture over time. The ownership conversation defines the community's part in the school changing and becoming its best (Block, 2009). This is an example of the community becoming accountable for how they intend the school to create and evolve. The commitment conversation promises the guiding coalition and the community that there will be no turning back to the past (Block, 2009). Utilizing these conversation pieces to address Kotter and Cohen’s step five of empowerment, helps the guiding coalition build the credibility needed to move to step six of change, (Kotter and Cohen, 2002), to celebrate short term wins.

By applying the gifts of conversation to which Block (2009) referred regarding possibility, ownership, and commitment, I will work towards the short-term wins in
Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) step six. The change I envision is an adaptive challenge, according to Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky (2009). This challenge will require more time to implement and a different way we will work on the change. This change will be ongoing since it will require all the stakeholders to become involved as the school change needs. Therefore, the guiding coalition will be specific about their short-term goals. They will need to offer opportunities to recognize when those goals are met throughout the change implementation, so that all stakeholders can celebrate. These short-term wins will be highlighted at parent workshops, via school robocalls, and school celebrations as they relate to the 4Cs in the Vision of Success.

In step seven of the change process, Kotter and Cohen (2002), require that leaders do not give up. This means that school leaders will continue to meet with the guiding coalition to ensure that the school meets its goals. The guiding coalition can serve as the school's accountability partner, ensuring that the school leaders implement the changes with fidelity and build the school's culture. This includes school leaders being present at professional learning community meetings, providing coaching cycle opportunities, and providing professional development that leads to rigorous and engaging lessons and improving teachers’ instructional practices. This idea of not giving up leads to sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). “Sustainable leadership puts learning at the center of everything leaders do” (p. 27).

Step eight in the change process is where leaders make the change stick. This means that the strategies and actions put into place are ones that will ensure that as new faculty, students, parents, and other community stakeholders become part of the school, they have a full understanding of the school's culture. They will be aware of the values
and shared vision established in the Vision of Success and will be encouraged to participate in the conversations that continue to move the school forward. Teachers will continue to see student academic achievement increase based on their improved instructional practices when teaching the State Standards. Still, more importantly, the teachers’ commitment to growing professionally will continue. Teachers’ participation in PLCs, professional development opportunities, and coaching cycles will be viewed as their continued growth and development for the students they teach.

District leaders will communicate and share the decision-making for leadership changes with the community to increase trust and mutual respect within this community. This will lead to the community participating in the culture building of the community school they desire and the power to improve their children's education. I also envision that the district leaders will take a more active role in advocating for the students at economically disadvantaged schools with additional funding that allows for the Vision of Success to come to fruition.

To test the effectiveness of our strategies and actions within our change plan, we will utilize the enacting phase described by Wagner et al. (2006) for whole systems change. “The enacting phase helps schools and districts undertake new practices that will result in improved instructional practice and results for students” (p. 154). During this phase, the guiding coalition look at data, shared accountability, and relationships for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The effectiveness for using the data comes as a reflection of the conversations with the school principal from the 2018 and 2019 school years. To improve the school data, the guiding coalition will determine the effectiveness on instruction as it relates to formative and quarterly assessments at a
passage rate of 70% or higher that reflects the quality of instruction and teacher practices. These data also include evidence of observables seen in classroom observations using the Danielson Framework (2007) that focuses on domains one and three, planning and preparation and instruction.

In shared accountability for continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Wagner et al., 2006), the guiding coalition will assess the fidelity at which learning from professional development and coaching cycles are implemented within classroom instruction. Teachers will provide collaborative feedback on their practices during professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004) and student learning improvements. This should also be seen in student assessment data in which improved instructional practices will result in improved learning gains.

In relationships for continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Wagner et al., 2006), the guiding coalition will assess the effectiveness of building trust amongst the teachers, coaches, and the community. Block (2009) said conversations of possibility, ownership, and commitment foster this continued commitment of what is valued in the school community. Step eight, according to Kotter and Cohen (2002), is about making change stick. To do that, the guiding coalition will provide opportunities for parents to participate in workshops and celebrations that promote the transfer of student learning from school to home. Purinton and Azcoitia (2016) suggested that “Families need to be safe in an emotional and social sense, but also in the participation within the academic landscape of the school,” (p. 7). It is these opportunities to build trust between the school and the community that ultimately impact the effectiveness of the change plan.
Conclusion

As I think about the Vision of Success of the school under study and how I can apply the strategies and actions to improving teacher instructional practices in economically disadvantaged schools, one thing that truly stands out for me is knowing that this adaptive change requires a change in the way people think about their teaching practices in the classroom. It also highlights the barriers that are in place that often make student proficiency on standards-based tests difficult. In the next chapter I will identify they policy implications that my program evaluation will have on the implementation of my Vision of Success.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications and Policy Recommendations

I will propose a new school board policy to implement instructional coaches for all subject areas in economically disadvantaged schools. School district leaders will work to remove barriers imposed by local and state funding to ensure that students receive the benefits of quality instruction that instructional coaches provide through improving teacher practice. This new change will ensure that teachers receive adequate support to impact student learning and proficiency on the State Standards Assessment in economically disadvantaged schools.

Policy Statement

The new policy will be specific to the school under study and applied to similar schools that serve economically disadvantaged students. The plan to collaborate with colleagues and instructional coaches with fidelity for lesson planning, coaching cycles, professional development, and PLCs offers teachers the opportunity to better understand their students' State Standards, needs, and teacher effectiveness. This also allows school leaders to gain insight into how teachers provide instruction or think about instruction within school buildings.

I recommend this specific policy based on my program evaluation findings as a need for teachers to collaborate and have tiered support from coaches based on the State Standards. I also recommend this policy because instructional coaches in this study found themselves as both teachers in the classroom providing student instruction and messengers of school administrators, meaning they were not seen as trusted coaches and “experts” but as procedural implementers.
I believe the policy will effectively address low student achievement on the State Standards Assessment and improve teacher instructional practices in economically disadvantaged schools. I found teachers wanted to utilize the time with coaches to improve student learning. Teachers wanted to better understand the student learning progression from year to year to improve test scores; they wanted the coaches' support to help build the school building's capacity and culture of learning.

**Analysis of Needs**

In the next few subsections, I will analyze my policy recommendations from six distinct disciplinary areas to better understand how my policy proposal will impact all stakeholders. I will analyze my policy proposal from an educational, economic, social, political, legal, and moral and ethical lens. My goal is to provide stakeholders with a deep understanding of how my policy recommendation will increase the support for hiring more instructional coaches in economically disadvantaged schools to improve teacher practices and student achievement on the State Standards Assessment.

**Educational analysis.** Student achievement decreased in every subject area tested on the State Standards Assessment over two years at the school under study. Increasing instructional coaches' use will impact how teachers provide classroom instruction and their understanding of the State Standards. Suppose instructional coaches are provided the opportunity to work with teachers in developing standards aligned instruction that is both rigorous, engaging, and culturally relevant. In that case, teachers will be able to implement this learning within their classrooms. Removing the barrier that places instructional coaches as the primary instructional leader within a classroom, allows them the opportunity to work with teachers based on skill level. It allows the coaches to
provide feedback (Quintero, 2019) on the delivery of instruction and provide support on how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students. It also creates a collaboration for learning between the teacher and the coach.

Another example of why an instructional coach is necessary is because their role is aligned with the professional development of teachers needed at the school level and can help raise the bar for teacher practice as part of professional learning communities (Quintero, 2019). It is their expertise aligned with professional development and professional learning communities that helps to drive the expectations for student learning and achievement on the State Standards Assessment.

The role of the instructional coach is to help teachers plan rigorous and engaging lessons based on the State Standards. They provide teachers with a strong model for what the very best instruction looks like for all students (Stevenson & Woulfin, 2019). This strong model of instruction as described by Stevenson and Woulfin (2019) involves teachers having “high-leverage activities, observation cycles, analyzing of student work with colleagues” (p.2), which make effective teaching and student achievement possible.

**Economic analysis.** This policy proposal's economic impact on increasing the hiring of more subject area instructional coaches in economically disadvantaged schools benefits the school under study, the school district, and the school's community. The hiring of additional instructional coaches also leads to improved teacher quality within the school. Based on Murnane and Steele’s (2007) research as described in Chapter 2 of my program evaluation, teacher effectiveness in schools is based on the teacher’s knowledge to implement curriculum and improve student growth on state assessments. When instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to improve their practice it
improves student achievement. It also, positions the students at the school for advanced level courses in middle and high school, and later employment within the community. It increases the school grade and places money on better programs to implement at the school for enrichment rather than remediation.

When school grades improve from year to year, the school staff is awarded money from the School Recognition program (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). This money is also used to help purchase additional materials and equipment for students based on the decisions of the School Advisory Committee. The current practice of using the School Improvement Grant (SIG) is to provide resources, such as additional curriculum and intervention materials that improve student achievement on the State Standards Assessment and subsequently to raise the school grade. However, utilizing that money to enhance teacher practice with instructional coaches will increase student achievement (Odden, 2012). An additional economic impact that Odden (2012) suggested for placing instructional coaches within schools is that of identifying teacher effectiveness and developing budgets that reflect it. He stated that when budgets are tight “dismissing teachers that are ineffective” (p.140), is a way to be strategic in how to move student achievement. Instructional coaches play a key role in developing teachers based on collaborative work, coaching, and observing teacher effectiveness (Stevenson & Woulfin, 2019).

Furthermore, the larger impact of having the instructional coaches in these schools allows more time to identify the type of professional development needed at the school site and which teachers specifically need the professional development. Odden (2012), suggested that states should include in their school finance formulas sufficient
funds for new teacher induction and coaching programs. Odden (2012) suggested that “5.4% of the district’s operating funds [be used] for teacher induction/coaching programs” (p. 89). The instructional coaches’ role will be to identify if the collaboration in planning transfers to the implementation of instruction within the classroom and increased student achievement. These observations will lead to embedded professional development at the school level that will not impede district funding, but will utilize research-based practices the coaches receive from their own professional development on teacher instructional practice.

**Social analysis.** The social impact of my policy proposal involves the increase in student achievement, culture of the community, and teacher beliefs. The relationships built between instructional coaches is developed through the learning and the collaboration from both the teachers and coaches. Teachers will share, reflect, and grow based on the collective needs of themselves and their students (Donohoo, 2017) as determined by working with coaches.

The social impact that instructional coaches have on teachers is that they facilitate increased opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice within the classroom. Instructional coaches can provide teachers with insight on student learning through the rigor of the instruction and the level of engagement. The primary goal of coaching is to improve student learning (Moran, 2007). Coaches also help teachers to identify their implicit biases when working with children of color and how those biases impede learning (Young, 2019). They offer teachers opportunities to set higher expectations for learning when the rigor is not present in the instruction. Their efforts with teachers help to broaden the scope of trust and collaborative learning for their colleagues. Teachers
then become more willing to share their own learning and that of their students. This collaborative work and trust build deeper relationships about what is valued in moving student learning (Wagner et al., 2006).

The social impact this policy proposal has on students is that they can form deeper relationships with their teachers. In Chapter Two: Review of Literature, I addressed the importance of teacher expectations on student learning through the research of Ryan (2006), Gershenson and Papageorge (2018), and Panteleo (2016), and how this connects to the greater value of what students learn and demonstrate when held to a higher standard of learning. When students feel challenged by the learning based upon the criteria the teachers have set forth, this demonstrates the teachers value them as learners. The learning opportunities are built with the students in mind and bring forth teacher clarity and deep engagement (Fisher et al., 2018). These authors stated that “Teacher noticing is the ability to notice student thinking; interpret what students know; and respond accordingly to advance student knowledge,” (Fisher et al., 2018, p. 68). When teachers set forth clear expectations for learning and the criteria for how learning will be assessed, they demonstrate the relationships they have formed with students. Teacher expectations matter: the higher the expectations, the more increased the completion rates of work for students (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018).

**Political analysis.** School district leaders depend on money from property taxes to implement instructional coaches for all subject areas in economically disadvantaged schools. They also depend on tax referendums to implement new initiatives within schools. In the 2018 school year, the district superintendent under study campaigned for a tax referendum that would increase funding for teachers’ salaries, school renovations, and
new air conditioners for schools (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The referendum passed overwhelmingly within the county. The political impact of my policy proposal to increase instructional coaches at economically disadvantaged schools could possibly increase support for future tax referendums provided it becomes a larger community endeavor that all students, regardless of where they live, should have better opportunities to improve their learning.

As a community member and an educator, I supported and voted for the tax referendum because I knew the impact it would have on me personally and professionally within the classroom. Although the referendum was used to help support building repairs, it also allowed for raises and opportunities to place more resources in the building for students. I also encouraged friends and family to vote for it because it is my belief that additional money in schools makes a difference in the type of resources children receive to improve learning. The tax referendum also made room for school leaders to hire additional instructional coaches that they needed to improve instructional practices.

Additionally, as a constituent and educator within the district under study, one of the biggest challenges I have noted for the school under study and similar schools within the community is that they are not viewed in a positive light. The schools serve students who live in poverty, they are in the inner city, and they often have low parental involvement. It is rare that district leaders and school board members address the heart of concerns that plague the schools in a community. These schools are disadvantaged by high teacher turnover, low academic performance, and disciplinary concerns. This is not evidenced in schools in more affluent communities, as often when parents advocate for their students change happens immediately. It is my opinion, that when parents in low-
income schools attempt to advocate for their children, the results are delayed reactions, talking points, or no change at all unless the problem is a result of the state assigned school grade. The political impact of a policy proposal such as mine will require future school board members to seek out better opportunities to improve the schools they represent. Schools in these communities are not a monolith and deserve representation that reflects their distinct needs.

The necessity to ensure that there are more instructional coaches in high poverty schools addresses the need to improve student achievement. The instructional coaches create the culture for a “growth mindset, a focus on continuous improvement, and risk-taking” (Johnson & Rodman, 2019, p. 1). This leads to improvement in the school grade and better opportunities for the elected school board members to build on their relationships with the community and re-election efforts.

**Legal analysis.** School district leaders must consider legal implications for a policy proposal which would implement the hiring of new instructional coaches. According to the state statute for school improvement, schools are required to have:

- coaching, that serves as an instructional resource in a school to generate improvement in student achievement by improving the quality of instruction through professional development support to instructional personnel in their respective content areas, as needed, based on an analysis of student performance and observational data. (citation of state statute withheld to maintain the confidentiality of the state and the district)

The state statute also requires that instructional support is “provided by a district curriculum or content area specialist who visits the school frequently to provide onsite,
job-embedded professional development and support to classroom instructional personnel” (citation of state statute withheld to maintain the confidentiality of the state and the district).

Instructional coaches serve in the capacity of the primary resource for helping teachers improve their instructional practice. Their capacity to help teachers understand the State Standards and the data from district assessments helps to improve student learning and proficiency on the State Standards Assessment. District leaders must create opportunities for instructional coaches to collaborate with teachers, school administrators, and the community on how to improve student learning.

**Moral and ethical analysis.** The barriers imposed by state and local funding to limit instructional coaches and effective teachers affect students in economically disadvantaged schools. In Chapter Two, I reviewed the research by Murnane and Steele (2007) in which they addressed how districts have a large talent pool of effective teachers from which to choose. They are often hired at more affluent schools; by the time the lower performing schools hire, they end up with the teachers of lower quality or those who are out of the field for the position available, and this impacts student achievement.

With the reauthorization of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 (U. S. Department of Education, 2015), schools and local education agencies must describe how students in economically disadvantaged areas are not disproportionately affected by ineffective teachers and school leaders [Section 1111 (g)1B and 1112 (b)(2)]. The new policy will benefit students in economically disadvantaged schools by allowing them to have better access to effective teachers and effective classroom instruction. I believe
school district leaders can close the achievement gap (Ansell, 2011) by hiring more instructional coaches to help teachers become more effective in the classroom.

Researchers Hahnel and Jackson (2012) and Isenberg et al. (2013) investigated the effects of effective teaching and stated when students were not given access to equal, equitable, and effective teaching, it resulted in low performance compared to their more affluent peers; but when students in economically disadvantaged schools had a highly effective teacher and were given high-quality instruction it improved proficiency academically. Instructional coaches provide the feedback necessary to impact that kind of change with a teachers’ instructional practice.

**Implications for Staff and Community Relationships**

I believe the policy to hire instructional coaches to improve teacher practices in economically disadvantaged schools will enhance students, teachers, and the surrounding community. Instructional coaches influence how teachers perceive their ability to transfer learning from coaching, professional development, and PLCs into their instructional delivery for student learning. This results in greater student achievement and positive relationships between the school and the community.

In my professional experience, I have benefitted from having implemented feedback from my instructional coaches. Their insight helped me to transfer learning into my classroom and influence student achievement within my classroom. The current practices of placing our instructional coaches in the classroom as the teacher when vacancies cannot be filled, limits instructional capacity within a school, and their ability as coaches to support the development of the teacher’s instructional practice.
Furthermore, through the collaborative work of the instructional coaches, teachers will likely have a greater opportunity to influence the broader community to draw a more diverse population to the school which will, in turn, improve the neighborhood’s outlook on the school. I believe that as the stakeholders work to create a more diverse learning environment for students and student achievement, the community will be more inclined to advocate for the diversity needed to continue the work in a magnet school. This level of “engagement in community occurs when parents, students, school staff and neighbors invest in schools, co-creating, and owning it… which leads to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities,” (Williams, as cited in Purinton & Azcoitia, 2016, p. 58).

**Conclusion**

The barrier to hiring instructional coaches to improve teacher practice imposed by local and state funding can be removed to ensure that students receive the benefits of quality instruction. The new policy to implement instructional coaches for all subject areas in economically disadvantaged schools will increase the impact instructional coaches have on the learning environment within a school and the collaborative opportunities they provide teachers. School district leaders, parents, students, and the community can appreciate the educational, economic, social, moral, and ethical impact a new policy could have on economically disadvantaged schools. This new policy creates equity and empowerment for students who are often relegated by state and local decisions that often overlook the greater need to see academic achievement within a school.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

I evaluated teachers’ instructional practices in Grades 3-5 at one school using the State Standards in a public school district in the United States. My program evaluation informs my future vision for how the school under study and similar schools within the district can improve student achievement. I hope that school district leaders will realize the impact instructional coaches have on teacher instructional practices and student achievement on the State Standards Assessment (SSA).

Discussion

The purpose of this program evaluation was to investigate whether the instructional practices implemented by teachers using the State Standards were effective for instructing economically disadvantaged students in Grades 3-5. The State Standards were used to determine student proficiency on the SSA annually in reading, writing, math, and science. The SSA determined student proficiency and learning gains for students in Grades 3-12. These data were used to determine the state assigned school grade. The school under study earned a school grade of D based on the 2019 SSA due to decreased proficiency points in the tested subjects. My goal was to determine whether teacher instructional practices addressing the State Standards contributed to the decrease in student achievement.

I evaluated one school’s instructional practices and their impact on student achievement on the SSA. I analyzed and compared the school’s SSA data from the 2018 and 2019 school years to determine whether the teachers’ implementation of the State Standards impacted student scores in reading, writing, math, and science. I analyzed and compared the school’s SSA data against the district and the state data to identify changes
in total possible points versus points earned by subject and category tested that counted toward proficiency or learning gains in each tested subject. As mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the State Standards Assessment components was that proficiency was based on students scoring a performance level of three or higher on a five level scale (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). For students to obtain this proficiency level, the teachers’ instructional practices in implementing the State Standards must demonstrate a clear understanding of the standards. However, over the two years I studied, the state, district, and school continued to decline in mean scale scores each year in every content area as I illustrated in Tables 1-28. Each subject area had a set of possible points in each of the content categories that neither the state, the district, nor the school met at 100%; in fact, scoring at 60% of the possible points appeared to be the benchmark for proficiency at the state level. Proficiency is considered achieving at a performance level three, which is satisfactory; but a performance level score of four or five demonstrates a students’ actual proficiency and mastery ability on the SSA. A 60% on a traditional A-F grading scale is a “D” and implies that a student “needs improvement.” If the threshold for the SSA is at 60%, are we only requiring students to barely make the standard of proficiency and “need improvement”? If so, there is something to be said about how the state education leaders view curriculum and student learning.

Through my research, I found that teacher instructional practices impacted student achievement on the State Standards Assessment. The impact was located in the teachers’ ability to make informed decisions, plan rigorous and engaging lessons for students, and collaborate to create greater learning opportunities among their students. I interviewed and surveyed teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators who implemented and
observed teacher instructional practices when teaching the State Standards. The instructional coaches worked with the teachers to plan rigorous and engaging lessons and provided professional development. The instructional coaches expressed a desire to work with teachers who were prepared for planning ahead of time to facilitate better discussion and collaboration among the teachers. The coaches also expressed a desire to provide professional support to teachers’ abilities as coaches and not be placed in the classroom as instructors or the implementers of school policy and protocols.

The teacher participants in my research desired to have more time to collaborate and plan with the instructional coaches (Murphy, 2016). They expressed a desire to have the support that coaches provided and the opportunity to participate in professional development that lent itself to improving their practice and increasing student achievement. I also learned through my research that change in school leaders affected the school culture and the climate. It impacted teachers' high turnover from one school leader to another, creating an inability for the school to maintain trust in the community and build capacity within the school. Block (2009) referred to this as a sense of belonging. The students at the school under study had not had the same school administrator from the time they entered school as kindergarteners until they left as fifth graders. This systemic barrier of change in leadership impacted student achievement. These changes also influenced the school’s ability to maintain a magnet school's diversity based on district leaders’ decisions to adhere to their membership policies at a magnet school.

The implementation of my change leadership plan places the onus on the district to hire additional instructional coaches at economically disadvantaged schools to improve
student achievement. It is the expertise of the coaches that provides insight into teacher instructional practices through coaching cycles, professional development, and professional learning communities (Stevenson and Woulfin, 2019). The instructional coaches help to build capacity in the school building and determine which teachers need the greatest support that leads to improved student achievement at an economically disadvantaged school. It is also their expertise that lends itself to greater teacher efficacy when it comes to providing teachers the adequate support they need to create a rigorous, engaging, and culturally relevant and responsive learning environment for students.

**Leadership Lessons**

One leadership lesson I learned through personal experience in my study is the role school administrators play in curriculum planning. Teachers pay attention to school leaders’ values. As an administrator, I have realized the value of showing up at planning sessions to be well-versed in the instruction that teachers are implementing. In my interview with one of the school leaders, I mentioned the importance of attending the PLCs and common planning among grade levels; thus, school leaders can identify whether the learning from PLCs and common planning transfers to instructional delivery in the classroom. Murphy (2016) suggested that principals accept responsibility for the school’s success when they demonstrate how they allocate their time and what is important enough to be place on their agendas. This also holds true for professional development; it should be tiered for teachers and based on teachers’ evident needs. The professional development should be ongoing and used with fidelity to determine the impact it has on student and teacher practices.
Another leadership lesson that I learned is Kotter and Cohen’s eight steps of change implemented within my program evaluation (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). As I think about the eight steps of change, I am reminded of the importance this process employs in effecting change within a school. Courageous conversations must be held to move the school forward. Recognizing that teachers’ instructional practices impact student achievement and the steps by which that happens is important. It is also essential to have the community involved in those change plans. The school under study has been impacted by change over the last fifteen years. It is a unique school with unique needs often ignored by district leaders and the school board, as mentioned in Chapter Seven. The stakeholders in this community deserve to see culture, capacity, and trust maintained at the school. Constant change impacts student achievement and relationships. One of the most important lessons I learned as part of this program evaluation is the necessity to get the community involved with student achievement in the school under study. Block (2009) discussed how the possibility, ownership, and commitment conversations impact how change can happen at a school when the community is part of the decision-making process. For the school under study to have that incremental change, the community needs to be a part of the change process.

**Conclusion**

Teacher instructional practices using State Standards have an impact on student achievement. For students to obtain proficiency on the State Standards Assessment, they need opportunities to have the best learning possible. This learning can be achieved with instructional coaches who support the learning of students and teachers. These instructional coaches provide ongoing support, professional development and help
teachers recognize how to improve their practice. School district leaders must take advantage of what instructional coaches provide in economically disadvantaged schools to raise the student learning bar. In the words of, Diane Ravitch (2013), “We cheat children when we don’t give them the chance to learn more than basic skills. We cheat them when we evaluate them by standardized tests. We undervalue them when we turn them into data points” (p. 241). They are more than just numbers; they are individuals who are deserving of a quality education that prepares them for an everchanging society.
References


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Johnson, B., & Rodman, A. (2019). *Collaborative learning for educators: Coaching is an effective form of professional development and embedding in the culture of a school or district is key*. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/article/collaborative-learning-educators


Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Survey
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions
Appendix C: Instructional Coach Survey
Appendix D: Interview Questions Instructional Coaches
Appendix E: Interview Questions Administrators
Appendix F: Survey Administrators
Appendix G: “As is” 4C Chart
Appendix H: “To Be” Framework
Appendix I: Strategies & Actions Chart
Appendix J: Teacher Interviews & Responses
Appendix K: Instructional Coaches Interviews & Responses
Appendix L: Administrator Interviews & Responses
Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Directions

1. Please answer the following questions regarding your level of experience in part 1.

2. Please answer sections 2-3 based on the Likert Scale regarding your experiences with the State Standards and leadership support.

3. After completing the Likert Scale questions, please follow the directions for completing the open-ended questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Demographics</th>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21+ years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. How long have you been teaching?</td>
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<td>b. How long have you taught in a Title 1/Renaissance School?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. How long have you taught using the State Standards?</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. State Standards</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. I know how to align resources using the State Standards.</td>
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<td>c. I know how to design lessons that are based on State Standards.</td>
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<td>d. I know how to develop common assessments using the State Standards.</td>
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<td>e. My district provides support in how to use the State Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. The State Standards are difficult to understand.</td>
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<tr>
<th>3. Leadership support</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
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</table>
a. The leadership team helps me plan rigorous lessons using the State Standards.

b. The leadership team understands the State Standards.

Please answer the following open-ended responses based on your experiences.

1. What types of planning resources do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

2. What types of professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

3. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
Appendix B

Teacher Interview Questions

1. How well do you feel you understand the State Standards? Please explain.

2. When planning, how do you align assessments to the State Standards?

3. What types of professional development have you taken in the last two years that has improved your understanding of the State Standards? Explain.

4. Have any of the professional development trainings you received resulted in follow-up coaching cycles with your instructional coaches? Explain.

5. How helpful was your instructional coaches when it comes to explaining the State Standards to you?

6. How helpful were your instructional coached when it comes to scheduling Coaching cycles?

7. How often has your instructional coaches worked with you to plan differentiated lessons for your students?

8. How often has your instructional coaches assisted with small groups to improve proficiency?

9. In what ways, do you feel your administration has an understanding or working knowledge of the State Standards? Explain.

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
Appendix C

Instructional Coach Survey

Directions

1. Please answer the following questions regarding your level of experience in part 1.

2. Please answer sections 2-3 based on the Likert Scale regarding your experiences with the State Standards and leadership support.

3. After completing the Likert Scale, please follow the directions for completing the open-ended questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Demographics</th>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21+ years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. How long have you been a teacher?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. How long have you been an instructional coach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. How long have you led/taught in a Title 1/Renaissance School?</td>
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<td>d. How long have you implemented instruction programs at your school?</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. State Standards</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. My teachers know how to align resources using the State Standards.</td>
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<td>c. My teachers know how to design lessons that are based on State Standards.</td>
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<td>d. My teachers know how to develop common</td>
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</table>
assessments using the State Standards.

e. My district provides support in how to use the State Standards.

f. The State Standards are difficult to understand.

g. As the instructional coach I plan rigorous lessons with the teachers at my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Leadership support</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Teachers at my school are giving support to use other resources to implement instruction at my school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. The leadership supports utilizing resources that are suggested in the planning support tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. The professional development provided to my teachers helps them to autonomously implement instruction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. My administrator decides how instruction will be implemented at our school to improve student achievement.</td>
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Please answer the following open-ended responses based on your experiences.

4. What types of planning resources do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

5. What types of professional development do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

6. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
Appendix D

Interview Questions: Instructional Coaches

1. How often are you able to help teachers plan lessons and common assessments using the State Standards?

2. Do you feel the teachers you support have a working knowledge of the State Standards?

3. In your opinion, are they planning lessons that will lead to proficiency on the State Standards Assessment? Explain.

4. What types of professional development have you offered to teachers, that would help them improve their practice as teachers?

5. When completing coaching cycles with your teachers, have you noticed any change in the way future instruction and planning is implemented using the State Standards? Explain.

6. How does your administrator support your expertise in helping teachers align instruction using the State Standards?

7. What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
Appendix E

Interview Questions: Administrators

1. What have you observed as a challenge that your teachers have when designing lessons using the State Standards?

2. What are some of the successes, you have observed with your teachers when designing lessons using the State Standards?

3. In what ways, do you feel that the professional development offered by the district is prescribed to help your teachers or is differentiated to help those teachers needing to implement rigorous lessons using the State Standards?

4. In what ways have you required that teachers meet with you or the literacy team to reflect on professional development offered at your site?

5. In what ways, have you observed your teachers apply the learning within their classrooms and share their results?

6. As the instructional leader at your site, what is your understanding of the State Standards, and what to expect when looking at teacher instructional practices?

7. What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?

8. Is there anything there else you would like to tell me?
Appendix F

Survey: Administrators

Directions:

1. Please answer the following questions regarding your level of experience in part 1.

2. Please answer sections 2-3 based on the Likert Scale as to whether regarding your experiences with the State Standards and leadership support.

3. After completing the Likert Scale please, follow the directions for completing the open-ended questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Demographics</th>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21 Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. How long have you been in leadership?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. How long have you led/taught in a Title 1/Renaissance School?</td>
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<td>c. How long did you teach prior to becoming and administrator?</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. How long have you implemented the State Standards at your school?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. State Standards</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I have a good working knowledge of the State Standards.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. My teachers know how to align resources using the State Standards.</td>
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</table>
Please answer the following open-ended responses based on your experiences.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What types of planning resources you perceive needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What types of professional development do you perceive is needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What is, or should be, the role of the school leadership in supporting teachers in their autonomy to plan lessons and implement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Is there anything else you would like me to know?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

“AS-IS” 4 Cs Analysis for Instructional Practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards

Context
- Lack of rigor & engagement; professional development
- Time for planning and collaboration
- Limited knowledge of what students know or need to know
- 80% of students African American and on free or reduced-price lunch

Culture
- Teacher support by coaches, planning is inconsistent
- High teacher turnover/change in leadership
- Relevant materials to address student vocabulary background knowledge

Competencies
- Lack of rigor & engagement; professional development
- Time for planning and collaboration
- Limited knowledge of what students know or need to know
- 80% of students African American and on free or reduced-price lunch

Conditions
- Funding
- Teacher contract
- Instructional materials and human capital

Need for Improved Instructional Practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards
Appendix H

“TO-BE” Framework for Instructional Practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards

**Context**
- Rigor & engagement; professional development
- Time for planning and collaboration
- Knowledge of what students know or need to know

**Culture**
- Teacher support by coaches, planning is consistent, professional development
- Low teacher turnover/no change in leadership
- Relevant materials to address student Parent knowledge of what students need to know

**Competencies**
- Rigor & engagement; professional development
- Time for planning and collaboration
- Knowledge of what students know or need to know
- Leader changes

**Conditions**
- Funding
- Teacher contract
- Instructional materials and human capital

**Improved Instructional Practices in Grades 3-5 using the State Standards**
## Appendix I

### Strategies and Actions Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a sense of urgency</td>
<td>• Hold a conversation with the principal regarding the state testing data and instructional practices impacting student performance from the 2018 and 2019 school years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Share the information with the leadership team to develop a guiding coalition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the change vision</td>
<td>• The guiding coalition will develop a change vision that will create more professional development opportunities for teachers, coaching cycles between teachers and instructional coaches, and workshops for parents to improve learning between school and home.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing professional development, tiered coaching cycles that are reflective on teaching practices, and improving student academic achievement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Parents will participate in a workshop at least three times a year to ensure continuous student learning and academic growth at the school level.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The guiding coalition will develop a common vision on what rigor and engagement look like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the change vision</td>
<td>• The guiding coalition will have written statements that outline strategies on professional development, professional learning communities, coaching cycles, and rigorous and engaging curriculum planning. The guiding coalition will develop a common vision on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What rigor and engagement looks like.</td>
<td>Will communicate that information to the faculty and other stakeholders in faculty meetings; thru family learning nights and workshops; and school events where the stakeholders and staff participate. This communication will be both formal and informal. All stakeholders are aware of the change plan affecting the school and use the school data from the 2018 and 2019 state assessment to explain why the change plan is needed at the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify funding to support the need for additional coaches, professional development, and culturally relevant curriculum.</td>
<td>The guiding coalition will work with the families and the district decision-makers on how funds for the school can be used to purchase additional instructional coaches, professional development, parent workshops, and culturally relevant resources. The guiding coalition resources to help improve student learning and help parents become aware of how they can bridge student learning from school to home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower- Implement the Gift of Conversation</td>
<td>Using the possibility of converting leads into the future and moves away from the past. This conversation gift will help the school move from enablement to empowerment and shape the direction of the school culture. The ownership conversation defines the community's part in the school changing and becoming its best. The commitment conversation promises the guiding coalition and the community to ensure that there is no turning back to the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate short-term wins</td>
<td>The guiding coalition will be specific about their short-term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
goals. They will recognize when those goals are met throughout the change implementation.

- Celebrate those wins at parent workshops, via school robocalls, and at school celebrations.

| Maintain Momentum | The guiding coalition will serve as the accountability partner for the school, ensuring that the school leadership is implementing the changes with fidelity and building the culture of the school, including being present at professional learning communities, providing the opportunities for coaching cycles, and professional development that leads to rigorous and engaging lessons and improves their instructional practices. |

| Make the change stick | The guiding coalition must have strategies and actions to ensure that as new faculty, students, parents, and other community stakeholders become a part of the school, they have a full understanding of the school's culture.  

- Communicate the values and shared vision established in the Vision of Success and encourage participation in the conversations that will move the school forward.  

- Teachers will continue to see student academic achievement increase based on their improved instructional practices using the State Standards; and their commitment to continue to grow professionally.  

- Teacher participation in PLCs, professional development, and coaching cycles will be viewed as continued growth and development for the students they teach.  

- District leaders will communicate and share the decision-making for leadership changes with the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>community to increase trust and mutual respect within this community.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The community members will participate in the culture building of the school they desire to improve for the education of their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The district leaders will take a more active role in advocating for the students at economically disadvantaged schools with additional funding from the state and prior to removal of a school leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Teacher Interview Questions & Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How well do you understand the State Standards? Please Explain.</td>
<td>• 100% of the teachers responded they have a good understanding of the standards and how it is broken down to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2/10 teachers mentioned the Blauman &amp; Burke text was especially helpful in describing teacher actions and student actions for each standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When planning instruction, how do you align assessments to the State Standards?</td>
<td>• 6/10 teachers responded that they align assessments with the curriculum, base assessments on what students have learned previously, and adjust as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- teachers base their assessments on the target outcome for the day.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- uses the SSA item specifications to identify the right types of questions to use instruction to assess student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2/10-uses the assessments from the district curriculum guide since their pre-made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What types of professional development have you taken in the last two years that have improved your understanding of the State Standards? Explain.</td>
<td>• 3/10 teachers mentioned training from iReady, National Board, or Common Core (during initial inception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2/10- Training at previous school unpacking standards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- Science training to utilize data and address student misconceptions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- Phonics and behavior management for my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3/10 teachers stated no new trainings since onboarding with the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have any of the professional trainings you received resulted in follow-up coaching cycles with your instructional coaches? Explain.</td>
<td>• 6/10- by modeling a lesson, providing feedback, and helping me to identify strengths and weakness of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2/10- initially yes, but once testing season comes around support is pulled away to focus on testing; less attention given to primary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2/10- very little follow through or only from administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How helpful were your instructional coaches when it comes to explaining the State Standards to you?</td>
<td>• 100% of teachers interviewed stated the coaches were knowledgeable about the standards and could explain them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How helpful were your instructional coaches when it comes to scheduling coaching cycles with you?</td>
<td>• 8/10- coaches flexible, approachable, and committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- depends, felt that more seasoned teachers did not get the help they needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1/10- no clear schedule and often no follow-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7. How often have your instructional coaches worked with you to plan    | • 5/10 weekly during planning  
| differentiated lessons for your students?                                | • 1/10- once/twice a month; more often at the beginning of the year  
|                                                                          | • 3/10- either alone, very little or inconsistent depending on subject area, leaving with nothing planned  
|                                                                          | • 1/10- depending on their time  |
| 8. How often have your instructional coaches assisted with small groups  | • 2/10- weekly to review district assessments and for MTSS interventions  
| to improve proficiency?                                                  | • 2/10- twice month based on district their training  
|                                                                          | • 3/10- very little or not often depending on testing  
|                                                                          | • 1/10- only for ELA  
|                                                                          | • 1/10 – based on the IEP goals of my students  
|                                                                          | • 1/10- daily based on the needs of my students  |
| 9. In what ways, do you feel your administration has an understanding  | • 100% of teachers stated that administration had a working knowledge of the standards; lead data chats with facts; provide teachers with solutions; skilled in different areas of the standards |
| or working knowledge of the State Standards? Explain.                   |                                                                                                                                          |
| 10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?                   | • Vertical planning is key for schools with high turnover; identifying vocabulary students need to know  
|                                                                          | • Balance, both primary and intermediate teachers, can benefit from coaching. Coaching should be differentiated. Teachers need more support  
|                                                                          | • Professional development and culturally relevant teaching and training on how to teach students of color  
|                                                                          | • There’s a more significant focus on standards-based learning at lower SES schools than higher SES’ teachers need to value what the standards are for and the benefit instruction  
|                                                                          | • Standards are easy to explain to parents  
|                                                                          | • Politicians should listen to educators.  |
## Appendix K

### Instructional Coach Interviews & Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Instructional Coaches Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How often are you able to help teachers plan lessons and common assessments using the State Standards?</td>
<td>Coach 1: Teachers sought help for learning targets and with question and discussion techniques, then they became overwhelmed and no longer wanted help. Coach 2: In the past, I always worked with teachers in grades 4/5; and k-3 at the beginning of the year. Currently, I do not meet with teachers as often and how well they are at assessing the standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you feel the teachers you support have a working knowledge of the State Standards?</td>
<td>Coach 1: On a scale of 1-5, they have some knowledge; there’s room for interpretation and that may not be the best for teachers. Coach 2: Some, those who do create lessons that allow them to assess students and see what they need. Others, not so much because they do not have comfort with the content are reluctant to try and become overwhelmed and push it aside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In your opinion, are the teachers planning lessons that will lead to proficiency on the State Standards Assessment? Explain</td>
<td>Coach 1: No, because there is a lack of rigorous lessons planned. Learning is still more teacher directed than the time given for students to take ownership. Coach 2: Some if they can meet focus because they give them an opportunity to practice regularly and give feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What types of professional development have you offered to teachers that would help them improve their practices as teachers?</td>
<td>Coach 1: Planning, the EET Rubric (Danielson, 2007) to understand the connections between the two. Culturally relevant PD. One-one with teachers depending on the teacher goals for that lesson. Data PD and last year, Visible Learning (Fisher et al.) was the highlight to learn about the effect size. Coach 2: Writing Rubric, which is based on the FSA writing. K-2 teachers involving crafts for traditional writers’ workshop, data to target student needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When completing coaching cycles with your teachers, have you noticed any change in the way future instruction and planning is implemented using the State Standards? Explain.</td>
<td>Coach 1: Unfortunately, no because coaching cycles were not started and ended as they should. Coach 2: Yes, I noticed a change in their confidence and the way they were teaching, being honest with students. There was a change in the data. It was noticeable that students were applying the craft, and teachers could identify it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How does your administrator support your expertise in helping teachers align instruction using the State Standards?</td>
<td>Coach 1: They allow for autonomy, and they are good listeners very supportive. They encouraged the hard conversations with the teachers that were not always the best for me as the messenger but geared towards teacher development. Coach 2: They are very supportive and encouraging one-one conversations and holding some accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?</td>
<td>Coach 1: Beginning of the year, we were all on the same page. The administration should convey expectations for the teachers. Teachers should lead planning, integrating PD with technology. Coach 2: Vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension when applying reading standards to show a blend of it works across curriculums, especially students in low SES schools. We must embed perseverance because they struggle going beyond the standards to get them there—differentiated strategies on how to gather specific things about students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is there anything else you would like me to know?</td>
<td>Coach 1: Fearful that the new BEST (Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking) will pose a whole new set of challenges because there is a potential for lack of rigor. How do we build student engagement and teacher buy-in, requiring them to be critical thinking and whether we are building life-long learners?” Coach 2: Both as a Peer Evaluator and now as a coach, I saw the difference in how students at our school compared to other schools have a different set of vocabulary and backgrounds. Our students lack the technology, equal opportunity, and exposure that students at higher SES schools have. They need a fair game on the same playing field. Their parents are trying but they also need the support to help their kids.</td>
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Appendix L
Administrator Interviews & Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Administrator Interviews</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What have you observed as a challenge that your teachers have when designing lessons using the State Standards?</td>
<td>Admin 1: Planning could be spent questioning the objectives, not looking at the text for the first time. Placing the ownership of kids and doing less teacher talk and getting the kids to collaborate. Admin 2: There is a lack of understanding of the learning required and what the outcomes should like (rigor). Teachers often do not understand the continuity of content or the progression from grade to grade beyond the current grade they teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are some of the success you have observed with your teachers when designing lessons using the State Standards?</td>
<td>Admin 1: With remote learning, teachers are collaborating with coaches. Admin 2: The willingness to search for answers or other resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In what ways do you feel that the professional development offered by the district is prescribed to help your teachers needing to implement rigorous lessons using the State Standards?</td>
<td>Admin 1: The district is good at planning/task alignment/assessment. However, what is defined as rigorous what does it mean or looks like (described as precarious)? What does it look like when planning? Admin 2: Not at all it, is up to teachers based on their professional development need, their professional development plan; or during teacher evaluations with principals. Nothing monitors the connection or requirement between PD and practice. Systems put in place in other areas monitor next steps. Other than that, there is no accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In what ways have you required that teachers meet with you or the instructional coaches to reflect on professional development offered at your site?</td>
<td>Admin 1: We surveyed our teachers to create a protocol and wanted action steps; teachers identified what was needed. Admin 2: None other than meeting with non-tenured teachers to make an informal plan or how they want it to reflect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In what ways have you observed your teachers apply the learning within their classrooms and share their results?</td>
<td>Admin 1: Remote Learning admin attending the planning sessions they can support coaches. It is seen in walkthroughs and maintains fidelity. This was something I had not done all year. Admin 2: Other than a program everyone is using, we observe them see how it is applied. The vendor usually provides additional follow-up, but not the teachers by choice. There is no fidelity unless the learning is school initiated. Then we allow an opportunity for safe practice and monitoring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. As the instructional leader at your site, what is your understanding of the State Standards, and what do you expect when looking at teacher instructional practices?</td>
<td>Admin 1: State Standards are supposed to assess problem-solving, critical thinking, and building your skill. It is our curriculum and drives everything we do and for our students it gives guidance to teachers on what students need to learn and apply over time. Teachers should plan with the</td>
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</table>
standards in mind, not as an afterthought. Ex. Text first- find the resources that align with the standard. Admin 2: State Standards is a subset of the national standards. My expectation is that teachers understand the critical learning and how they build on another and design instruction that would engage students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. What types of planning resources and professional development do you perceive are needed to prepare rigorous instruction that is aligned with the State Standards?</th>
<th>Admin 1: Depends on teachers and what is needed. Teachers should collaborate with coaches for teacher planning and clarity. Does the task align with the standard? Is it rigorous? We need more examples of what rigor looks like. Admin 2: The resource of time, human capital; knowledge of culture, teacher collaboration, and reward system that motivates collaboration.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?</td>
<td>Admin 1: I am concerned about our standards now. The reading data is stagnated, within the district. We need a different ELA approach for economically disadvantaged students; resources always go to the intermediate grades and not primary. With a lack of quality texts and building background knowledge to promote citizenship, standards do not promote that, but a text first curriculum that focuses on vocabulary and builds background knowledge could. Admin 2: None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>