



Change Is the Only Constant: Beginning Teacher Perceptions of Implementing the Current Top-Down Change

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North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, implemented in 2012, and retracted in 2014. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to hear beginning teachers describe their challenges and realizations as they implemented top-down curriculum reform. Mandated reform has been linked to professional vulnerability (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005), professional vulnerability has been linked to diminished teacher self-efficacy (Lasky, 2005), and diminished teacher self-efficacy has been linked to teacher attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Semi-structured interviews with three elementary beginning teachers were analyzed to uncover key themes. Participants stated that the amount of state or district initiatives they had experienced in their short careers was unexpected and overwhelming. Unsurprisingly, participants reported spending the most amount of instructional time on mathematics and reading because of the State tests. A synthesis of the findings suggests participants perceived the mandated reforms negatively and the intrinsic factors of teaching positively. Findings may help policy-makers and teacher-leaders understand beginning teachers' experiences implementing reform in order to diminish rampant beginning teacher attrition.

Keywords: beginning teachers, faculty mobility, educational change, common core state standards, elementary education, qualitative research

Within the educational domain, various The most recent education reform in the United States, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was released in June of 2010. Goals and expectations for the subjects of English language arts and mathematics were announced for each grade level. School districts across the United States began implementing the CCSS by 2012. While the CCSS were new, standards-based reform is not new to educators. In fact, standards reform has been part of the political rhetoric since the 1970s (Smith & O'Day, 1991). During the last several decades, the policy pendulum has

swung from a national curriculum to localized control of content and back again. The hope is that each return is not like a ping-pong ball bouncing back and forth uselessly, but like a drill, utilizing what was done before and going deeper with each return (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). The CCSS promised to be better than standards reforms of the past because these standards were internationally benchmarked (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010a; NGA & CCSSO, 2010b).

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to hear beginning teachers describe their challenges and realizations as they implemented the changing academic curriculum. Specifically, we examined how second and third year elementary school teachers implemented the CCSS as part of their daily teaching content. The main research questions were:

- 1) What do second and third year teachers at Wade Elementary School (pseudonym) report as the impact of implementing the CCSS?
- 2) What do these second and third year elementary teachers perceive as influencing their decision-making regarding curriculum content?

This study looked at three beginning teachers (two to three years of experience) in one North Carolina public elementary school. We aimed to identify what beginning teachers found overwhelming as well as influential in regards to implementing the new curriculum. An additional goal of this work was to understand how top down policy on curriculum affects teachers' decisions in their classrooms. These decisions included what internal stories and external pressures controlled teacher judgments on what subjects to teach and how much time to spend on each subject. These decisions also included whether or not to remain in the teaching profession.

Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by critical theory (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009) and influenced by both deficit thinking paradigm (Lasky, 2005) and teacher efficacy theory (Guskey, 1988). As Figure 1 demonstrates, critical theory was the overarching theory. Teacher efficacy theory most directly influenced our research questions and our decision to utilize Branyon's (2013) study findings for a priori analysis of our data. Deficit thinking paradigm directly influenced the discussion to focus on what could be accomplished in the future, not on complaints of what went wrong in the past.

The Cost of Change

This study is significant because the literature shows that beginning teachers leave the profession in high numbers reporting lack of support as a major reason (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Latham & Vogt, 2007; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Our beginning teachers were being asked to teach the new CCSS, but were not trained during pre-service coursework on the CCSS. Moreover, minimal in-service professional development was offered on the new CCSS or on ways to effectively implement new standards. North Carolina adopted the CCSS in 2010 and implemented it in 2012. Many top-level administrators considered implementation a "work in progress" and continued to tweak the policies and expectations for classroom teachers throughout the school year

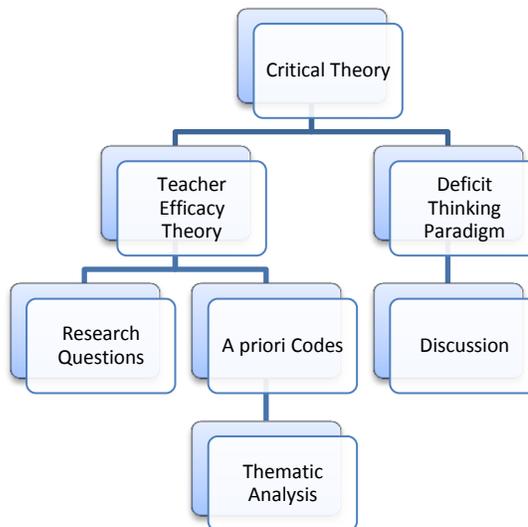


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

As North Carolina public school teachers with 17 years of experience between us, we had experienced the sink or swim feeling of being a new teacher. Idealistic and full of pedagogical theory, we started our careers full steam ahead but quickly shifted down to "survival mode" when we also had to shoulder the weight of state assessments, district initiatives, administrative paperwork, parental expectations, and struggling students on top of pedagogy and content knowledge. The literature shows that

- reform relates to teacher feelings of professional vulnerability (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005);
- feelings of professional vulnerability negatively correlate with teacher self-efficacy (Lasky, 2005; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990);
- low teacher self-efficacy causes attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2011).

While the literature supports these three statements, no studies with the exception of Dworkin's (1997) study discuss reform in the US in relation to public school teacher attrition.

The literature does address the cost of attrition and the cost of reform. Teacher turnover comes at high costs to districts: a) money for the rehiring and training process, and b) human capital of teachers with experience (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). In addition to turnover being expensive, it negatively affects student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

Similarly, curriculum reform requires the expenses of training teachers and measuring progress. In order to implement the CCSS, Fremont Public Schools (pseudonym) provided multiple professional development sessions to administrative faculty who in turn relayed this

information by offering trainings for faculty during staff meetings and teacher workdays. Financed assessment training materials were sent to teachers in stacks and technological resources were created by various entities. Subsequently, administrative faculty sent these websites and links to Freemont teachers via email to navigate and learn to utilize in their own free time. Furthermore, a new curriculum means new textbooks, standardized assessments, other publishing materials, and educational software products (Porter, 2011) that were being developed at the time of the study. Although unfortunate to illustrate, in public schools such as Freemont, taxpayer dollars supply the financing for curriculum reform and possibly teacher attrition.

Taxpayers, policymakers, school leaders, teacher educators, beginning teachers, and students will benefit from this case study as it can facilitate discussion between legislators, educators, and researchers. Similar case studies have linked teacher commitment to successful school improvement in Kenya, England, Australia, and Canada (see Branyon, 2013; Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Lasky, 2005) but there is a lack of case studies conducted in US schools to generate theory on attrition as an unintended consequence of reform. This study was timely as implementation of the newly adopted CCSS began the 2012-2013 school year and the annual report showed teacher turnover increased to 14.3%, a five year high (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013).

Review of Related Literature

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published one of the most significant reports in the history of United States education reform. This report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, was written in a cautionary voice and portrayed American students as academically underachieving. *A Nation at Risk* concluded that the US was in foreseeable danger of “a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). The nation’s response to this account catalyzed education reforms at local, state, and federal levels. Although the report mainly focused on the improvements needed for teachers and students at the secondary level, an overarching proposition of getting *back-to-basics* in K-12 education was incited generally.

Over the past three decades, a myriad of educational reforms both large and small scale have been introduced in an effort to disavow the “rising tide of mediocrity” in our nation and correct the path of our education system. In 1994, the Goals 2000 Education America Act deployed a new set of standards, which sought to make US students first in the world in science and mathematics achievement by the year 2000. The development and implementation of content standards in academic and several non-academic areas took root during this period. This concentration of standards and

testing furthered the fervent drive of accountability in our schools. Accountability has been the primary focus of the educational reform era beginning in 2001 with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act through present day with the Common Core State Standards.

In 2001, NCLB increased federal oversight as the Bush administration implemented the rewards-based policy to motivate school improvement. Low-performing, high-poverty public schools across the nation made systemic changes based on scientifically proven methods, a caveat of NCLB and other federal legislation (Borman et al., 2003; Easley, 2005). Four years after NCLB, literature from the field continued to cite problems in the education of American youth and identified strategies linked to college success. American public school systems again made changes, but this time in two specific streams: a) recruiting certified and retaining experienced teachers; and b) raising rigor (Hunt & Tierney, 2006, p. 2).

The review of literature is organized into these two streams. The first is teacher retention, including sections on self-efficacy and school climate. The second stream is raising rigor through standards-based reform, including unintended consequences and the deprofessionalization of teachers. The selection criteria for inclusion consisted of peer-reviewed literature and containing at least two of the key words listed as sections above.

Teacher Retention

Retaining experienced teachers is not only a concern of the US, but one of global trepidation as well. Teacher attrition is a significant international concern facing administrators (Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2011). Estimates of teacher attrition in the United States suggested that of those that leave 50% leave the profession within the first five years (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Latham & Vogt, 2007). More acutely, estimates of beginning teachers suggested that 20% to 30% of all beginning teachers in the United States leave the profession (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Staffing problems of public schools cannot be explained only by teacher retirement and increased student enrollments; rather, organizational characteristics also contributed to the problem of teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Teacher attrition resulted in high economic costs for hiring, more inexperienced teachers in classrooms, and a lack of continuity that has made institutional development and planning difficult (Brill & McCartney, 2008). The annual financial costs of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers was staggering, with estimates of a total national replacement cost of \$2.2 billion per year (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Furthermore, new teachers tended to make tremendous improvement in the first few years (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007), meaning that retaining a teacher with two years of experience was far more productive than hiring a new teacher to replace him

or her (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Attrition was especially acute among teachers with higher ability, as measured by the SAT, the National Teacher Exam, and licensure tests (Smethem, 2007). With the positive correlation between high teacher attrition rates and both high human capital and economic costs, it is important to understand this phenomenon in detail and work toward necessary changes. Teacher efficacy and school climate were major factors of dissatisfaction related to beginning teacher attrition.

Teacher efficacy. Self-efficacy in teaching was noted consistently as having major impact on teacher attrition and retention. If individuals did not believe that what they were doing could influence how well students learned, attrition rates rose. Teacher efficacy has also been linked to teacher strain and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and intent to quit (Sass et al., 2011). However, Hughes (2012) made the argument that although effectiveness has been cited by teachers as a consideration of retention, only a few studies collected measures of teachers' perceived levels of effectiveness and evaluated the impact on retention; thus, more data are needed to more fully understand this relationship.

School climate. New teachers consistently mentioned administrative support, working conditions, and collegiality when discussing attrition rates. Data suggested that the roots of the teacher shortage largely reside in the working conditions within schools and districts (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, p. 32). New teachers are particularly vulnerable to a negative environment (Smethem, 2007). In fact, the third most common reason reported by teachers who had considered leaving the profession—behind salary and disruptive students—was inadequate administrative support (Brill & McCartney, 2008). In a survey of 217 first- and second-year teachers as to why, six of the top eight reasons related to school climate (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). Teachers reported wanting to work in schools where they had greater autonomy, higher levels of administrative support, and clearly communicated expectations (Hughes, 2012).

Predicting job satisfaction and dissatisfaction is instrumental to reducing teacher attrition. Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) and Sergiovanni (1967) suggested that teacher satisfaction was connected to factors associated with intrinsic rewards (i.e., student-teacher relationship, teacher and student achievements, etc.) whereas teacher dissatisfaction was linked more closely with extrinsic factors (i.e., school leadership and climate, teacher course load, school communication, etc.).

This study was conducted to build on the existing literature on beginning teacher retention, and also to determine how intrinsic and extrinsic factors affect teacher decisions. The literature appears to indicate that the level of influence that administration and colleagues have on new teachers is high. The goals are for policy makers, administrators, and school officials to take this

information and use it to support new teachers and ultimately increase teacher retention. Keeping teachers in our schools is half of the battle. The other half of the battle is raising rigor.

Raising Rigor through Reform

The US Department of Education (DOE) stated that the goal of any educational reform, be it systemic or curricular in nature, is increased student achievement (USDOE, 2002). The major stakeholders in schools seem to agree that raising rigor is a worthy goal. The disagreement lies in how to get there. Researchers have conducted qualitative and quantitative studies on top-down reform intended to raise rigor in US schools.

Standards-based reform. Proponents of standards-based models of reform, including current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, have cited empirical evidence showing correlation to higher student achievement. Marzano and Kendall proved in their highly cited work that clearly stated standards were linked to a 25 % increase in student achievement (1996). While reform always comes at a cost, Berger (2000) affirmed, "The factors supporting the implementation of a standards-based system of reform appear to outweigh viewpoints opposing it" (p. 62).

Due to issues of efficiency, Bobbitt (1918) claimed that decisions of what standards to execute should be decided at the top level of leadership. The current environment of top-down reform focuses on accountability. Jones, Jones and Hargrove (2003) gave three reasons mandated standards and assessments should come from the top: "1) to measure student achievement, 2) to provide information about the quality of schools, and 3) to hold students' educators accountable" (p. 10). As it stands, a considerable body of literature supports standards-based reform and supports implementation by systemic top-down scientifically-backed accountability measures (see Borman et al., 2003 meta-analysis).

Critical researchers debunk these findings and instead assert that context matters tremendously in the success of standards reform to create higher student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Lachat, 1999; Ramirez & McClanahan, 1992). Under the NCLB legislation, schools with poor performance as measured by standardized tests were punished and schools with adequate yearly progress were rewarded with more funding. This legislation created a Matthew effect where the poor become poorer and the good become better. Ramirez and McClanahan (1992) claimed that standardization and centralization solely advantage the majority.

Furthermore, researchers attribute unintended consequences to standards-based reform. The most problematic consequence was widening the achievement gap between white and nonwhite students (Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004). Students already below grade level had further progress to make than students at grade

level before more rigorous standards were added. In some states, including North Carolina, students who could not achieve the new standard, as assessed by the high stakes test, were forced to repeat grades (e.g. Excellent Public Schools Act, 2013) or worse. High stakes tests created counterincentives for students to drop-out early (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and caused conditions where some teachers felt they must cheat (Amrein-Beardley, Berliner, & Rideau, 2010; Dorn, 1998). Another critical unintended consequence of the standards-reform movement was a narrowing of the curriculum to mathematics and literacy, marginalizing important 21st century global-ready skills in social studies and world languages (Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; VanFossen, 2005; Zhao, 2010).

Instead, critical researchers advocate for participatory reform to empower those closest to students, the classroom teachers and administrators, to generate the school improvement process (Elmore, 2004). Kotter and Cohen's (2002) *The Heart of Change*, a foundational book in the field of organizational learning, emphasized employee participation in the decision-making process to increase buy-in. Buy-in then leads to a greater chance of the desired change to result (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Engaging teachers in the reform process increases teacher empowerment and creates a more agreeable school climate, relating back to greater teacher retention.

The Deprofessionalization of teachers. This leads to a second major theme in the literature: teacher deprofessionalization. Atkin (1989) claimed that both educational researchers and policy makers had marginalized classroom teachers from the reform process. Atkin offered a reason for this gap between educators' views and education reformers' views in his seminal editorial. Educational researchers, contributing to the literature that policy makers use to structure reform, increased from the social sciences and not from the K-12 classroom. Teachers and teacher-educators were marginalized in colleges of education as the emphasis was placed on objective scientific evidence over interpretive classroom experience (Atkin, 1989; Darling-Hammond 2006).

Another theme in the literature is that ever-rolling waves of reform kept teachers in a place of professional vulnerability. Lasky's (2006) data from a longitudinal mixed-methods study showed that when teachers felt well-prepared and in control of their classroom, they did not feel vulnerable. High rates of change were correlated to feelings of vulnerability. The change could be unexpected curriculum changes, such as the CCSS, but also the probability of future change, such as short-term contracts like those common with beginning teachers (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005). A high number of policy changes followed closely by high-stakes performance measures, could leave teachers feeling distrusted by politicians and the public and afraid that they may fail (Taubman, 2009).

Common Core critics. The CCSS, written in 2010 and implemented in North Carolina in the fall of 2012, specified goals for ELA and Mathematics, while North Carolina state social studies and science standards were to be implemented in the following years respectively. However, critics of the CCSS have already made their voices heard. Legislative discussions of repealing CCSS in North Carolina took place in 2014.

The authors of the CCSS claimed that the standards are nationally and internationally benchmarked on degree of focus and level of cognitive ability (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). However, Porter (2011) found that the CCSS were notably less focused than state ELA standards and had less of an emphasis on performance than standards in countries with higher student achievement. Teachers perceived the biggest problem to be that classroom textbooks did not align to the CCSS (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013). Standards, curriculum, and instructional materials needed to be aligned to ensure success (Krajcik, McNeill, & Reiser, 2008). While accountability measures were supposed to protect taxpayer money (Shore & Wright, 2000), the cost of new textbooks, curricular materials, and aligned assessments would be lofty (Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

Conclusion

Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners agree that high teacher quality and rigorous curriculum can yield higher student achievement. The disagreements arise from how to retain quality teachers and reform curriculum standards. The current practices in educational research and reform have marginalized teachers and marginalized subjects, such as science, social studies, and world languages (Settlage & Meadows, 2002; Zhao, 2010).

This study gave a voice to beginning teachers. Because the majority of the literature is published by social scientists at the university level or from policy analysis groups, it is imperative for teacher case studies to be shared. In the literature, teacher research has been presented as an emancipatory act, one through which teachers gained freedom of voice, choice, and power by positioning themselves in contradistinction to researchers and academics in higher education, who traditionally enjoyed higher employment status (Clifford & Guthrie, 1998). Many who write about the phenomenon of teacher research argue that teachers must be included in academic journals to deepen understandings of teaching and to define their work (Zeichner, 2003).

Methods

This study was an exploratory collective case study (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2000). The qualitative approach permits researchers and policymakers to better understand the daily world of teaching through teachers' own words. The phenomenon under investigation was how second and third year teachers made decisions related to their changing academic curriculum. The unit of

analysis was the individual in his or her role as an elementary school teacher. The case consisted of three participants: beginning teachers at an elementary school that had implemented the CCSS the same school year.

Research Questions

Our research questions looked at beginning teachers’ priorities as they implemented the CCSS in a normal day-to-day manner, in order to uncover their values, influencers, and stressors. We asked:

- 1) What do second and third year teachers at Wade Elementary School (pseudonym) report as the impact of implementing the CCSS?
- 2) What do these second and third year elementary teachers perceive as influencing their decision-making regarding curriculum content?

Site Selection

The context of the case was part of the case itself (Stake, 2000). The school was relatively small with room for 350 students. Other than the size, the site selection was a typical elementary school in a large urban district in North Carolina. The student population was diverse ethnically, racially, and socio-economically. Just over 50% of students were white, non-Hispanic, followed by just under 50% African American, and a small percentage Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian. The average End of Grade scores for mathematics and reading were slightly below of the state average. The teacher culture was collaborative. The site selection was a sample of convenience.

Participants

We sent out an email to all beginning teachers at Wade Elementary School asking for participation in the study. Wade Elementary was selected for this study because one of the researchers had an excellent rapport at this school and we both felt that we had a unique opportunity to gather rich, uninhibited data due to the established, close peer relationships.

Three beginning teachers in the school accepted a role as participant. The three teachers were either second or third year teachers in kindergarten through third grade classrooms. Two of the teachers were female and one was male. All three teachers had their bachelor’s degree in elementary education from reputable universities in the Southeast (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants

Pseudonym	Sex	Grade-level taught	Teaching year
Ms. Glenn	Female	3 rd	2
Mr. Jones	Male	3 rd	3
Ms. Patch	Female	1 st	3

We chose to study beginning teachers because there is a learning curve in teaching as in all professions. Beginning teachers may understand best practices from undergraduate courses and professional development but may not yet be able to apply these practices (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Teaching is a phenomenon with many moving parts. On a continual basis, teachers must decide what content to teach and how to teach it. A veteran juggler can add a new bowling pin and keep the other pins in the air. But toss an additional bowling pin to a novice juggler who is already in a rhythm (e.g., second and third year teachers) and all the pins come crashing to the ground. It is for this reason that we chose to study second and third year teachers the year the state implemented a new curriculum. We wanted to understand how beginning teachers decided to implement the changes in their own classrooms. In other words, we wanted to see how beginning teachers eventually got all the pins back in the air and how they felt during this process. Moreover, the attrition rate for beginning teachers was higher than at any other time of teaching: 30% in the first three years and 50% in the first five years (Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010). This made understanding their experience with reform important to the discussion of the relationship of policy and attrition.

Due to district budget cuts, the participants did not have the opportunity to seek any additional professional development in CCSS or in general outside of their school during their beginning years of teaching. Occasionally, professional development was conducted during staff meetings by the Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) or by other members of the school faculty. These short teacher development sessions typically entailed a faculty member from the school displaying a method from their classroom that they found beneficial.

No fresh ideas or professional development was offered from outside individuals or groups at the time of the study due to the funding restrictions. The majority of the professional development presented by the school faculty involved literacy or mathematics subject material with the extremely rare presentation on science education. Professional development in social studies did not take place in this elementary school for at least the past 10 years. This deficiency was not an atypical phenomenon. The complete dearth of professional development in the area of social studies corroborates with a study by Wood (1989), which found that social studies received the least support from school level administrators of any of the five core subject areas.

This lack of teacher development and support generated feelings of frustration among the faculty members of the school, including the beginning teacher participants. As fairly recent college graduates, the participants felt a level of disappointment with their ability to access new methods to continue honing their professional skills as an educator in their beginning years

of teaching. Once hired in a teaching position, they expanded their professional repertoire by working closely with their grade level colleagues and other school faculty.

Data Collection

We interviewed participants with a semi-structured format consisting of nine main questions and any reasonable clarifications, probes, or follow-ups. The interviews took place at the teachers' school, the natural setting for the participants. Interviews were conducted between the third and fourth quarter of the school year. At that point in the year, the school's administration had led several brief Common Core training sessions during the school's bi-monthly staff meetings and quarterly in-service days. Interviews were audio recorded and accompanied by researcher notes for reliability. See Appendix B for codes and operational definitions.

We contextualized the interviews using participant observer attendance of school faculty meetings, professional development workshops, and professional learning community meetings (Hendstrand, 2006). We also attended public events, such as a district leader presentation on CCSS ELA implementation for elementary schools and a public symposium on North Carolina education reform. To further contextualize the case, we reviewed public web documents including general statutes, policy statements, and school demographics.

We made additional interview notes of nonverbal communication during and immediately following the interviews. Because new teachers may not feel comfortable in sharing their insecurities or stress, we thought it important to not only examine what they were saying, but how they were saying it with their body language. Koivumaki (1975) explained:

Nonverbal skills can be related to other facts about people, such as their sex, their experiences, their values, or their personal happiness. One can examine "channels" of nonverbal communication: tone of voice, face cues, body gestures, proxemic (spatial) behavior, touch, smell, even ESP. In short, nonverbal communication seems relevant in an enormous range of ways, and there is much research both good and bad being done on it. (p. 28)

The major categories of interpersonal communication as specified by Buehler and Richmond (1963) that we focused on in this study were motor movement and speech. Motor movements include subcategories of posture, facial movements, and gestures. Speech includes oral and sound subcategories.

Data Analysis

As critical researchers, we viewed our study as a wake-up call for increased and valued teacher input in educational research, more trials on efficacy of policy before mass implementation, and less capriciousness in policy reform. We used a critical theoretical perspective

as described by Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, and Hayes (2009), "to produce a sociopolitical critique" (p. 689).

Critical researchers term deficit thinking as discussion on what characteristics students are lacking (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Lasky (2005) applies the deficit thinking paradigm to teachers and asserts that focusing on teacher stress and vulnerability caused by policy creates deficit thinking, whereas focusing on the positive input of teacher commitment to implementation fidelity speaks to the affirmative. Teacher commitment is part of a larger theory of teacher efficacy that suggests that teachers' confidence in their effectiveness positively affects student outcomes (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

The research questions and data analysis were shaped by Branyon's (2013) case study on teachers' decisions regarding common core curriculum. She organized the findings into two maximum impact themes: (a) mandated and (b) intrinsic influences. Branyon concluded, "Internal factors overcame all other factors in determining the types of learning experiences children received" (2013, p. 45). Branyon's findings then informed the conceptual framework for the a priori coding themes and contextual considerations of analysis as displayed in Appendix B.

A priori coding. In the a priori coding we created spreadsheets to organize coded statements from the interviews that fell under the following categories and subcategories:

- Intrinsic (internal)
 - teacher pedagogical and content knowledge;
 - attitudes and personal preferences;
 - self-efficacy as a teacher;
 - one's beliefs about decision making or problem solving.
- Mandated (external)
 - compensation in the form of salary and benefits;
 - timetable or prescribed daily schedule for content;
 - students mastery of common core standards;
 - undergraduate training and professional development;
 - materials and resources accessible at the school level.

After the independent initial coding sequence, we convened and discussed the coding analysis. After meticulously discussing our individual analysis, we determined that many statements were coded the same, but that some compound sentences were counted as two by the analysis of one researcher and one by the other. After thorough discussion, we reached an agreement of the specific category in which the particular statements

belonged. At the completion of this process, we reached a reliability percentage well over 80.

Open coding. After the completion of the a priori coding, we open coded each of the three interviews independently. We began the analysis by reading over each of the three interviews multiple times. Each time we read the interviews, we added notes to the margins and underlined key statements.

Researcher one initially determined that a high number of comments were made involving positive emotion; this led researcher one to begin the highlighting process. Researcher one read all interviews again and each time a significant section or phrase appeared involving positive emotion she highlighted with a specific color. This process was repeated when additional salient themes were presented in the data of negative emotion, self-efficacy, curriculum, and change or preparation. When this was completed, we met to review our initial data analysis and findings. Researcher two then utilized the color-coding technique for the shared key themes. We did this to ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis of the data collected. We also wanted consistency in the findings and an overall collaborative process with the analysis of the data. When the salient categories and colors were determined and coded, we decided to also complete a content analysis of the data.

Researcher one noticed that specific subjects were mentioned more frequently than others. Wanting to have a better understanding of this phenomenon to determine any meaning within the data, she created a content analysis chart. She analyzed the interview data, tallying the frequency of subjects verbally mentioned or referenced. The subject noted most frequently was reading, writing, and/or literacy. Then mathematics, followed by science, and social studies was last. Throughout this process, researcher one noticed that science and social studies were conflated as “science and social studies” frequently. This occurrence was further investigated and the category of “science and social studies” became an additional section of the frequency chart.

Trustworthiness

Triangulation was achieved as we used multiple and different sources and methods to corroborate the initial evidence. Due to the thorough and rigorous qualitative data analysis methods, the study had a high degree of confirmability. The verification process occurred through the duration of the study as both researchers crosschecked their data analysis at various points throughout the coding process. After each researcher independently analyzed the same data, we met and discussed the reasoning for each code and ultimately discussed the salient findings that emerged. It can be determined from the completion and explanation of this rigorous process that the data is credible, defensible, warranted, and able to withstand alternative explanations.

Additionally, member checking occurred at the conclusion of the data analysis. Findings were communicated with all participants in order to increase validity. Participants found no discrepancies in our findings.

As both researchers had worked as teachers in the district, we had an insider view that allowed us to share a common culture with the participants. This insider status also forced us to clarify our own bias. We both kept a reflective journal to document assumptions before, during, and after the study was completed. This was to acknowledge reflexivity and increase trustworthiness of our qualitative method. We used our position as participant observers to informally observe the context of the participants and the decisions they made on a daily basis. We both remained cognizant of personal biases, understanding the potential for a validity issue. As the researcher with personal connections at the elementary school, I identified and exposed personal biases in my journal. These biases dealt with hesitating to attack teacher or administrator actions, understanding the limited time and resources allotted in many public elementary schools. I exposed my biases to my research partner to ensure that my personal biases did not affect the validity of the study. As the other researcher, I acknowledged my assumption that top-down reform would be perceived negatively by teachers. As a classroom teacher, I had often felt frustrated by top-down reform that came from policy-makers, so I earned my master's degree in education policy to learn more about the US system. We followed institutional review board protocol for the whole of the study.

Findings

Our data showed that participants reported diminished self-efficacy, marginalization of science and (even more so) social studies, and negative feelings of mandated state or district initiatives as a response to the top-down standards reform. This section organizes the findings by research question. The study used open and a priori coding for both research questions.

How Do Beginning Teachers Perceive the CCSS Implementation?

All three participants mentioned the new CCSS multiple times and in each instance the comments were in a negative manner regarding the CCSS as a mandated change. The study found that teachers perceived the CCSS implementation at Wade Elementary related to their own feelings of being (a) overwhelmed, (b) underprepared, and (c) unconfident. This confirms the literature on the relationship of reform to professional vulnerability (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005) and diminished self-efficacy (Lasky, 2005).

One key theme of open coding was participants feeling overwhelmed related to a large number of academic standards with a comparatively small amount of time to achieve the level expected. As for the lack of time

for needed instruction, all participants cited district policy as the major influence over the time schedule. Ms. Patch discussed how she felt like she needed to teach certain subjects more based on student formative assessments but that "it just gets hard with the schedule."

The second key theme was the participants' feelings of being underprepared related to a perceived lack of training and support. Ms. Glenn said, "We learned the NC, or the North Carolina, objectives all through college and then as soon as I graduated they were like Common Core." While this participant blamed the university as expressed with the previous and other statements, the other two participants blamed the district and school administration for the lack of training.

The analysis of the participant body language and non-verbal cues showed the negative feelings associated with our participants' perceived lack of support. When the participants referred to the lack of support they felt from the administration, they all lowered their voices at different points throughout these statements and some eye contact was lost due to the participants looking down or away when speaking about this topic. Two of the participants appeared to display shame when commenting on the lack of administrative support. One participant leaned back with folded arms when speaking about this topic. One participant also chuckled frequently and insincerely while speaking about the perceived lack of support as if to say that it was a joke.

The third key theme was participant feelings of lack of confidence related to the amount of curriculum and policy change. Our participants stated multiple negative comments concerning the constant change in the schools and linking the new CCSS as yet another change. Ms. Glenn lamented, "There's so many changes happening all the time, which I guess is what I didn't expect." A large amount of mandated change in a short time period diminished self-efficacy of the participants. Mr. Jones said, "It's every year something new, improve, do this do that and I haven't found that zone where I'm in the zone and I know what I'm doing and I'm confident with it." The participants commented on wanting more stability in the curriculum to have the ability to accomplish a level of expertise. Ms. Patch stated, "I feel like everything has changed so much with Common Core and I have felt a little, not so confident teaching it [math] just because everything has changed."

Observation of body language during the interviews substantiated the findings. When speaking about the perception of the constant change, the participants displayed body language and mannerism depicting frustration. Two of the participants looked up and one rolled her eyes when discussing the pressures with learning the new curriculum while simultaneously teaching it. All three at various points in the interview opened their hands, palms facing each other and moving

out in a sharp movement as if to say, "What do they expect me to do?" They also each sighed frequently and shook their heads from side to side when speaking about their perceptions of the constant changes with the curriculum. We noted no inconsistencies between the informal observations and the formal interview responses.

What Are Beginning Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Academic Content in the CCSS?

During the data analysis the researchers created a frequency count on academic content areas. Two of the participants mentioned literacy the most throughout their interviews, while the third participant mentioned the subject of mathematics the most. Science and social studies were mentioned the least by all three participants. Our finding is not a surprise; it parallels and confirms the extensive amount of research that has been conducted on the marginalization of science and more specifically social studies in the elementary school setting (Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Shaver, 1989; VanFossen, 2005). Ms. Glenn stated that social studies is given the least amount of time in her classroom; "I know this is horrible to say, but mainly because it's not tested the same way."

The study uncovered two individual subjects referenced in a conflated manner, matching ongoing critiques of specific subject marginalization occurring over the past three decades due to the various curriculum reforms. The two female participants mentioned specifically "science and social studies" together more frequently each time they spoke of the subjects rather than referring to them as individual content areas and they both mentioned that neither science nor social studies were a favored subjects to teach. Mr. Jones, the male participant, did mention social studies and science more frequently as individual subjects and he did mention during his interview that these two subjects were his favorites to teach overall. Our finding is contrary to the literature that predicted the CCSS would increase instructional time for both science (Scruggs, Brigham, & Mastropieri, 2013) and for social studies (Anderson & Ross, 2013).

What Do Teachers Perceive as Intrinsic and Mandated Influences Over Their Professional Decisions? Findings from the a priori coded data suggest that attitude, perceptions of self, and problem solving were the coded measures with the highest frequency of comments. Participants perceived their attitude about teaching, their perception of self as a teacher, and their ability to problem solve as the most important aspects of making professional decisions (see Table 2 and an expanded table in Appendix C).

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions

Impact	Internal	External
Negative	4	36
Positive	31	11

Attitude. The majority of our participants' comments concerning attitude were of a positive nature pertaining to the intrinsic aspects of working as a teacher. The first grade teacher exclaimed, "I just love seeing how much they [students] grow." The analysis revealed that the participants' body language suggested their positive attitudes toward the nurturing aspect of teaching. During all three interviews, the participants seemed sincere and genuine about their enthusiasm for the aspects of their profession that they deemed as positive. They all smiled a great deal, leaned forward, and sat up in their chairs. They also had bright eyes with raised eyebrows and all three participants became highly animated when speaking about their love of working with children and feeling that they were making a difference in the lives of their students.

Perception of self. On the whole, all three participants' perceptions of self were mixed with both positive and negative comments concerning self-efficacy as teachers. Positive perceptions of self related to the intrinsic aspects of teaching. They all commented on loving to work with children. Mr. Jones said that he began teaching "to make a difference, be a guy role model, be there for kids that don't have that strong male role model in their lives and make a difference, let kids see the world differently." Negative perceptions of self related to the mandated aspects of teaching. One participant said that teaching reading was her weakness and that teaching reading was considered the most important subject by the district. Another participant said he felt professionally vulnerable because his "end of year performance is based on how kids do" and that he didn't perceive his students' test scores to be an accurate reflection of his teaching ability.

Problem solving. The category on the a-priori coding measures with the highest number of comments overall was the problem solving section. The results concluded that in this section the majority of the participants' comments were negative, especially those that pertained to policy or limitations of their teaching as an effect of those policies or administrative pressures. Ms. Glenn stated that she left her last teaching position because the school leaders controlled the curriculum; "You had to do it this way or that way and you couldn't change it." On the other hand, all three teachers found the ability to tackle the problems facing their individual students as a positive challenge of being a teacher. Ms. Glenn went on to say that the leadership at her current

school allowed her to "make that change to meet the needs of the kids."

All participants presented a high level of positivity when they spoke about any autonomy they felt in the classroom with regards to their abilities to make decisions. The male participant preferred to solve classroom problems alone. The two female participants identified collaboration with other grade-level teachers as the most influential factor concerning classroom decisions. "It's just really cool how we as a team can think of something that we need to do for the kids or a certain thing and we can do that," explained Ms. Glenn. In all three cases participants found autonomy in being able to make decisions an important aspect of problem solving. They all, however, defined autonomy differently, with the male participant referring to it as individually and the female participants as in peer-groups.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are specific to the three beginning teachers that were interviewed. Inability to generalize findings is a characteristic of qualitative research (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The data identified that the three beginning teachers found the amount of state or district initiatives they had experienced in their short careers overwhelming. The amount of change diminished self-efficacy in their daily professional lives. Participants identified collaboration with other teachers and district requirements as the most influential factors concerning decisions about what to teach. Additionally, through observed events, such as staff meetings and school in-services led by administrators, we found that all three teachers perceived the state and the district indirectly responsible for shaping their teaching experience as it related to content demands, while a more direct responsibility was placed on their school administration, whom they felt had the ultimate authority within their school. The minimal professional development on site during staff meetings and in-service days directed toward the implementation of the new curriculum standards gave the teachers some support, but they were left wanting. None of the teachers attended outside professional development, as it required taking days off of work, finding a substitute for their classroom, and paying for it out-of-pocket. The school administrators and/or the Instructional Resource Teacher, who attended CCSS professional development, relayed information about the new standards to the staff. This led to an uneasy feeling of "learning as they go" with respect to the new curriculum. A synthesis of the findings suggested the participants perceived the mandated factors of teaching negatively and the intrinsic factors of teaching positively.

The intrinsic and mandated influences suggested from this study are important findings. The positive and negative attitudes the beginning teachers had toward the work and the profession is important as well. The study was conducted to better understand the influences of

policy as they relate to professional vulnerability and to have a deeper understanding of beginning teachers' self-efficacy towards academic content areas. While these findings cannot be generalized, the suggestions from this study can be used to corroborate literature on reform and attrition in the context of beginning teachers. The findings can also be used as a springboard for discussion between policymakers, school leaders, teacher educators, and beginning teachers. The next section begins this discussion between the major stakeholders and calls for further research where needed to improve our schools in a way that respects teachers as the experts of their own classrooms.

Discussion

Rather than focusing on what causes teacher stress and reinforcing deficit thinking, we chose to focus on the discussion on the positive. The participants said that they needed stability in the system to increase self-efficacy and thereby commitment. Self-efficacy is a teacher believing that he or she *can* make a difference. Commitment is a teacher saying that he or she *will* make a difference. Commitment leads to both greater policy implementation fidelity and greater teacher retention (Lasky, 2005; Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005). The following section discusses implications of our study for policymakers, for school leaders, and for teacher educators.

For Policymakers

The medical field has an extensive trial period before new practices are implemented in the field. This long timeframe allows for positive outcomes and side effects to be measured. The longer length from study to practice has ethical concerns in that patients could die from a disease for which there is a cure before the cure is made available to the public. However, the education field has the opposite problem, implementing widespread and systemic reform before a trial period accounts benefit, cost, and side effects. Borman et al. (2003) state, "As each new reform is widely disseminated and implemented, the research follows closely behind, sometimes weighing in on an issue only after schools have moved on to the next apparent innovation" (p. 125). Without a period for efficacy evaluation, school reform will be more like the pendulum swinging back and forth rather than the drill, going deeper with each return. Hiebert says it best: "What if, rather than being harried by another new standard that has yet to be validated, we were to do some serious soul-searching?" (Hiebert, 2011, p. 27). We must do some soul-searching not just about this particular reform but on the reform process as a whole.

Policymakers should also heed unintended consequences of legislating standards reform. Tying financial rewards and punishments to mathematics and reading can cause teachers to decide only to teach mathematics and reading. Creating a culture of competition for financial resources goes against the moral

values of cooperation and collaboration of these three teachers. This substantiates Easley (2005). In addition, a culture of constant change is contrary to these participants' values of consistency and stability. Finally, creating an environment of competition and instability can cause teacher's self-efficacy to drop. This research study supports the literature that self-efficacy is correlated to attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2011).

Before implementing a system-wide reform, future policymakers should take into consideration both

- the quality of the outcomes resulting from the change, and
- the quantity of change experienced by the educators in that system.

For School Leaders

While this study found mandated standards and testing as factors that influenced our participants' decisions of daily content, these teachers felt that these were minor influencers. Further, the bureaucratic paperwork associated with accountability measures had a high learning curve and consumed much time but is perceived by the teachers as redundant. The findings of our study corroborate previous studies on prior standards reform movements (see Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005; Berger, 2000). Participants stated that implementing the CCSS was not a major factor in instructional decisions but was a major factor in paperwork preparation. Teachers require assistance in completing the paperwork and other non-instructional duties related to the policy changes. Dworkin (2001) found that feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness led to teacher burnout. Assistance with paperwork gives teachers the time needed for meaningful responsibilities, such as developing relationships and personalizing curriculum.

The participants said that collaborating with other teachers was the most influential factor in their daily decision-making of content. On one hand, collaboration increased their workload, and because of this, created negative stress. On the other hand, the female teachers reported that collaboration gave them a system of support. Collaboration with peer teams affords reciprocal accountability. Collaboration with in-school teams keeps teachers accountable for teaching common core standards in a way that complements the needs of their students. The amount of stress collaboration causes is minimal when balanced with the accountability and support systems that keep the teachers as the perceived professionals. We must go back to the research that was emerging before NCLB sent us down the path of valuing externally-calibrated, quantifiable research over teacher's qualitative professional judgments (Borman et al., 2003; Easley, 2005; Shepard, 2010).

For Teacher Educators

In teachers' colleges, preservice teachers learn to include the students in the classroom rules conversation

(Canter, 2001). Being part of the process and understanding why a rule exists helps children meet the expectations. The same is true of adults (Schmidt, & Prawat, 1999; Schrag, 1998, as cited in Berger, 2000). We must spend time in teacher education courses talking about the research behind policies. This can help increase self-efficacy and help avoid unintended consequences, such as the marginalization of subjects like social studies. The teachers in our study said that they spend the most time in class on what will be tested at the end of the year.

As we move closer with each day to the first score of our 21st century, the marginalization of elementary school social studies continues to be repeatedly confirmed and unyielding (Heafner et al., 2007; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; VanFossen, 2005). Results from elementary school-level studies indicate that primary grades teachers (K-2) spend as little as 12 minutes a day on social studies instruction compared to 24 minutes a day for intermediate grades teachers (3-5) (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010). The results conclude that unequal value placed on subjects in the standards determines unequal value placed on subjects in the classroom. Yet, specific subjects are not the only aspect of devaluation that requires attention in our schools, there is a significant lack of value and professionalism afforded to our teachers as well.

Our participants' teacher education courses included knowledge of the previous state standards. All of our participants noted that they never anticipated the amount of change that they experienced as beginning elementary school teachers. Teacher education classes can help prepare preservice teachers to manage top-down initiatives and remain committed to the profession by explaining the historical context for why and how educational policy decisions were made. Understanding why a reform was implemented in the past can help teachers infer what policy-makers are attempting to accomplish in the future. Understanding why reform was occurring may have helped our participants perceive the change in a more positive light.

Conclusion

This study looked at beginning teachers' priorities as they teach daily content because as experienced teachers, the researchers believed that how teachers spend their time reflects their intrinsic values and external pressures. Our overarching question was: How did second and third year elementary teachers at Wade Elementary School perceive the implementation of the Common Core State Standards? This exploratory case study contributes to the literature both on teacher attrition and standards-based reform. Implications for further research would be to discover through statistical analysis if accountability reform causes an unintended consequence of high quality teacher attrition.

Our study found that the beginning teachers are overwhelmed by the amount of change mandated from the

top and that the constant changes created both frustration and disillusion with their chosen profession. Teachers need time to become proficient before mandated to change and held accountable for the success of the reform. The ultimate goals are for teacher attrition to decrease and for educational policies to be productive for all parties involved. Increasing teacher retention benefits taxpaying citizens, policymakers, school leaders, beginning teachers, and most importantly, the students.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1) What do you teach? How long have you taught? Where did you go to undergrad? What was your major?
- 2) Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- 3) Is teaching what you expected? Why or why not?
 - a) Question for clarification
 - i) Is it different or the same as you imagined?
 - ii) Is it different or the same as your professors said it would be?
 - b) Questions for probing
 - i) What do you like about teaching?
 - ii) What aspect of teaching causes the most anxiety?
- 4) What subject or subjects do you spend the majority of your time?
 - a) Questions for probing
 - i) Do you like or not like this content area?
 - ii) Is this content area a strength?
 - iii) Do you feel less confident in any subject area?
- 5) What factors influence how much time you spend on each subject?
- 6) Who is making these choices?
 - a) Question for clarification
 - i) Why do you spend the most time on this subject?
 - ii) Are you advised to teach this the most?
- 7) What subject or subjects do you spend the least amount of time on?
 - a) Question for clarification
 - i) How do you decide what subjects if any get cut from your schedule?
 - b) Questions for probing
 - i) Do you like or not like this content area?
 - ii) Were you advised to spend less time on this?
- 8) What changes would you make, if any?

- a) Questions for probing
 - i) Why would you make that decision?
- 9) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Impact Factors on Decision-Making in the Classroom for Coding

Intrinsic (Internal) factor	Operational definition	Mandated (External) factor	Operational definition
Teacher knowledge	Shulman's PCK model (1987)	Salary	Human capital theory: monetary and nonmonetary benefits
Teacher attitudes	values, likes, dislikes, personal preferences	Timetable	time in the day, academic subjects schedule
Perceptions of self	Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1994) related to teaching Guskey (1998)	Standards mastery	Standards mastery- what students were expected to know and be able to do for the next year
Decision-making strategies	problem solving skills beliefs about making decisions independently and collaboratively with peers	Ability grouping	in-class small group instruction to like ability students
		Materials	instructional resources, such as books, technology, and scripted lessons
		Training	undergraduate coursework and professional development workshops

Note: Adapted from Branyon, J. B. (2013). Enacting a common core curriculum: The Kenya study. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 79(2),40-46.

Appendix C

Positive and Negative Perceptions of Intrinsic and Mandated Influences

	Intrinsic (Internal)	Mandated (External)
Negative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesson plans go not in a good direction 2. That ((teaching reading))'s a weakness 3. I was really nervous (about teaching social studies) 4. I feel a little less confident in math 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is horrible to say but mainly because it's not tested 2. It ((social studies curriculum)) gets boring 3. You had to do it this way and you couldn't change it 4. I didn't expect the changes so much 5. Haven't found that zone where I'm in the zone 6. This year I am working with a team and I have to create everything brand new 7. The negative student behaviors 8. No matter what I tell the parents, inform them, administrators:::nothing changes 9. It's a lot of smoke and mirrors 10. Putting everything down on the line at the end of the year 11. That's ((EOG result)) wrong 12. They make it seem like one day makes a whole year 13. All that anxiety because people put that 14. End of year performance is based on how kid's do 15. It's a bunch of crap 16. Reading does take a lot of time 17. People care about test results 18. I don't have any job security 19. It's to the minute . . . I'd change some things 20. I didn't know we were going to departmentalize until after I had the job 21. I didn't find anything beneficial ((about mentoring program)) 22. Do I feel supported by administrators? No. 23. I expected more support from like administration 24. ((open classroom and working with other teachers)) is very difficult 25. Just in 3 years it ((curriculum)) has changed 26. I feel like my professors did not prepare me 27. Parents can cause a lot of anxiety 28. They ((parents)) can be very, I think, rude 29. Administration doesn't really support you 30. You have no control over ((students' homelife)) 31. It just gets hard with the schedule 32. Everything has changed with Common Core and I have felt ... not so confident teaching it 33. If we didn't have to do that because ... kids get more out of centers 34. I would also like to see how another administrative team works 35. I would like to teach maybe in my own classroom 36. I spend so much time on paperwork
Positive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comfortable around kids 2. Passion for teaching 3. It((teaching))'s very rewarding 4. Get to be creative ... get to be logical 5. Be silly with kids 6. Meet the needs of the kids 7. I'm really content 8. Make a difference 9. Make a difference ((2)) 10. Make a difference ((3)) 11. Open the world to these kids 12. I love all my kids to death 13. I love it 14. Just giving as much love as I can to ((students)) 15. I care about them 16. Love creating stuff for the classroom 17. I enjoy all of those things 18. One of the things I enjoy is reflecting 19. I can't wait so I can do these kinds of things ((choose novels)) 20. I can have a lot of fun 21. I rock those things ((SS and science)) 22. I love science experiments 23. Trying to get away from the boring 24. I loved those things 25. I have always loved children 26. I love the children 27. I get to teach really fun things 28. I do like teaching that content 29. I really enjoy teaching ((grade level)) 30. I really like these content areas 31. I do think I'm good at teaching literacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Team is collaborative 2. We're ((teacher team)) good at coming to a conclusion 3. It ((Daily 5)) helps me get a better relationship 4. I love this school but ... 5. I think everyone on the staff I could approach and talk to 6. It's a happy environment 7. I really like ... working with the other teachers but 8. Some of the parents, they make me feel like I'm making a difference in their child's lives 9. Fun, happy environment 10. I like how the school is small 11. I like the time off

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