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Curriculum Change: A Study on Teacher Perceptions of Curriculum Change on Content Standards

Tiffany Kessler-Hopek

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CURRICULUM CHANGE: A STUDY ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
CURRICULUM CHANGE ON CONTENT STANDARDS

By
Tiffany Kessler –Hopek

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education
in Curriculum and Leadership
(CURRICULUM)

Columbus State University
Columbus, GA

May 2019

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, my grandparents, my husband, and my two children who have pushed me and supported in my dreams and goals. They have watched me sacrifice and work hard these years to complete this program and process. Thank you all for your support; it could not have happened without you. I hope to instill this dedication and drive in my children, and I hope they see with motivation and dedication that anything can be accomplished.

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, curriculum has encountered frequent changes throughout years. The main initiative of educational change has three main components, and they are to increase the quality and rigor of the curriculum, have a common curriculum, and prepare students for secondary education. The standards in the state of Georgia have changed from Georgia Performance Standards and Common Core State Standards to the more recent Georgia Standards of Excellence. By the school year 2018-2019, the Georgia Standards of Excellence should be fully adopted. An explanatory sequential mixed methods study was conducted to examine the perceptions of teachers on curriculum change in a Western Georgia high school. A survey was distributed first to the entire teaching faculty and followed by focus group sessions. The survey data from 26 participants were analyzed using descriptives. The focus group data from 12 participants were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes, which included: teachers desired for more input in making and revising curriculum standards, an increased stress level and workload, and a need for more professional development. The researcher discussed implications and recommendations for future research and offered concluding thoughts. With the knowledge gained through this study, policymakers can have a better understanding of how to support teachers with curriculum change.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educational curriculum has become a point of contention among educators for years. The process of curriculum design in part lies with the policymakers. In Georgia, the curriculum has changed multiple times in the past couple of years. The curriculum changed from Georgia Performance Standards in 2002 to Common Core State Standards in 2010 and then to Georgia Standards of Excellence in 2015 with full implementation completed in 2018-2019 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The initiatives to change curriculum fall into the category of improving student preparation for college, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education and the appropriate amount of rigor in the curriculum.

Historical Change

In the 20th century, education began changing. One of the movements was called the “progressive movement” in which the push was to have a democratic society and ensure that all students were informed citizens. The next significant movement in education was the launch of the Sputnik by the Soviet Union (Herald, 1974). As a result, Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Sloan, 2010). The premise behind the National Defense Education Act was to increase rigor and prepare students for college to ensure the United States was globally competitive. The educational focus was predominantly math and science educational programs (Cheng, 2012). The primary focus of the National Defense of Education Act was on mathematics

and science education programs in school; however, the act was the beginning of the federal government's involvement in the education system (Wallender, 2014).

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan formed the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The commission was tasked with gathering information on how students in the United States were performing in schools. The research indicated a drop in Scholastics Aptitude Test scores (Gardner and others, 1983). Reagan's National Commission on Excellence had 18 members who reported that schools in the United States could not compete with other schools globally based on the drop in SAT scores (Gardner et al. 1983). The publication called *A Nation at Risk* reported that the material taught in our schools should not be lowered and presented recommendations to help other school systems employ the recommendations made in the report (Gardner et al., 1983). The Committee made 38 recommendations and organized the recommendations into five categories. The categories were content, time, teaching, leadership, and fiscal support (Gardner et al., 1983).

Many other presidents took an intense look at education and continued to increase the rigor of the standards and content. However, it was not until the creation of No Child Left Behind in 2001 that the federal government created a sense of urgency to improve the education system in the United States (LaMorte, 2008). This act was intended to strengthen educational standards, assessments, and improve schools' achievement levels (LaMorte, 2008). In 2009, President Obama set a goal for the nation to have the highest amount of college graduates in the world (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The goal was to have the highest amount of 25- to 34-year-olds as college graduates by either receiving an associate's degree or higher by 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Changes in Georgia

In 2002, a review of the Georgia curriculum standards was conducted by Phi Delta Kappa, and the results of the audit indicated that the Quality Core Curriculum did not have the depth of knowledge needed, required too much time to teach, and did not meet national standards. The audit brought to light that Georgia standards required a change. A team of teachers, state and national experts, and consultants met to create a new set of standards known as the Georgia Performance Standards, which remained intact until 2010 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

In 2008, the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers created Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The Common Core State Standards were a set of standards, which focused on mathematics, English language arts, and literacy (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In 2010, the state of Georgia adopted a new set of standards called the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). One of the goals for adopting a new set of standards was to align standards and content across the states (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The new standards mainly impacted English language arts and mathematics teachers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The idea was to create one set of standards for English language arts (including literacy standards) and mathematics that would be the same across the board (National Governors Association Center for Best

Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The standards dictated what each student should learn at each level from K through 12 with the expected result that using the Common Core State Standards successfully would enable students to compete globally (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Science and social studies standards did not change from Georgia Performance Standards to Common Core State Standards; however, the state required teachers in other content areas incorporate the literacy standards into their curriculum (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

In 2015-2016, the state of Georgia made another change in the educational standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The decision to make a change in standards was made by the State Board of Education after a review of the Common Core Standards by a survey sent out to teachers, administrators, and system personnel, legislative sessions, and public comments (Downey, 2015). The state took the advice of the committee members and made changes to the standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The new standards were named the Georgia Standards of Excellence. The first implementation took place in the 2015-2016 school year with the content areas of mathematics and English language arts.

Teacher Perceptions

In recent years, several studies were conducted based on teacher perceptions. First, Cheng (2012) conducted a study using mixed methods research to understand the perceptions of teachers when implementing Common Core State Standards. There were 333 teachers invited to participate in the study from California. Ninety-five teachers

participated in the study. Two main topics arose during Cheng's study, which were standard-based reform lowered teacher morale and policy development showed conflicts with what teachers believed was best for the students.

Cochrane and Cuevas (2015) conducted a study based on previous studies, which indicated that teachers and administrators held negative views on No Child Left Behind. The research they conducted examined teachers' perceptions of Common Core State Standards after the standards had been implemented for more than a year (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015). Findings of research conducted by Cochrane and Cuevas (2015) suggested that teachers did see the new standards as an improvement when preparing students for college or a job. Cochrane and Cuevas (2015) also indicated that teachers' perceptions of Common Core State Standards was they lacked the ability to improve student achievement or raise standardized test scores. The researchers also indicated the implementation of the new standards did not improve teacher morale, increased the teachers' workload, and the negative perceptions about standardized testing that remained (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015).

Bostic and Matney (2013) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions when implementing Common Core State Standards. The study focused on elementary and middle school teachers in mathematics (Bostic & Matney, 2013). The results of the study suggested that teachers perceived a need for a deeper understanding of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and demonstrated the teachers need for professional development to assist with teachers' perceived notions of educational reform (Bostic & Matney, 2013).

Murphy and Torff (2014) conducted a study about teacher perceptions and the Common Core State Standards. Murphy and Torff (2014) surveyed 370 teachers from the Northern United States on their perceptions of effectiveness when implementing Common Core State Standards. The study indicated a statistically significant decline in a teachers' perceived ability to teach based on the implementation of Common Core State Standards (Murphy & Torff, 2014).

Burks et al. (2015) conducted a study on teacher's perceptions of teachers' preparedness when implementing Common Core State Standards. The study consisted of 35 participants, and more than half of the participants had over 7 years of experience teaching (Burke et al., 2015). The results of the study indicated that 57% were comfortable or extremely comfortable with implementing Common Core State Standards, but the results showed that 55% of those teachers reported have insufficient training in Common Core State Standards (Burke et al., 2015).

Statement of Problem

In recent years, curriculum content standards have changed from Quality Core Curriculum, which came about from the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985. After an audit by Phi Delta Kappa in 2002, the Georgia Department of Education changed the standards from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards. Another change occurred in 2010, and the state adopted the Common Core State Standards with the intentions of having a national curriculum (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In 2015-2016, the standards changed from the Georgia Performance Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of

Education, 2017). The Georgia Standards of Excellence became effective in 2015-2016 for mathematics and English language arts content areas (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The change came from a survey of educators, legislation, and the community. Curriculum change was occurring at an accelerated rate. Changes in educators' work environment can have an impact on how they perceive their quality of work, and those perceptions could influence stress levels. The researcher proposed to study the perceptions of teachers and the effects that curriculum change of content standards have on teachers with regards to teacher classroom practices.

Research Questions

The researcher proposed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the educators' perceptions of curriculum change?
2. What effect does curriculum change have on classroom practices?

Conceptual Framework

The first element of the study dealt with teachers' perceptions of changing standards and, more specifically, the change in the standards from the Georgia Performance Standards and Common Core State Standards curriculum to the Georgia Standards of Excellence curriculum and the standards implementation in Georgia schools. The second element of the study examined the perceptions of teachers regarding the impact of the new Georgia Standards of Excellence curriculum standards (see Figure 1). The new standards (1) increased rigor, (2) required teachers to create new lessons and modify previously existing lessons, (3) restructured pacing of the curriculum, (4) required a new assessment to measure the students' understanding of the concepts, and (5) required a new measure for the districts, schools, and teachers to follow and implement.

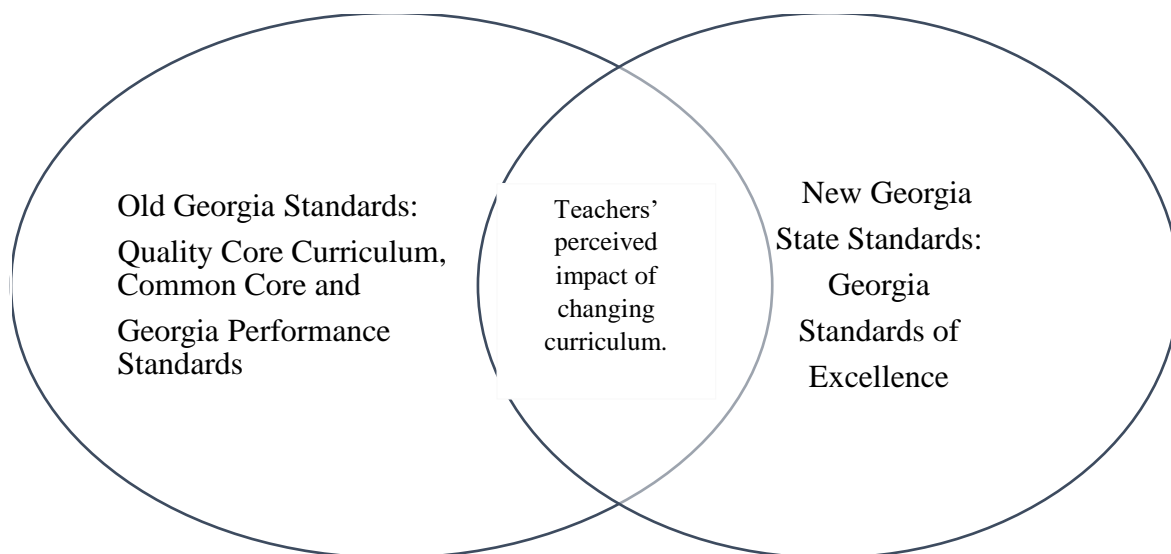


Figure 1. Hopek's Conceptual Framework

Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the effect curriculum standard changes had on teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices. There were copious amounts of research, which compared and contrasted curriculum changes, but the research was void in the area of how teachers' perceptions have been influenced by curriculum changes of content standards when transitioning from Common Core State Standards and Georgia Performance Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In 2015-2016, there was another shift from Common Core State Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The study aimed to survey Georgia teachers in one high school within one school district. After the survey was conducted, teachers were asked to participate in a focus group session on their perceptions of curriculum change and classroom practices.

Procedures

The design of this study was influenced by the research of Cheng (2012) and Cochrane and Cuevas (2015). The researcher sought to provide an understanding of how curriculum change impacts teachers. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used to help gain a better understanding rather than just measuring with one process (Creswell, 2007). The mixed methods design was inspired by Cheng's (2012) method of collecting data.

First, a survey was sent out to the faculty at the high school using Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018, which is a web-based survey platform. After 2 weeks, the survey question responses were analyzed, and the data were used to guide focus group sessions. Following the collection of data from the survey, focus groups interviews were conducted with teachers. Once all the data had been collected, it was uploaded into NVivo 11 Starter for Windows Student software (an online tool that helped analyze data collected during the focus group sessions) to search for themes and patterns.

The setting of the research study was a rural area with a mixed socioeconomic population in Western Georgia. The school's student population consisted of over 1,679 students with a faculty of 77 members. The participants in the study consisted of current teachers with several years of experience in teaching who had experienced a change in curriculum. The researcher was a current faculty member and had a relationship with the participants. Eisner (1991) suggested that having a relationship with the participants could lead to more meaningful research but must be done with caution.

Limitations

Limitations were factors that could impact a study which the researcher cannot control. Some of the limitations were as follows:

1. The possibility of researcher bias could exist due to the working relationship with the participants. However, Creswell (2007) suggested that a relationship with the participants could provide more detailed information.
2. The participants were chosen out of convenience for the focus group interviews.
3. The researcher was unable to solidify a time and date in which more than one administrator could attend. This occurrence was out of the researchers control but could have an impact on the study results.

Delimitations

Delimitations were decisions that were made by the researcher during a study that could influence the research. Some of the delimitations of this study were:

1. Similar studies had been conducted on curriculum change, and the current study aimed to extend the research related to curriculum change and the impact on teachers.
2. The researcher was a faculty member at the school, which could have impacted participants' willingness to participate in the study.

Definition of Terms

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) was a system implemented to monitor schools meeting yearly goals (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Burnout refers to dealing with many different tasks that become overwhelming causing the person to leave the profession (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

Curriculum change was the changing of standards that impacts the teacher's role in the classroom (Berman, 1980).

Cut Score was the score that is used by the state to determine mastery on the state-mandated test (i.e., Georgia Milestone). The levels of learners were beginners, developing, proficient, and distinguished learners (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Educational change was a set of theories and idea that impacts the development of curriculum at the district, state, and national levels, which include design, implementation, and evaluation programs (Berman, 1980).

Georgia Milestones was a mandated standardized test to measure the students' knowledge of the material from Grades 3 through 12 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Georgia Standards of Excellence Curriculum was a revision of the previous Common Core State Standards and Georgia Performance Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Highly Qualified (HQ) refers to the standards that teachers were required to meet in their qualifications to teach (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

The *high school* refers to schools serving students in Grades 9 through 12.

No Child Left Behind was a federal mandate requiring schools that receive federal funding to meet specific requirements with teacher qualifications, testing, and other initiatives (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Self-Efficacy was defined as a person's perception about one's ability to accomplish goals and tasks (Bandura, 1997a).

Standards were defined as guides for educators to provide challenging materials that support learning and accomplishment (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Summary

The Common Core State Standards were created by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop a set of standards to be used among all states (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). For some, the most recent set of standards were the Georgia Performance Standards with the mixture of the Literacy component of Common Core State Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The Common Core State Standards was met with some resistance in part due to the lack of teacher input and professional development on the curriculum standards being implemented (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).). The next stage of change in curriculum occurred in the state of Georgia with the revision of Common Core State Standards and Georgia Performance Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The change occurred in 2015 and was to be fully implemented in all educational areas by the school year 2018-2019 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). This study aimed to understand the impact on teachers when faced with curriculum changes to Georgia Standards of Excellence and how their perceptions of curriculum change impacted their classroom practices (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Curriculum has changed at an accelerate rate in recent years in the state of Georgia. To understand the significance of curriculum change it was important to review the historical time line of curriculum change (Cheng, 2012). In 1957, Russia launched Sputnik into space (Herald, 1974). After the launch of Sputnik, the United States started to invest in the educational system predominantly focusing on math and science (Herold, 1974). Around the 1980s, scholastic aptitude test scores national average score for the English and mathematics portion dropped by 40 to 50 points (Gardner et al., 1983). These events as well as others influenced curriculum change in the 21st century and provided insight into current curriculum changes.

Curriculum

Depending on the person asked, the word *curriculum* has several different meanings, and a person might not understand the meaning of curriculum was until an explanation was offered to them (Portelli, 1987). Portelli (1987) stated that there were more than 120 different definitions in the educational literature for the word curriculum. “Curriculum was interpreted as a vision of the adult educational professional, a plan for a pedagogical journey toward the good life, or students’ actual classroom engagement with ideas and ways of knowing” (O’Conner, 2016, p. 22). Depending on the state that an educator resides in, the curriculum can relate to the standards that guide the teacher in the students’ educational journey. “Like many other common terms in education, curriculum

is a complex concept. When people use the word, you do not know what they mean until they explain themselves” (Henderson & Gornick, 2002, p. 3).

Historical Foundations of Education

“Wise societies since the time of Plato have made moral education a deliberate aim on schooling. They have educated for character as well as intellect, decency as well as literacy, virtue as well as knowledge” (Lickona, 1991, p. 6). Our founders knew the importance of having correct moral citizens to have a prosperous society (Lickona, 1991). Ryan (2003) stated that education was necessary to instruct people on morals but also to perpetuate a democracy.

An event that sparked a movement in education was the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957 (Herald, 1974). The “Race to Space” sparked a push towards the mathematics and science fields (Herald, 1974). Sputnik was the first man-made satellite to orbit the Earth (Herald, 1974). After the launch, the United States made the first significant investment in education (Herald, 1974). The goal of education was to produce more scientists to help the country reach the moon before other countries (Herald, 1974). The National Science Foundation invested money into the development of new curricula in mathematics, physics, biology, and chemistry (Herald, 1974). This movement sparked the federal governments’ interest and investment in education, and education has continued to change.

Between the years of 1960 and 1980, Scholastic Aptitude Test scores verbal scores dropped by 50 points and mathematics scores dropped by 40 points, which sparked concern about the U.S. education system. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report on the U.S. educational

system (Gardner et al., 1983). *A Nation at Risk* was a report commissioned by President Ronald Reagan with a panel of 18 members from private sectors, government, and educators. The report indicated that schools were failing and education had become diluted, and, due to the need for a competitive workforce, the education system needed to improve the quality of teaching (Gardner et al., 1983).

The committee made 38 recommendations and placed the recommendations into five groups: content, standards and expectations, time, teaching, and leadership and fiscal support (Gardner et al., 1983). The recommendations for the areas of content included the following: high school students should have a foundation in the “Five New Basics,” earn 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, and 1.5 years of computer science course to receive a diploma. For those students who chose to further their education by going to college, the committee recommended students take 2 years of foreign language (Gardner et al., 1983). The recommendations for the section comprised of standards and expectations were for standards to be “rigorous and measurable” (Gardner et al., 1983). Schools were recommended to use classroom time more efficiently and potentially extend the number of hours spent in the classroom or extend the school year (Gardner et al., 1983). In the area of teaching, the recommendation had seven parts, and the intent was to improve the field of teaching (Gardner et al., 1983). The recommendations made by the committee were: teachers were to meet high school educational standards, demonstrate their knowledge of the topic, show an aptitude for teaching, provide a competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based environment, adopt an 11-month contract, develop career ladders, and incentives, and master teachers should be involved in teacher preparation programs

(Gardner et al., 1983). Under the area of leadership and fiscal support, the committee recommended that citizens hold educators accountable and provide budgetary support and stability (Gardner et al., 1983). *A Nation at Risk* was the beginning of the development of standards that would play a vital role in an educators' role in the classroom (Gardner et al., 1983). In response to *A Nation at Risk*, Georgia developed standards that teachers taught by for almost two decades. The development of the standards was known as Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 enacted by Governor Joe Frank Harris.

Curriculum Change in the Standards

On January 8, 2002, George W. Bush signed into law No Child Left Behind. The act did not require states to participate in No Child Left Behind; however, if the states did not participate, the states ran the risk of losing federal funding. No Child Left Behind was designed to close the achievement gap between low-income families and minorities (No Child Left Behind, 2017). Under No Child Left Behind, students were required to be tested in reading and mathematics in Grades 3 through 8 and once again in high school. States and schools were required to report student populations as a whole and as subgroups of students (i.e., special education, English language learners, racial groups, and low-income families) as part of the adequate yearly progress report (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The goal of No Child Left Behind was that every student would test at a proficient level on the state-mandated test by 2013-2014 (No Child Left Behind, 2017). If schools missed targets for adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, then the school was deemed a failing school (No Child Left Behind, 2017). If the school missed

adequate yearly progress for three straight years, the school was required to provide free tutoring to students. If the school missed adequate yearly progress for more than three years consecutively then, the state had several options (No Child Left Behind , 2017). Some of the options were to provide state intervention, shut down the school, convert into a charter school, a state-run school, or use other significant turnaround strategies (No Child Left Behind, 2017). Under No Child Left Behind, teachers were required to be *highly qualified* (HQ), which meant teachers were to hold a bachelor's degree in education or higher and successfully pass the state teacher assessment called the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; (No Child Left Behind, 2017).

No Child Left Behind held educators accountable for students' learning. The purpose of No Child Left Behind was for all students to have access to a fair, equal, and high-quality education as well as meet the requirements on state academic achievement standards and academic assessments (No Child Left Behind, 2017). The first goal of No Child Left Behind was that state had high-quality academic assessments, preparation, and training for teachers, instructional materials that met the needs of the standards, which would aid in the alignment of curriculum, and have measurable academic achievement (No Child Left Behind, 2017).

In Georgia, the goal of Quality Core Curriculum provided teachers with standards that were clear and measurable, help them create lesson plans that were relevant to the real world, and aligned with to the changing of technology (Barbour, Evans, & Ritter, 2007). Quality Core Curriculum Standards were a set of standards in Georgia that were used for two decades before transitioning to Georgia Performance Standards. Quality

Core Curriculum Standards were transitioned out because the standards lacked depth and made it unreasonable for teachers to cover the amount of material. In addition, the standard did not match the national standards (Barbour et al., 2007). The new standards (i.e., Georgia Performance Standards) were proposed to improve the guidelines of what students were expected to learn. In 2002, the Georgia Performance Standards were created to provide teachers with objectives for instruction, assessment, and student work. The Georgia Performance Standards were developed to “isolate and identify skills” necessary for students to perform problem-solving tasks while using reasoning skills and to communicate their knowledge effectively (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

In recent years, Georgia’s standards known as the Georgia Performance Standards changed to Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards were created by a group called Achieve in 2009, an independent group (Rust, 2012). The components of Common Core were developed in collaboration with educators, administrators, and other educational experts (Rust, 2012). Common Core State Standards were created not as a curriculum but as a set of expectations for what students should learn during their time in school to be successful in either a post-secondary institution or the workforce (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Rothman, 2012). Only mathematics and English language arts teachers experienced the full implementation of Common Core (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2010). The literacy and technology component of Common Core was taught in addition to the Georgia Performance Standards for the science and social studies standards (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2010). The goal of the Common Core State Standards was to create consistency among educational systems throughout different states. The standards were

designed so that all students could understand the value of consistent and real-world learning experiences.

In 2009, President Obama made his first joint address with Congress about setting a goal that would produce the highest amount of college graduates in the world by 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education (2011) stated the goal would require 50% of the population of 25- to 34-year-olds to receive an associate's degree or higher by 2020. The goal would in turn increase the U.S. rank compared to other countries (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The push for the educational goal set by President Obama was based on the U.S. ranking among other countries (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The national goal for elementary and secondary education was to increase the percentage of graduates from high school, increase the number of fourth and eighth graders scoring proficient or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The goal was to improve the areas of reading, mathematics, and science and ensure all elementary and secondary students were college and career ready by providing a rigorous instruction in the classroom while also providing sufficient support services (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

In 2012, the Obama Administration began granting waivers to states regarding specific components of No Child Left Behind in exchange for rigorous state-developed plans, which would decrease the achievement gap, make improvements to curriculum, and produce higher student outcomes (No Child Left Behind, 2017). However, components of the act remained intact, such as testing and accountability.

In December of 2015, the Obama Administration signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA was designed to help ensure every student and school was

successful. The act upheld critical components about disadvantaged and high-need students in the United States and required all students be taught using high academic standards that would prepare them for college or careers.

In response to ESSA, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) was created to measure how strong schools, districts, and the state were preparing their students for the next level in education (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). There were five main components of CCRPI, and they were achievement, progress, closing gaps, readiness, and graduation rate (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The five components of CCRPI were scored on a scale of 0 to 100 and were combined for a total score on CCRPI using a range from 0 to 100 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). Baseline data for schools, districts, and the state of Georgia were taken in the school year 2016-2017. The score was then used to establish schools, districts, and state ranking (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Teacher Perceptions

Perceptions were the ability to become aware of information through a person's senses (Murphy & Torff, 2014). The perception of teachers was a vital role in education. If a teacher's perception of events was low, then the likelihood of having high regard for the event was low. If the teacher's perception of an event was high, then the possibility of teachers having high regard for the event was expected (Murphy & Torff, 2016). Teacher perception has been measured through many different studies.

Murphy and Torff (2014) surveyed 370 teachers in the North Eastern part of the United States, and the results of the survey indicated that teachers expressed little confidence when using the Common Core State Standards while instructing students. In

addition, the results indicated a decline in teacher's perceptions of classroom effectiveness due to the accountability mandates pushed down by the state (Murphy & Torff, 2014). The results of the study also indicated that teachers experienced added stress when working to implement the standards and improve lessons (Murphy & Torff, 2014).

Cochrane and Cuevas (2015) conducted a study on teacher perceptions of Common Core State Standards when implementing the standards. When the study was conducted, the Common Core State Standards had only been in place for a year and a half (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015). Cochrane and Cuevas (2015) research indicated approximately 66% of the teachers felt prepared to teach the new standards while 53% indicated they would have liked additional information to teach the standards. The results of their study indicated participants did not feel the new standards had a big change over education when compared to No Child Left Behind (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015). The research suggested that teachers believed that Common Core State Standards had some positives to the content of the standards but suggested a negative perception when it came to raised test scores. There was also a negative perception about the amount of workload and negative perceptions on the impacts of the testing standards (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015).

Educational Reform and Teacher Perceptions

With the educational reform of curriculum, researchers found that there was a relationship among teachers' perceptions when compared to educational reform of curriculum. Nadelson et al. (2012) reported that when curriculum change occurred, teachers perceived the change as a way to stifle their creativity and autonomy in the

classroom. Nadelson et al. (2012) conducted a study based on teachers' perception of educational reform. Findings of research performed by Nadelson et al. (2012) indicated that the teacher participants had a moderate level of knowledge and perceptions about Common Core State Standards. Findings of Nadelson et al. (2012) indicated that teachers needed more professional development in regards to Common Core State Standards. The implications of the study indicated understanding the level of the educators' knowledge and perceptions were critical components of a successful implementation of educational reform (Nadelson et al., 2012).

Content Alignment

Porter, Fusarelli, and Fusarelli (2015) stated effective communication and supported learning for teachers was necessary for new educational reform to successfully implement and enhance the learning environment of the students in the classroom. The need to adequately prepare teachers for educational reform was high (Porter et al., 2015).

Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011) conducted a study with 35 specialists in mathematics and English language arts from 18 different states comparing the new Common Core State Standards in English language arts and reading and mathematics. All grade levels (K- 12) were included in the study (Porter et al., 2011). Porter et al. (2011) compared mathematics standards from 27 states with Common Core State Standards and 24 states with English language arts and reading. The study used multiple methodologies (Porter et al., 2011). The results of the study indicated a slight to moderate alignment when No Child Left Behind standards and Common Core State Standards were compared (Porter et al., 2011). Porter et al. (2011) concluded that Common Core State

Standards and the standards of the state with No Child Left Behind had a difference between curriculum and assessments.

In 2011, Cobb and Jackson reviewed the analysis of state's No Child Left Behind standards to Common Core State Standards conducted by Porter et al. (2011). Cobb and Jackson's (2011) findings were in favor of the result indicated by Porter et al. (2011) when comparing the researchers Common Core State Standards with rigorous, focused, and consistent standards. Cobb and Jackson (2011) cautioned "that the process of implementing the Common Core State Standard mathematics should be the focus of improvement-oriented investigations that can inform the development of effective implementation models. It was one thing to formulate sound instructional policies and another to support their successful implementation" (p. 185).

Dingman, Teuscher, Newton, and Kasmer (2013) conducted a comparative study to examine the previous mathematical standards to the Common Core State Standards of mathematics. The results of the study indicated several primary differences between the prior state standards and Common Core State Standards mathematics including: (a) changes in grade levels where specific mathematics content was taught, (b) the number of grade levels in which mathematical topic appear, (c) changes on the emphasis on specific mathematical topics (either by decreasing or increasing the amount of time on the topic), and (d) lastly, the level of expectations of reasoning skills in mathematics (Dingman, Teuscher, Newton, & Kamer, 2013).

Reys (2014) reviewed research literature on the shift of the previous state standards to Common Core State Standards mathematics. Reys (2014) discussed topics of how the shift towards technology, reasoning process, and mathematical standards was

tioned to assessments with accountability for teachers, administrators, and school districts. Reys (2014) suggested a need for professional development with support to align the teachers' practices with Common Core State Standards mathematics. The researcher also reviewed textbooks with the Common Core State Standards mathematics and found that the textbooks were not aligned with the standards. In addition, Reys (2014) suggested that time was needed to implement the standards fully and for textbook developers to align the books with the new standards. Figure 2 displays a concept chart for studies related to Common Core and teacher perceptions.

Topic: Studies Related to Common Core and Teacher Perceptions

| Study | Purpose | Participants | Design and Analysis | Findings |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Cheng (2012) | Studied teachers' perceptions when implementing Common Core State Standards. | 333 teachers invited to participate from California (95 participated) | A mixed methods design was used where he conducted an online survey(Quantitative) and conducted interview questions (Qualitative) | Flexibility with the implementation of new curriculum to meet the needs of all students. A need for professional development and time to determine the effectiveness of the new curriculum. |
| Cochrane & Cuevas (2015) | To examine teachers' perceptions of Common Core. | Participants were from two districts and consisted of 70 participants. | Mixed Methods: Survey was conducted and followed by the examination of the correlations between different variables. | The results indicated a correlation between variables and among the variables. A positive correlation was discovered between teacher training, workload, and morale. |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Bostic & Matney (2013) | Perceptions of teachers when implementing Common Core State Standards | 148 elementary teachers and 22 middle school teachers. | Quantitative: Surveys sent out to participants one for elementary school and one for middle school. | Professional development on understanding Common Core State Standards mathematics and instructional strategies to help students with conceptual development. |
| Murphy & Torff (2014) | Teacher perceptions of Common Core State Standards. | 370 teachers surveyed | Quantitative: Survey | A statistically significant decline in teachers' perceived ability to teach with the new standards. |
| Burks et al. (2015) | To examine the perceptions of teachers (sixth – twelfth) when implementing the Common Core State Standards. | 35 teachers from four states participated in the survey. | Quantitative: A descriptive analysis was conducted. | Half of the population survey reported feeling comfortable implementing Common Core State Standards, and over half (55%) reported not having adequate training on implementation of the new curriculum. |

Figure 2. Concept Analysis Chart

Self-Efficacy

“Self-efficacy is grounded in the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory, emphasizing the evolution and exercise of human agency- the idea that people can exercise some influence over what they do” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 611).

Bandura (2006) emphasized that people monitor and regulate their actions, anticipate different outcomes and solutions, and reflect upon their actions. Personal factors, behaviors, and environmental factors impact this theory (Bandura, 2006; Skaalvik &

Skaalvik, 2007). Behaviors and environmental factors influence one's goals, attitudes, activities, how much effort was put forth on an activity, and how long people will actively pursue obstacles (Bandura, 2006).

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and Other Research

Bandura first published an article about self-efficacy entitled "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change" in 1977. Bandura stated that dysfunctional inhibitors, such as phobias and protective mechanisms, could be changed due to "the experience of mastery arising from effective performance" (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). Bandura (1977) defines efficacy as one's ability to acquire the behavior to produce the necessary outcomes.

Bandura (1977) explained that a person's self-efficacy impacted the person's behavior. An example of this behavior is if a person ran track and was confident in the person's ability to run track he or she would join a track team, whereas a person who was not confident in his or her ability to run would avoid all running activities. Bandura (1977) asserted that a person's self-efficacy impacted how much effort and persistence a person put into completing a task.

One of the key components of controlling life circumstances was human behavior (Bandura, 1997a). Bandura's social cognitive theory proposed that individuals can influence life experiences of others (Bandura, 1997a). Bandura's social cognitive theory component of self-efficacy states that belief in an individual's self-was essential to the individual's actions (Bandura, 1997a). Bandura (2000) stated that self-efficacy played a role in how individuals chose paths, set and achieved goals, time spend in activities, and how they responded to stress in difficult circumstances.

Bandura (1997b, 1977) research from his studies grouped self-efficacy into one of four main areas, and they were performance accomplishments (i.e., mastery of experiences), vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological state. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) stated that mastery experiences were the most impactful area of self-efficacy as identified by Bandura. People who were masters in their fields of experiences were more likely to have higher self-efficacy and had higher self-efficacy in future experiences. Most mastery experiences come from actual accomplishments that they have achieved (Bandura, 1977). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) explained that a higher sense of satisfaction with one's past performance in teaching indicated a higher self-efficacy in the classroom. Bong and Skaalvik (2003) and Pajares (1996) regarded mastery experience as the most influential for self-efficacy. The participants who were masters at their skills have seen failure and made the most of certain situations that occurred in their careers.. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) stated that verbal persuasion could potentially increase self-efficacy if conducted in the appropriate manner and it was best used when the person conveying the information was viewed reliable and confident. Lastly, physiological responses, such as nervousness, were signals of previous failures that may impact self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

According to Bandura (1977), vicarious learning was another source of self-efficacy. The models that used written, visual, or kinetics for the learning process were considered vicarious learning. A vicarious learning experience was at its highest when the learner was using a model that was best suited for them (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). If the person did not identify with the model as well, the result could be low self-efficacy in the vicarious learning model (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Verbal persuasion was another component of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Verbal persuasion uses criticism and encouraging feedback from a reputable source (Bandura, 1977). If encouragement was used, then the expectation was that self-efficacy would increase, but, if criticism was used, then the expectation was that it would decrease self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion was a valuable indicator of teacher self-efficacy (Cantrell, Young, & Moore, 2003). Verbal persuasion can help people overcome difficult tasks, provide people with helpful advice, and provide strategies for people to be successful (Cantrell et al., 2003).

The last component of Bandura's (1977) theory was the physiological and emotional part. Part of this component involves the person's environment, emotions, and health situation (Bandura, 1977). Being in a stressful environment could have a negative impact on a person's self-efficacy as opposed to people who were in a positive environment with encouragement (Cantrell et al., 2003). Most individuals would try to deal with situations that they were comfortable with but would avoid conditions where the task was above their ability (Bandura, 1977). If a person's self-efficacy was higher, then the person was more likely to try to complete the task even if it was above the person's abilities.

Around 1980, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy was applied to educational research. Lalonde (1980) created and validated the *Measure of Academic Self-Efficacy* for 10th through 12th-grade students on academic self-efficacy. The study had 529 student participants, and the results indicated that students who had a higher grade point average had higher academic self-efficacy (Lalonde, 1980).

Keyser and Barling (1981) completed two studies using Bandura's theory of self-efficacy concerning academics. Keyser and Barling's (1981) research used 504 sixth-grade students. The first of the two studies used the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire to compare the effects of performance accomplishments, modeling, and interaction based on their self-efficacy beliefs, and the effects of their locus of control (Keyser & Barling, 1981). The results of the study indicated that modeling did account for the variance in self-efficacy whereas the performance accomplishments did not in the study (Keyser & Barling, 1981).

The second study completed by Keyser and Barling (1981) was done to determine performance accomplishments, and modeling accounted for the variance in self-efficacy. The result indicated that modeling accounted for higher variance in self-efficacy than performance accomplishments; however, the researchers stated that the age of the participants could have accounted for the reason that modeling had a higher variance than performance accomplishments (Keyser & Barling, 1981).

Research conducted by Appleton and Kindt (2002) suggested that teachers who were new to the field of teaching had low confidence and preferred to use more reading and writing strategies rather than hands-on strategies in the science curriculum. Some researchers have suggested that teachers with low self-efficacy had an authoritarian approach to classroom instruction (Bandura, 1997a; Palmer, 2006). Additionally, teachers who exhibited low self-efficacy tended to provide students with more book and worksheet tasks, which can hinder students' ability to learn the material (Bandura, 1997a).

Eidietis and Jewkes (2011) examined 89 K-8 teachers in the United States and researched in their preparedness to teach ocean literacy and their attitudes toward ocean science. The results of the multiple linear regression indicated significance between teachers' dispositions and frequency of teaching ocean literacy (Eidietis & Jewkes, 2011). Findings by Eidietis and Jewkes (2011) indicated that teachers' ability to make curriculum decisions impacted their dispositions and attitudes regarding ocean literacy.

Powell-Moman and Brown-Schild (2011) investigated the "impact of a two-year professional development program on teacher self-efficacy for inquiry-based instruction" (p. 47). Participants who were enrolled in the program had a scientist and teacher partnership to help create content knowledge, inquiry-based instruction, and leadership skills for in-service science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers (Powell-Moman & Brown-Schild, 2011). Participants were given a survey to assess their self-efficacy at the beginning of the program and then again at the end of the program (Powell-Moman & Brown-Schild, 2011). The results of the study showed an increase in self-efficacy after completing the program when compared to the beginning of the program in inquiry-based instruction and depth of content knowledge (Powell-Moman & Brown-Schild, 2011).

Duncan (2012) conducted a study that looked at the relationship between U.S. history curriculum design, self-efficacy, and test achievement of eighth-grade students and parents who were part of the KIPP: STAR College Preparatory Charter School. Duncan (2012) created an online questionnaire specifically for the study. The results of the study indicated a need for more African-American history to be taught in the curriculum (Duncan, 2012). The results of the study "indicated that relationships exist

between curricular design and test achievement and between curricular design and self-efficacy” (Duncan, 2012, p. 91).

Pan, Chou, Hus, Li, and Hu (2013) conducted a study that analyzed the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teaching practices in the health and physical education curriculum in Taiwan. Random and cluster sampling were used for elementary school teachers. Teachers completed a Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale in health and physical education and the Teaching Practice Scale in health and physical education. The result of the study indicated that the model had an acceptable “goodness-of-fit”, and it was “concluded that teachers’ self-efficacy has a positive effect on teaching practices in health and physical education curriculum” (Pan et al., 2013, p. 241).

Fanni, Rega, and Cantoni (2013) conducted two studies. The first study was to analyze the impact of information and communication technology on primary school teachers in Brazil and South Africa. The second part of the study was to measure the perceptions of teachers in being able to use technology (Computer Self-Efficacy-CSE) and how it impacted their perception of being an effective teacher (Fanni, Rega, & Cantoni, 2013). The findings of one of the surveys suggested that there was a positive influence on CSE and the perception of being an effective teacher (Fanni et al., 2013).

In 2013, Yavuz, Günhan, Esen, and Narli (2013) published a study about self-efficacy beliefs of teachers and their mathematical literacy and the relationship between the self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards mathematics. The descriptive research study conducted by Yavuz et al. (2013) used 550 prospective teacher candidates studying primary school mathematics.. The data were obtained through the use of a Mathematical Literacy Self-Efficacy Scale and a Scale Measuring Attitudes towards mathematics

(Yavuz et al., 2013). The results indicated that the prospective teacher's self-efficacy on mathematical literacy was high and their beliefs did not change when examined in regard to gender, grade level they were being trained to teach, or the university they attended (Yavuz et al., 2013). The findings of Yavuz et al. (2013) indicated that the prospective teachers' attitudes impacted their self-efficacy about mathematical literacy.

Charleston and Leon (2016) developed a study to understand self-efficacy and expectations of career interest for African-American graduate students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degree programs. The study had 23 African-American graduate students and faculty in the area of computer science (Charleston & Leon, 2016). The results of the qualitative research indicated "different stages of the STEM trajectory, self-efficacy of STEM and computing needs to be reestablished" (Charleston & Leon, 2016, p. 152). Researchers Charleston and Leon (2016) indicated self-efficacy was a "mobile construct to be re-achieved as students' progress toward advanced STEM degrees" (p. 152). The results of the study also suggested that the contributions and input of teachers, parents, mentors, counselors, and peers had a significant impact on the level of self-efficacy (Charleston & Leon, 2016).

Teaching Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the perceptions people have about themselves and their ability to perform job functions such as organization skills and the actions required to complete tasks. In teaching, a teacher's efficacy can impact the teacher's ability to perform their job duties, goal setting, and impact the learning abilities of their students (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). Self-Efficacy was a "multidimensional and context-specific construct" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

Teacher efficacy can be affected by three categories, and they were planning and preparation, classroom environments, and instruction.

A teacher who was prepared and had planned appropriately seemed to have higher self-efficacy. Instructional planning refers the method, which teachers use to plan their instruction. There were many different types of instruction planning strategies that have been developed over the years to help teachers with planning. According to Reiser and Dick (1996), a systematic approach was an effective way for a teacher to improve and maintain a high self-efficacy. Reiser and Dick's (1996) systematic approach had six phases, which included goals, objectives, instructional activities, assessment, revision, and implementation. The principles that underlie the six phases were: "identifying goals and objectives that students will be expected to attain, planning instructional activities that correspond with the objectives, developing an assessment instruction to measure attainment of objectives, and revising instruction based on student performance and attitudes" (Kitsantas & Baylor, 2001, p. 97; Reiser & Dick, 1996). However, there was no strong research to support that the instructional planning methods implemented in the teachers' preservice program were being used in the actual classroom to improve the teachers' effectiveness. There was, however, research where results indicated that the teachers were not using the instructional planning methods that they acquired in their preservice programs (Kagan & Tippins, 1992; Kitsantas & Baylor, 2001; Reynolds, 1993). There was a strong belief among veteran teachers that the novice teacher should be taught instructional planning (Kitsantas & Baylor, 2001). Kitsantas and Baylor (2001) suggested that improving instructional planning could have been increased by self-

regulation, which was a systematic way to monitor peoples' thoughts, feelings, and actions to achieve a goal.

Teacher self- efficacy refers defined as the views that the teacher's values and how it may impact the teacher's ability to impact student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers who have perceived low self-efficacy typically used factors outside the classroom to measure the success of the students, such as home life, family background, and parental involvement (Pas et al., 2010). Teachers who displayed low self-efficacy were less motivated to reach out and try to impact the students' abilities in the classroom (Pas et al., 2010). Researchers indicated that those teachers who had perceived higher self-efficacy had a positive correlation with effective instruction and proactive classroom management, and higher performance (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers with low self-efficacy used reactive classroom behavior strategies instead of proactive strategies (Pas et al., 2010). The teachers who used organized instruction strategies, open to new methods of teaching, and were willing to work with struggling students showed high self-efficacy (Pas et al., 2010).

Researchers asserted that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more open to consultants who brought new ideas and strategies and were more willing to implement those strategies (Pas et al., 2010). A study was conducted by Pas et al. (2010) that measured teacher self-efficacy and burnout that were related to student disciplines, such as referrals to the principal, suspensions and referrals for the student support team. Therefore, teachers with higher self-efficacy could be better at dealing with and implementing curriculum change while also maintaining and even improving academic scores.

Historically, self-efficacy had been measured in many different ways. One of those ways was Rotter's (1966) concept and its relations to internal and external control (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Bandura (1997a) was another researcher who measured self-efficacy. Rotter (1966) asserted that if the teacher believed that his or her actions influenced the students, then the teacher's self-efficacy would increase. The reverse would hold true that if the teacher did not believe that his or her influence would be beneficial and that other factors influenced the classroom environment (e.g., students' abilities and life outside of the classroom), then the teacher's self-efficacy would decrease (Rotter, 1966). Bandura (1997a) asserted that a teacher's self-efficacy was based on the teacher's perceptions of his or her ability to perform and organize tasks to obtain certain educational goals set forth by the states and local agencies.

Stress

There were many different types of stress. Chronic stress was a stress that has been constant for a certain period. Posttraumatic stress was a disorder where a person has experienced an extreme amount of stress over a period. Since the 1960s, stress has been an area of concern. After the 1960s, researchers developed tools to measure stress to verify these empirical studies. Some researchers indicated that stress contributed to poor academic performances, sleep disturbances, sexual difficulties, substance abuse problems, and could even lead to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980).

Lunau, Siegrist, Dragano, and Wahrendorf (2015) analyzed several studies that had been conducted regarding education and work stress in a sample of workers from 16 different European countries. Lunau et al. (2015) wanted to measure the amount of stress

among those workers in lower socioeconomic schools asserting a link between low socioeconomic schools and stress levels. Most of the studies conducted before the Lunau et al. (2015) study showed a weak comparison between low socioeconomic schools and work stress when compared to a multivariate analysis (Lunau et al., 2015). The two data sets used by the researchers were collected in 2010 and 2011 and were comparative studies (Lunau et al., 2015). The two studies that were compared by the researchers were the Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Lunau et al., 2015). The samples were of men and women between the ages of 50 and 64 (Lunau et al., 2015). The results from the comparative study indicated that workers in lower socioeconomic schools showed strong relationships in having higher stress levels in all countries (Lunau et al., 2015). The researchers stated that the strength of the relationship between lower schools and workers with higher stress levels varied among countries, and their conclusions pointed to the different types of policies that may help reduce educational stressors in the workplace, especially to teachers in the lower schools (Lunau et al., 2015).

Stress was an important factor in the educational world. Teacher stress has been continually studied since the 1930s when the “National Education Association published articles on the health and happiness of teachers” (Adams, Health-Camp, & Camp, 1999, p 134). There were many teachers who reported a large amount of stress during the school year (Adams et al., 1999). “One of the most important sources of teacher stress was the educational system itself” (Adams et al., 1999, p. 133). Stress can result from numerous items, such as psychological, physiological, and environmental factors (Selye, 1974). “Stress is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and psychological

processes that was a consequence of any external action, situation, or event that places special and psychological demands upon a person” (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980, pp. 8-9). Some the stressors that teachers experienced were excessive workload, a poor school climate, lack of support from other teachers and administrators (Durham, 1992; Pepe & Addimando, 2013; Wilson, 2002).

Other stressors, which did not receive professional recognition, included excessive bureaucracy, the amount of time needed to complete paperwork, large classroom size, and the fear of isolation due to poor classroom management (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Pepe & Addimando, 2013; Pither, 1995). Some of the consequences of experiencing unnecessary stressors could lead to physical consequences, such as physical illness, early retirement from teaching, burnout, chronic fatigue, depression, and anxiety to name a few (Pepe & Addimando, 2013). Pepe and Addimando (2013) stated that job stressors of educators were placed into two categories: external environmental and internal emotional. External environmental stressors were linked to “academic facet of teachers’ work and teaching processes (i.e., the efficacy of learning)” (Pepe & Addimando, 2013, p. 16). Pepe and Addimando (2013) stated that internal emotional stressors were connected to teachers’ inner feelings when dealing with job stressors, such as “anxiety, anger, annoyance, irritation and frustration, low sense of efficacy, low motivation and distress” (p. 16). External environmental and internal emotional were extraordinarily intertwined and impact teachers’ performance in the classroom (Pepe & Addimando, 2013). Studies have indicated that teachers were more motivated when they had minimum stress levels (Czubaj, 1996).

Increased attention has come to educators' relationships between stress and burnout, depression, and anxiety (Polanyi & Tompa, 2004). Research on this issue has been brought to light because of increased amounts of people who reported high levels of workplace stress (Loretto et al., 2009). The National Institute for Occupational Study and Health reported that occupational stress was responsible for approximately 10% of workplace deaths (Wagner et al., 2013). The area of educational stress had been overlooked.

Classroom Stress

A teacher's stress level can be impacted by changing curriculum standards. Teachers were expected to maintain order in the classroom so that it promoted a calming climate and increased students' motivation (Pepe & Addimando, 2013). There was a fair amount of research that supported high levels of stress resulted from disruptive classroom behavior because of fearfulness and mistrust between the students and teachers (Charles & Senter, 2005). Challenging behavior influenced how teachers' dealt with stress in both novice and tenure teachers (Pepe & Addimando, 2013). Severe misbehavior can prompt teachers to leave the profession teaching. Challenging behavior was referred to as any behavior that impeded the teachers' ability to teach the students (Pepe & Addimando, 2013).

In a survey of British teachers' perceptions of students' classroom behavior, challenging behaviors were defined as activities, which upset or distressed the teacher, disrupted the order of the classroom, or caused the teacher to continually comment on student's behavior and resulted in loss of instructional time (Pepe & Addimando, 2013). Emerson (1995) defined challenging behavior as "culturally abnormal behaviour(s) of

such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person was likely to be placed in serious risk” (p. 3). Pepe and Addimando (2013) examined another model that was based on four different categories of students’ behavior in the classroom. The model that was proposed by Everston, Emmer, and Wrosham (2006) put students in one of four categories, identified as no problem with classroom behaviors, minor problems but did not impact other students’ learning environment, the behaviors caused significant problems in the classroom as it interferes with the teachers ability to teach, and was where minor problem escalated to being impacting the learning environment.

Burnout

Cherniss (1980) defined *burnout* as the “negative personal changes, which occurred over time in helping professionals working in demanding or frustrating jobs.” Maslach and Jackson (1986) has defined burnout as people who experience depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and condensed personal accomplishment. Burnout was not a new concept to the workforce. It was a concept that emerged during the 1970s; however, some researchers suggest that it was started earlier than the 1970s. The term burnout began to show up in psychological literature and cultural discourse during the 1970s (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated that the “concept of burnout” started in the human service fields. Other advanced countries have experienced burnout in their society. In the Netherlands and Sweden, burnout was a medical diagnosis, and many different fields serviced this condition, such as psychologists, social works, psychiatrists, counselors, and different organizational consultants (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Schaufeli et al. (2008) used a metaphor for burnout and likened burnout to the smothering of a fire or extinguishing of a candle, which

implied that a once brightly lit fire, could no longer continue to burn due to insufficient resources (p. 205). Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated that if employees were not appreciated, not given enough resources, and overloading the employee with additional responsibilities.

Freudenberger (1974) borrowed the term burnout from people who were involved in the illicit drug scene where the drugs caused harmful effects. Freudenberger observed the employees at St Mark's Free Clinic in New York's East Village lose energy and motivation, as well as a reduced commitment among volunteers (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Another reason why Freudenberger was so interested in the "burnout syndrome" was because at one time, he experienced burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Freudenberger later received The Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Practice of Psychology at the APA Convention in Boston because of his writings on the subject of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2008).

In the 1950s, the United States and European countries started rapidly growing and became "professionalized and bureaucratized" because of state and government involvement (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Larger corporations where job descriptions were created to formalize jobs replaced smaller businesses where people were intrinsically motivated (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Cherniss and Kranz (1983) observed that people who worked in Montessori schools and religious organizations did not experience burnout in the same way that people who were employed in large-scale organizations. Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated people who participated in religious organizations felt that it was more like a "calling" rather than just an occupation. People who were employed by a religious organization usually had a sense of communion and strong values (Schaufeli et al., 2008).

Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated that the “frustration and disillusionment arising from a widespread, institutionalized clash of utilitarian organizational values with providers’ personal or professional values contributed further to burnout” (p. 207).

In the 1960s, a “cultural revolution” occurred that seemed to diminish professionals in the human service fields (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated that the prestige of the human service professionals was no longer apparent and the recipients’ demands were high. Recipients expected more empathy and compassion (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Schaufeli et al. (2008) asserted that for these reasons and socio-cultural influences increased the number of people who experienced burnout and led to the recognition of burnout in the 1970s.

Schaufeli et al. (2008) stated that there were two main contributing factors, which contributed to the increase in burnout. According to Schaufeli et al. (2008), the demands of recipients increased while resources failed to keep up with the demand, and employees held different values than the organizations, which resulted in burnout. In recent years, the economy crashed, and everybody experienced the recession where large companies downsized, and small businesses closed. The impact the economy had on the work environment changed because of downsizing; the employees were forced to take on more responsibilities. Schaufeli et al. (2008) asserted that more demands and lack of resources impacted burnout. The second contributing factor suggested employees had different values than the organizations. For example, an employee may expect to get a certain amount of credit cards sells each day and month to meet the minimum requirement. However, the employee might have different values and beliefs, which placed customer experience as a more significant focus than making a monthly quota. Schaufeli et al.

(2008) stated that there was more potential for conflict when organizations and employees lowered their commitment to one another.

As previously mentioned, other countries burnout experienced burnout; however, different countries dealt with burnout in different ways. Different researchers provided insight that burnout does not only happen in North America or was solely a Western phenomenon (Schaufeli et al., 2008). It was suggested the reason burnout had increased in different parts of the world was because of the “globalization, privatization, and liberalization” (Schaufeli et al., 2008, p. 210). Researchers suggested that globalization, privatization, and liberalization created a work environment with the expectation of employees to increase the quality of work and productivity (Schaufeli et al., 2008).

In different countries, the term burnout did not have the same implications. A review of the term burnout indicated the term was not different in various languages (Schaufeli et al., 2008). However, in most countries, the term burnout did have an equivalent term. Another term that had similar meaning to burnout and was used in other countries was “exhaustion” (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Schaufeli et al. (2008) suggested that some countries consider the term burnout as an extreme term as almost a “psychology death sentence” (p. 210). However, the term burnout referred to symptoms that range from mild to severe (Schaufeli et al., 2008).

Schaufeli et al. (2008) used the term neurasthenia as the equivalent of severe burnout. According to the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD-10), for a neurasthenic diagnosis to be given the person must have shown persistent and increased fatigue or experienced weakness when conducting minimal work, must have displayed at least two of the seven distress symptoms, such as irritability and inability to

relax or sleep, must have proven there was not some other disorder causing the symptoms, such as a mood disorder or anxiety/depression disorder, be work-related, and the person must have sought professional treatment (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Researchers indicated women experienced more burnout than men; however, researchers indicated little to no difference between women and men burnout rates (Soares, Grossi, & Sundin, 2007).

In Sweden, the ICD was introduced in 1997, and the diagnosis burnout became one of the largest increased diagnoses. In Swedish, the term translated to problems that were work-related and made it difficult to manage life (Schaufeli et al., 2008). In lieu of the increase, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare added the disorder exhaustion to the national version of ICD-10 along with the diagnosis the “person must display physiological or mental symptoms for at least two weeks” and the work capacity had to be suffering and included symptoms, such as “lack of psychological energy, and difficulties concentrating, decreased ability to cope with stress, irritability or emotional instability, sleep disturbances, muscle pain, dizziness, or palpitations” (Schaufeli et al., 2008, p. 213).

The term burnout in earlier years was related to symptoms of exhaustion and nothing more by some researchers and practitioners (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Burnout has been associated with many different physiological conditions, such as sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, and health conditions, such as cardiovascular conditions. “Studies about the function of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis (HPA) in burnout have yielded contradictory results showing insignificant, negative or positive associations between burnout and cortisol” (Soares et al., 2007).

Professional Development

Professional development was a factor, which played various roles in an educator's career. With the new set of state standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence) being implemented in all areas of content by 2019, the professional development needs for teachers needed to fully understand the curriculum and all of the components. Extensive research has been conducted on professional development and the positive effects that it played in the role of education in the areas of content knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Akerson, & Hanuscin, 2007; Bell & Gilbert, 1994; Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Grigg, Kelly, Gamoran, & Borman, 2013; Johnson & Fargo, 2010). Supovitz and Turner (2000) collected survey data from 3,464 teachers and 666 principals in 24 locations. The data were collected over 2 years. Supovitz and Turner (2000) reported findings, which indicated professional development had deeper and more meaningful experiences.

In 1996-1997, Eisenhower Professional Development Program reported that professional development was lacking (Porter et al., 2011). Stenglein (2003) recommended the need for time for the teachers to implement a curriculum and to embed professional learning during the school day may be necessary for an effective implementation of a new curriculum.

Johnson (2007) conducted a study of experiences of middle school science teachers. The teachers participated in collaborative standards-based instructional practices at different levels (Johnson, 2007). The sample size was small with the data collected for the study from only two schools; however, the results of the study were

similar to the results of other studies on professional development and the positive effects on teachers (Johnson, 2007).

Grigg et al. (2013) completed a study in 73 Los Angeles area schools over a period of 3 years. The study consisted of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers to gain knowledge of the impact of professional development and how it influenced inquiry in the science classroom (Grigg et al., 2013). Teachers reported using “active learning strategies” although the achievement test scores were similar to previous years. The researchers concluded that teachers did implement the skills and lessons from the professional development.

Various types of professional learning existed and three of the various professional learning types were traditional, horizontal learning, and online. Of the three types of professional development available to teachers was the traditional style of professional learning (Avery & Reeve, 2013). A traditional professional development consisted of teachers participating in a day or multiple days of workshops where teachers were provided with information and sometimes resources to use in their classrooms (Avery & Reeve, 2013). While the traditional style of professional learning was the most popular way of disseminating information, it sometimes lacked the depth of knowledge to be effective (Trimmell, 2015).

Horizontal learning was where professional development or learning happened between peers or through a professional network. A strength of this type of professional development was that it was continuous. Knight (2002) described horizontal learning as an important factor in the development of procedural and declarative knowledge. Knight (2002) based his work on Shulman’s (1987) seven components of teaching knowledge.

Shulman (1987) stated the need for procedural and declarative knowledge teaching included: content knowledge in their area of expertise, pedagogical and curriculum knowledge for curriculum strategies, materials, programs, and classroom management. Shulman (1987) also stated the need for pedagogical content knowledge, an understanding of the different learners and their characteristics, understanding of educational context in the sense how grouping students impacted students ability to learn, and the educators understanding of their values and philosophy. Knight (2002) and Shulman (1987) provided a strong case for the importance of professional development among educators throughout their careers.

The final type of professional development was online learning. This form of professional learning was relatively new and had little research on how online learning impacted professional development. Fishman et al. (2013) completed a comparison of online professional development and face-to-face professional development to determine which of the two produced better teacher learning and student performances. Fishman et al. (2013) findings indicated both models of professional learning showed significant gains by both teachers and students, revealing no significant difference between online and face-to-face learning. Fishman et al. (2013) findings had the potential to be beneficial when providing and implementing professional development for adult learners.

Summary

The review of literature above encompassed an extensive body of knowledge on curriculum change, self-efficacy, stress, burnout, and professional development. The research indicated a need to understand how changing curriculum impacted teachers in

their classrooms and how changing curriculum standards impacted other areas of education.

In the state of Georgia, curriculum has change at least three times in the past 6 years from 2012-2018. In 2012, the Georgia Performance Standards were exchanged from Common Core State Standards, and then again in 2015, the state of Georgia voted to revise the standards and change the name of the standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence. The teachers were responsible for implementing the new curriculum on their own and were not afforded opportunities for professional development. With the new change came some concerns with the implementation and the impact it played on teachers with another change in curriculum happening so close together.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of curriculum change and the impact the curriculum change played on the educators in the classroom. Educators, school officials, academic coaches, instructional coaches, and state officials could benefit from the result of the study. The information gained in this study can help district officials and administrators assist teachers with the implementation of new curriculum. All teachers at a high school were represented and expressed how curriculum change impacted their classroom practices.

In order to study this phenomenon of teachers' perceptions of curriculum change and the impact it plays on their classroom practices, the researcher distributed a survey and facilitated two focus group sessions at a high school in one school district in Western Georgia. The researcher facilitated two focus groups to determine if there were any differences among different content teachers and their perceptions of the curriculum standards. The survey and focus group protocol were created with the purpose of answering the research questions. The researcher used the modified protocol by Cheng (2012) with both the survey and focus group sessions. The researcher used the same focus group protocol with both focus group sessions. The outcomes of the survey data and focus group sessions were used by the researcher to gain insight into teacher perceptions on curriculum change at the high school level.

Research Questions

The researcher's goal of the study was to gain insight into how educators perceive curriculum change and what affects curriculum change has on classroom practices. The researcher collected and analyzed data related to the following research questions:

1. What are the educators' perceptions of curriculum change?
2. What effect does curriculum change have on classroom practices?

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was chosen by the researcher to investigate a group of educators using survey and focus group data in a sequential explanatory analysis (see Figure 3). The study used a mixed methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative data provided meaningful information. Qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions of curriculum change by providing a detailed view of change in a natural setting (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative data provided for empirical evidence with judgment not based on perception. Content teachers experienced curriculum change, and the researcher studied the teachers' perceptions of the curriculum change and the impacts in their classrooms.

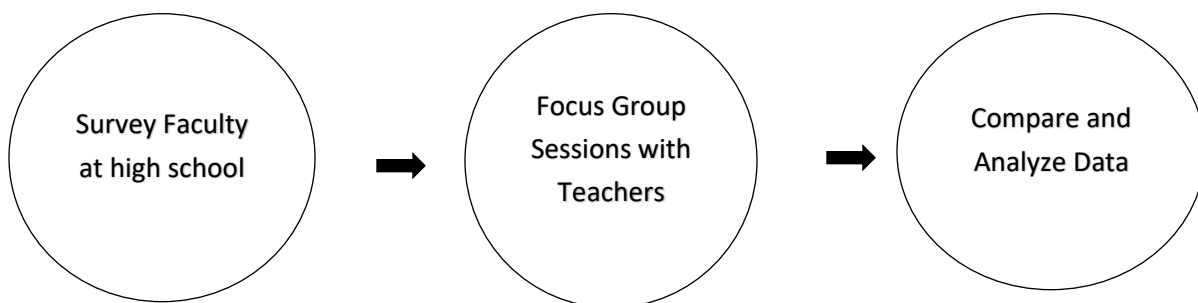


Figure 3. Flow Chart of Research

In recent years, curriculum change with regards to content standards has occurred at a high rate. Teachers experienced curriculum change in 2002 with Quality Core Curriculum, in 2008 with Georgia Performance, in 2012 with Common Core State Standards, or in 2015 with Georgia Standards of Excellence, and the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of curriculum change on teachers' perceptions and classroom practices with regard to content standards.

Population

The research setting was in a rural area in Western Georgia with a mixture of students from different socio-economic statuses. The district was chosen due to the geographic location and convenience. The total population of the school district with seven schools was approximately 5,310 students (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The district was comprised of four elementary schools (Pre-K thru fourth grade), one intermediate school (fifth through sixth grade), one middle school (seventh through eighth grade), and one high school (ninth through 12th grade). The average CCRPI score for high schools in the state was 77, and the district where the study was conducted was 84.4, which was above average based on 2017 CCRPI (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The participants in the study were from a rural high school in Western Georgia with a population of 1,679 students (Georgia Department of Education, 2018). The school district ethnicity was 5% Hispanic, less than 1% Asian, 16% African American, 73% Caucasian, and 5% Multi-racial (Georgia Department of Education, 2018). The student ethnicity of the high school was 5% Hispanic, 18% African American, 72% Caucasian and 5% Multi racial and was represented in Table 1 (Georgia Department of Education, 2018).

Table 1

List of Percentages of Ethnic Groups at the High School.

| Hispanic | Asian | African American | Caucasian | Multi-racial |
|----------|-------|------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 5% | < 1% | 16% | 73% | 5% |

Note. Percentages only represented respondents who completed the survey ($N=26$).

The certified teachers in the district consisted of approximately 286 members. Of this total, approximately 129 were elementary school teachers, 48 intermediate school teachers, 32 middle school teachers, and 77 high school teachers. The population of this study were high school teachers located in the identified Western Georgia school district who were content-area teachers (e.g., mathematics, English language arts, social studies, and science). The participants were chosen based on a volunteer basis. Each participant had at least five years of teaching experience at the high school level and had experienced at least one change in the curriculum. All of the participants who met the criteria were sent an invitation to participate. There was not a maximum number set for teachers who wanted to participate in the study. The researcher had worked at the school for 2 years and had a relationship with the participants. Eisner (1991) suggested that having a relationship with the participants can lead to more insight on the research topic but that it must be done with caution not to create bias.

Participants

Before distributing the survey and soliciting the participants for the focus group sessions, the researcher wrote a letter to the superintendent of the school district and requested permission to conduct the web-based survey and the focus group sessions. The researcher hand-delivered the letter to the superintendent's office to answer any questions about the study (Appendix A). After the superintendent granted permission to conduct the

study, the researcher hand-delivered a letter to the principal requesting permission to distribute the survey to the educators and to conduct the focus group sessions (Appendix B). The researcher followed the same protocol with the superintendent as with the principal to answer any questions the principal could have about the study. After permission was granted by the superintendent, principal, and the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) the researcher distributed the survey via email to the teachers at the high school. The email to the teachers contained information about the study and link to click on to participate in the study (Appendix C). The web-based survey was conducted by providing a link to Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018, in the email (Appendix C). The first question on the survey was consent to participate in the study. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary. Participants were required to click "I consent" to participate in the study, and if the participants did not click "I consent", they were prompted out of the survey (Appendices D & E). Teachers were sent an email asking for participation in the focus groups (Appendices F & J). The researcher predominantly focused on math and science teachers; however, all teachers, including non-content areas, were allowed to participate. The participants were chosen out of convenience. The researcher proposed to study a phenomenon and not content specifics.

The district has one high school. Mathematics and science teachers were well informed in the phenomenon studied by the researcher and the teachers were located in the same county the researcher chose, the sample was selected from this district. Two focus groups were conducted. The focus group, which contained science teachers consisted of eight participants, and the focus group, which contained mathematics teachers consisted of four participants. All participants in each focus group had taught

ninth graders to 12th graders. The teachers who participated in the focus group sessions did so on a voluntary basis.

Instrumentation

The protocol used by Cheng (2012) was a mixed methods study where the researcher surveyed the participants before the researcher interviewed the participants. The survey and interview protocol used by Cheng (2012) consisted of 22 survey questions and seven interview questions; however, the researcher revised the protocol to use 36 questions in Table 2 (Appendices E & H), and the interview questions were revised to use only five questions and fit a focus group session (Appendices G & I). In the original survey and focus group protocol, the term “Common Core” was used; however, “Common Core” was replaced with the term “Georgia Standards of Excellence” for this study. The change of curriculum standards in the state of Georgia occurred in February of 2015. The researcher contacted Cheng and asked for permission to use his survey and interview protocol and modify the survey and interview protocol to better fit the researcher’s study. Cheng (2012) consented to the request (Appendix H). Table 2 presents the quantitative item analysis of survey questions.

Table 2

Quantitative Item Analysis of Survey Questions

| Item | Research | Research Question |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Demographic question about age, gender, ethnicity, years of experience, experience in the county, and highest degree held. | Cheng , 2012 | 1 |
| 2. How many hours a week do you spend preparing your curriculum? | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016 | 2 |
| 3. How many curriculum changes have you experienced? | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016 | 1 |

| Item | Research | Research Question |
|--|--|-------------------|
| 4. New curriculum standards will have little impact on my everyday practice. | Cheng, 2012; Burks et al. 2015 | 1 |
| 5. I believe that the curriculum change will be more effective than current standards at preparing students to be college-career ready upon high school graduation. | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016; Bostic & Matney, 2013 | 1 |
| 6. The work that I will put into preparing and transitioning to the new set of curriculum standards will be worthwhile. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 7. I am well informed regarding what the new curriculum standards are. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 8. I am sufficiently prepared through professional development to transition from teaching current standards to the new standards. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 9. The new curriculum standards will help me become a more effective teacher. | Cheng, 2012 | 1 |
| 10. The new curriculum standards makes me feel more like a professional. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 11. Especially with the emergence of the Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel that I am spending more effort to comply with mandates rather than to teach students to the best of my ability. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 12. I am concerned that the new curriculum standards will restrict my creativity and the types of instructional strategies that I may use. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 13. I am concerned that under the new set of standards, I will spend too much time preparing students for testing. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 14. I would like more decision-making power over the curriculum than what I believe the new set of standards will permit. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |

| Item | Research | Research Question |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 15. Transitioning to the new curriculum standards will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials and lesson plans. | Cheng, 2012; Burks et al., 2015 | 2 |
| 16. The new curriculum standards will enable me to spend more time teaching higher-level (i.e. critical and creative) thinking skills. | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016 | 2 |
| 17. The new set of curriculum standards – as a single, common set of curricular- will help to make collaboration and sharing of instructional materials more efficient. | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016 | 1 |
| 18. The new curriculum standards are easier to understand than current standards. | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015 | 1 |
| 19. I have a voice in creating and responding to new education-policy legislating, such as the Georgia Standards of Excellence. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 20. With the implementation of Georgia Standards of Excellence my stress level: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 21. With the new curriculum (Georgia Standards of Excellence), I feel that I am preparing students for success. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Sanchez, 2016 | 1,2 |
| 22. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel more prepared in creating the new curriculum. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 23. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my workload: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 24. I feel that there is a difference between the old and new curriculum. | Cheng, 2012 | 1 |
| 25. The Georgia Standards of Excellence are more rigorous. | Cheng, 2012; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Sanchez, 2016 | 1 |

| Item | Research | Research Question |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 26. I spend more time preparing for the new curriculum than the old curriculum. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 27. I was able to properly prepare for the implementation of the new standards. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 28. I received professional development on the implementation of the new standards. | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |
| 29. The new curriculum standards have high academic standards and real-life implications. | Cheng, 2012; Sanchez, 2016; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 1 |
| 30. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my productivity: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly | Cheng, 2012, Bostic & Matney, 2013; Sanchez, 2016; Burks et al., 2015; Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015 | 2 |

Data Collection

The survey was created using Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018, a web-based platform. An email was distributed to the educators at the high school with a link to access the survey located in the email (Appendix C). The survey was open for 2 weeks. After 1 week had passed, the researcher sent out a reminder email with the link to the survey in the email. After 2 weeks had passed, the researcher closed the survey. The first question in the survey was a consent question. If the participant chose to take the survey, the participant had to click “I consent”, and if the participant decided not to take the survey and clicked on “I do not consent,” s/he was prompted out of the survey. The surveys were anonymous, and no identifying information was collected in the survey.

Questions 2 through 14 on the survey were demographic questions. The researcher conducted the focus group sessions as the facilitator. Each of the focus group sessions was recorded with an audio recorder, which was placed in the middle of the table where the focus groups were held. The audio recorder was set up before the participants' arrival. The focus group sessions were conducted in a classroom with chairs around a large table. The research set up the room to ensure the environment of the focus group sessions were as comfortable as possible (Appendix K).

When the participants arrived at the classroom, each participant was assigned a number and was given a consent form. Before each focus group session, the researcher explained the consent form to the participants, asked if there were any questions, and then asked the participants to sign the consent form (Appendix I). If a participant elected to not participate, he or she was allowed to leave with no consequences before the focus group discussion. All participants in the focus groups were asked several demographic questions. The demographic questions that were asked by the researcher were: (1) What is your age?; (2) What is your highest level of education?; and (3) How many years have you been in education?

Once the demographic questions were answered, the researcher began the focus group session. The researcher made sure to offer each participant an opportunity to respond to each question. Each focus group session lasted less than 45 minutes; the actual time in each focus group varied based on the dialogue between the participants. Figure 4 provides a visual representation for data collection and data analysis.

| Data Collection | | | | |
|------------------|-------|--|--|--|
| 1. Instruments | | Online Survey | Focus Group Session 1 | Focus Group Session 2 |
| 2. Participants | Who | The survey was distributed to content area teachers and non-content area teacher. | Teachers in the field of Science from one high school. | Teachers in the field of Mathematic from one high school. |
| | What | 1. What are the educators' perceptions of curriculum change? 2. What effects did curriculum change have on classroom practices? | | |
| | When | Online survey was distributed via email before the focus groups. | The focus group was conducted next after the data from the survey was collected. | The focus group was conducted next after the data from the survey was collected. |
| | Where | Via online | In the high school. | In the high school. |
| 3. Data Sources | | Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018 an online survey tool. | The focus groups sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. | The focus groups sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. |
| 4. Data Analysis | | The online survey data was run through Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018 and frequency distributions were used. | The transcribed data was run through NVivo 11 to search for patterns and themes in the transcribed focus group sessions. | The transcribed data was run through NVivo 11 to search for patterns and themes in the transcribed focus group sessions. |

Figure 4. Data Collection and Analysis Process.

Analysis of Data

Data in this study were collected in two ways, through surveys and focus group sessions. The survey data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, such as percentages, and the data analysis of the focus group sessions were analyzed by organizing and coding the transcribed data and then focusing on themes and patterns. After which, the data were used to answer the researcher's questions by using the data

from the focus groups to help support the data collected from the survey. The data collected from the survey were collected and organized into a chart form to aid in visualization of the data. Percentages were used to indicate how each question was answered, and the questions were grouped in the chart according to the research question each survey question answered.

During the first phase of data analysis of the focus groups, the researcher transcribed the interview recordings taken after each focus group session. Both focus groups were audio recorded, and the dialogue from the participants was transcribed. After the focus group sessions were transcribed, the transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 11 Starter for Windows Student software. In NVivo 11, a word frequency analysis of the transcripts was conducted to determine repetitive and frequently used words in the focus group sessions. The researcher chose NVivo 11 software because of the software's capabilities of analyzing themes and patterns of transcribed data. The researcher used online tutorials to ensure the program was used efficiently and correctly.

Next, the researcher used a text search feature for the second round of coding, which organized common phrases used in the focus group sessions. The researcher next used the word tree and word cluster feature, which provided a visual representation of the common phrases and commonly used words. The visual representation allowed the researcher to see commonly used words and phrases that were relevant to the research. Lastly, the researcher reanalyzed the transcribed recording using the word tree and word cluster feature in NVivo 11 software to ensure no themes were missed during the coding cycle. Once the data analysis was completed, the researcher reported the information obtained according to the research questions.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher described the methods used to research the desired topic of high school teachers' perceptions of the changing standards and the Georgia Standards of Excellence in relation to high school teachers. The research design was based on Cheng's (2012) study and consisted of a survey being distributed to the high school in Western Georgia and two focus groups of teachers at the high school. The targeted population for the study was high school teachers in one district in Western Georgia. The survey data were collected first and followed by two focus group sessions. The researcher collected the survey data, analyzed the survey data, transcribed the focus group data, coded the data, analyzed the data into themes, and grouped the themes into categories. All data were organized to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

From 2002 until 2018, the standards for the state of Georgia have changed and some content areas experienced multiple changes. Mathematics and English language arts have experienced four curriculum changes since 2012. Before 2012, the state standards were the Georgia Performance Standards and then changed to Common Core State Standards with the expectations of having a common curriculum across the country. In 2015, the state of Georgia changed Georgia Standards of Excellence from Common Core State Standards and, in some areas, such as science and social studies, to Georgia Performance Standards. The main content areas impacted by the change first were mathematics and English language arts, followed by social studies and science, with the last implementation of the standards expected to take place in 2018-2019 with all other subjects, such as fine arts. The purpose of the Georgia Standards of Excellence was to increase the rigor of the curriculum taught in the classrooms. The new curriculum shift created different situations where teachers had to develop new lessons and change classroom practices to fit the new set of curriculum standards. With new standards came new testing and different forms of accountability.

Most teachers experienced more than one curriculum change in their careers and rarely had a voice in the educational reform, this study aimed to explore the impact this educational reform had on teachers and their classroom practices. The researcher conducted a survey and two focus groups in a high school in Western Georgia. First, a survey was sent out to the entire population of the high school teachers, including content

and non-content areas, such as fine arts and band, in the Western part of Georgia. Next, focus groups were conducted with teachers. Two focus groups were conducted with high school teachers (ninth through 12th grade) who had experienced educational reform. The results from the survey and interview data collected in this study depicted the teachers' perceptions of curriculum change and how it impacted their classroom environments.

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the educators' perceptions of curriculum change?
2. What effect does curriculum change have on classroom practices?

Survey Results

Three themes emerged from the data, and the themes were organized into groups: (a) teacher morale/decision making when curriculum change could occur, (b) preparation for implementing new curriculum and professional development, and (c) stress and workload. Table 3 shows the responses listed into the three categories. The percentages of each response choice, *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*, were listed. The percentages of *agree* and *strongly agree* were added together and provided in the adjusted frequencies column as well as the percentages for *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. The figures were listed under the category called adjusted frequencies and were used throughout the discussion. The adjusted sum in the combination of *agree* and *strongly agree* percentages and the combination of *disagree* and *strongly disagree* percentages. The adjusted frequencies were used to convey the teachers' perceptions about curriculum change. The limits to using adjusted frequencies were discussed in Chapter V.

Table 3

General Survey Results

| Survey Questions Perception of Teachers (N=26) | Responses | | | | | Adjusted Frequencies | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | A | D |
| Category: Teacher Morale/ Teacher Input | | | | | | | |
| I have a voice in creating and responding to new education-policy legislating, such as the Georgia Standards of Excellence. | 3.85 | 7.69 | 23.08 | 42.31 | 23.08 | 11.54 | 65.39 |
| The new curriculum standards make me feel more like a professional. | 3.85 | 3.85 | 46.15 | 34.62 | 11.54 | 7.7 | 46.16 |
| I am concerned that the new curriculum standards will restrict my creativity and the types of instructional strategies that I may use. | 15.38 | 26.92 | 34.62 | 23.08 | 0.00 | 42.42 | 23.08 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Especially with the emergence of the Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel that I am spending more effort to comply with mandates rather than to teach students to the best of my ability. | 26.92 | 46.15 | 19.23 | 7.69 | 0.00 | 73.07 | 7.69 |
| I believe that the curriculum change will be more effective than current standards at preparing students to be college-career ready upon high school graduation. | 7.69 | 26.92 | 26.92 | 30.77 | 7.69 | 34.61 | 38.46 |
| I would like more decision-making power over the curriculum than what I believe the new set of standards will permit. | 11.54 | 69.23 | 15.38 | 3.85 | 0.00 | 80.77 | 3.85 |
| The new curriculum standards will help me become a more effective teacher. | 3.85 | 19.23 | 26.92 | 42.31 | 7.69 | 23.08 | 50.00 |
| <hr/> Category: Impressions of the GSE <hr/> | | | | | | | |
| I feel that there is a difference between the old and new curriculum. | 11.54 | 30.77 | 26.92 | 23.08 | 7.69 | 42.31 | 30.77 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| The Georgia Standards of Excellence are more rigorous. | 11.54 | 26.92 | 34.62 | 23.08 | 3.85 | 38.46 | 26.93 |
| The new curriculum standards have high academic standards and real-life implications. With the new curriculum (Georgia Standards of Excellence), I feel that I am preparing students for success. | 7.69 | 34.62 | 38.46 | 11.54 | 7.69 | 42.31 | 19.23 |
| With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel more prepared in creating the new curriculum. | 7.69 | 26.92 | 38.46 | 26.92 | 0.00 | 34.61 | 26.92 |
| I am well informed regarding what the new curriculum standards are. | 7.69 | 11.54 | 53.85 | 19.23 | 7.69 | 19.23 | 26.92 |
| The new set of curriculum standards – as a single, common set of curricular-will help to make collaboration and sharing of instructional | 0.00 | 30.77 | 53.85 | 15.38 | 0.00 | 30.77 | 15.38 |

materials more efficient.

The new curriculum standards are easier to understand than current standards.

4.00 16.00 40.00 36.00 4.00 20.0 40.00

Category: Stress and Workload

I spend more time preparing for the new curriculum than the old curriculum.

11.54 34.62 42.31 7.69 3.85 46.16 3.85

I am concerned that under the new set of standards, I will spend too much time preparing students for testing.

19.23 38.46 34.62 7.69 0.00 57.69 7.69

I am sufficiently prepared through professional development to transition from teaching current standards to the new standards.

11.54 11.54 34.62 26.92 15.38 13.08 42.3

I was able to properly prepare for the implementation of the new standards.

7.69 19.23 38.46 23.08 11.54 26.89 34.62

The work that I will put into preparing and transitioning to the new set of curriculum

7.69 34.62 34.62 19.23 3.85 42.31 23.08

standards will be worthwhile.

The new curriculum standards will enable me to spend more time teaching higher-level (i.e. critical and creative) thinking skills.

| | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| 7.69 | 19.23 | 46.15 | 26.92 | 0.00 | 29.92 | 26.92 |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|

Answer choices varied with the questions listed below and are represented in the box:

With the implementation of Georgia Standards of Excellence my stress level:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|-----|
| SI 7.69 | IS 53.85 | No Change 30.77 | DS 3.85 | SD 3.85 | 61.54 | 7.7 |
|------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|-----|

With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my workload:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|------|
| SI 15.38 | IS 65.38 | No Change 15.38 | DS 3.85 | SD 0.00 | 80.76 | 3.85 |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|------|

With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my productivity:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|------|
| SI 3.85 | IS 26.92 | No Change 61.54 | DS 7.69 | SD 0.00 | 30.77 | 7.69 |
|------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|------|

Note. All of the figures are represented by percentages but not all percentages add up to 100 due to rounding, some answers choices varied from disagree and agree categories and are represented in the chart, and n =number of respondents who answered the survey questions. SI=*significantly increased*, IS=*increased somewhat*, DS=*decreased somewhat*, and SD=*significantly decreased*. Under adjusted frequencies, A=*strongly agree* and *agreed* responses and D=*strongly disagree* and *disagree* responses.

Teacher Morale/Teacher Input

Some of the questions indicated teachers had little to no input or decision-making when it came to revision or changing of educational standards. The questions provided some insight into the perceived impact of curriculum change among educators. The survey questions brought to light the desire that teachers would like to have had more input and decision-making power when it comes to the implementation of standards. One survey question indicated that over 80% of educators would like more power in decision making when it comes to revisions or changing of standards. As part of the demographic section, teachers indicated 57% of teachers had experienced more than four curriculum changes in their years of teaching.

When teachers responded to the question about the new curriculum standards restricting their creativity, teacher indicated 42.42% agreed the new curriculum would restrict their creativity while only 7.7% believed it would not impact their creativity. When asked the survey question about the new curriculum standards making teacher more like a professional, most teachers responded negatively with 46.16% disagreeing and only 7.7% agreeing. Most teacher responded negatively (50% versus 23.08%) when asked if the new curriculum standards are helping in becoming a more effective teacher. Seventy-three percent of teachers who responded to the survey felt like they were complying with standards rather than teaching the students to the best of their abilities. Most teachers were split when it came to the belief that the new curriculum would be more effective at preparing students to be college and career ready after graduation. Table 4 represented the number of curriculum change respondents indicated. Over 80% of teachers have experienced more than three curriculum changes while teaching.

Table 4

Results from Survey Question on Number of Curriculum Changes Experienced by Teachers.

| Number of Curriculum Changes | Percentages |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| 0 | 3.03% |
| 1 | 9.09% |
| 2 | 6.06% |
| 3 | 24.24% |
| 4 | 12.12% |
| 5 | 18.18% |
| 6+ | 27.27% |

Note. All of the figures are represented by percentages but not all percentages add up to 100 due to rounding.

Stress and Workload

Most participants indicated an increase (80.76%) in workload, and more than half of the participants indicated an increase in stress levels (61.54%) associated with the changes made in the curriculum indicating an increase; however, they indicated no change (61.54%) in their productivity when comparing the Common Core State Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence. A higher number of respondents indicated spending more time preparing for the new curriculum versus the old curriculum (46.16% versus 3.85%), and they were concerned they would spend more time preparing the students for testing (57.69% versus 7.69%).

When responding to the survey question, “I was able to properly prepare for the implementation of the new standards”, respondents indicated more teachers were not

prepared for the implementation of the new standards (34.62% versus 26.89%), and 42% indicated they did not receive professional development to prepare sufficiently for the new curriculum standards while only 13.08% indicated receiving enough professional development to prepare for the new curriculum. However, when respondents were asked about the change in productivity when compared to previous standards, the respondents indicated there was no change (61.54%) in their productivity while 30.77% indicated an increase in productivity.

Impressions of Georgia Standards of Excellence

When the scores from all of the questions related to teachers' impressions of Georgia Standards of Excellence were averaged together, 35% of the responses to curriculum change were positive with an average of 38% remaining neutral on their impressions of Georgia Standards of Excellence and 27% responding with a negative answer. When asked about whether the new standards were different from the old, 42% agreed the standards were different with a slightly smaller percentage disagreeing (30.77%). More respondents agreed with the new standards being more rigorous (38.46%) while a slightly smaller percentage disagreed the new standards were more rigorous (26.93%). The remaining respondents selected a neutral response (34.62%). The survey responses to the question, "With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel more prepared in creating the new curriculum", 53.85% of respondents remained neutral while 26.92% disagreed with the question and an only slightly lower percentage agreed with the question (19.23%). The responses were similar with questions on the new set of curriculum standards helping to make collaboration and sharing instructional materials easier; the responses included 53.85% neutral with 30.77%

agreeing and 15.38% disagreeing. Forty percent were neutral on the question of new curriculum standards being easier to understand than previous standards, and 40% disagreed with the new standards being easier to understand than the previous while 20% agreed. Over 50% of the respondents agreed they were well informed regarding the new standards while a lower percentage disagreed (26.92%).

The Likert-scale survey questions indicated valuable information and displayed noticeable trends, and the quantitative data, however, did not give a description of the entire picture, and the data alone did not explain teachers' responses entirely. The second phase of the study was open-ended focus group sessions, which provided more depth to the understanding of teachers' perceptions of curriculum change to help provide a complete picture.

Focus Group Sessions

The data from the focus groups sessions were organized by focus group questions and presented in the study. The first step of organizing the data was to place the data into groups based on common themes and patterns. Each theme connected to the research questions; each focus group was represented. The first focus group (i.e., science teachers) conducted was represented first, and it was followed by the second focus group, which was predominately mathematics teachers. To cite the respondents' responses and protect anonymity, each participant was designated a numerical value. The same organizational pattern was used on all the research questions represented in the study.

Data from the focus groups were analyzed for themes and patterns. The first theme that emerged was a "shift in content". Mathematic teachers experienced a reorganization of standards. One set of standard changes put algebra equations in the

geometry course, and then the next curriculum change the standards were reorganized again. The mathematics teachers who participated in the study had experienced a transition from Quality Core Curriculum standards, to Georgia Performance Standards, to Common Core State Standards, and then to Georgia Standards of Excellence. Another theme that emerged was the vagueness of the educational standards; teachers expressed the lack of direction and were uncertain how deep to teach a subject. The next theme that emerged was the lack of professional development for the implementation of the new educational standards (e.g., pacing guides and examples of exemplary lessons), tasks aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence standards, textbooks, and assessments. In the first focus group of science teachers, the topic of funding came up along with the concern about not having enough or proper equipment to successfully implement the standards.

Focus Group Question 1

What are some of the strengths of the Georgia Standards of Excellence (likes) when compared to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)? What are some of the weaknesses (dislikes) of the Georgia Standards of Excellence when compared to the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)?

When answering focus group question one about the strengths and weaknesses of the new Georgia Standards of Excellence, both focus groups stated similarities between the old curriculum and the new curriculum. Two themes emerged from the data. The first theme was the change in curriculum alignment, and the second theme was curriculum expectations.

In 2002, Georgia teachers' educational standards were called Quality Core Curriculum and were phased out for Georgia Performance Standards in 2008, and in 2010 changed again to Common Core State Standards. In 2015-2016, another shift in educational standards occurred called the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Both of the focus groups discussed the changes in curriculum from Quality Core Curriculum to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Some of the participants had more experience with Quality Core Curriculum while others only had experienced curriculum change from Georgia Performance Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence.

In the focus group sessions, participants indicated the new standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence) were written in a way to allow teachers to cover the amount of material in a given time but indicated a concern about how the standards were set up and how to best teach the new curriculum standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence). In the first focus group of teachers, one respondent stated the, "new standards were product oriented as opposed to memorizing stuff" (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 1, line 5). The focus group members expressed their perceptions about the change in curriculum. Respondent 7 stated, "Teachers have a better chance of covering the material and not staying on topics too broad" (Focus Group 1, Respondent 7, p. 1, line 14). Respondent 1 spoke again, after hearing about Respondent 7's perspective and stated, "Especially when critiquing things and when bringing in some controversial subjects, and I think it would make it much more literate in terms of what scientific knowledge is and scientific application" (Focus Group 1, Respondent 1, p. 1, line 17).

The second focus group indicated that there had been four shifts in their educational standards. Respondent 2 from Focus Group 2 stated, Georgia Performance

Standards and Georgia Standards of Excellence “overlap, it’s like they use the same standards” (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 1, line 9). Respondent 2 from Focus Group 2 expressed more fondness for GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] when compared to GSE [Georgia Standards of Excellence] (p. 1, line 9). Respondent 2 stated, “I like GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] better. I’m just going to be honest, I did. The Math 1 [Georgia Performance Standards] was better. It was cleaner than GSE [Georgia Standards of Excellence]” (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 1, line 9). Respondent 2 then indicated,

The only good thing about it [Georgia Standards of Excellence], now we are cycling back so Algebra one is not the old Algebra one, but it is closer. So, they regrouped [Georgia Standards of Excellence] a little better. That would increase the strength. The geometry is more geometry rather than throwing in the algebra stuff in there. (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 1, line 18)

The second theme that emerged was based on the expectations of curriculum and the requirements to successfully teach and for students to learn. Participants were uncertain on how in-depth to teach the standards. Both focus groups indicated a need for more clarity with Georgia Standards of Excellence curriculum standards.

In Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 stated,

The new Georgia Standards of Excellence, the clarification statements of what we need to focus in on instead of having of having these broad overarching topics, they have narrowed it down for us, which is good for what we need to teach and for our milestone testing.... It looks like these new standards are analyze and interpret data, plan out and carry out data investigation, all of this NGSS stuff they are pushing for this high level thinking concept driven but it is also how to

get these kids to think instead of getting these kids to memorizing data or concepts. (Group 1, Respondent 3, p. 2, line 19)

Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated, the new standards were “extremely vague” (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 1, line 7). Focus Group 2, Respondent 1, stated, “It’s a little steep but that also takes us back to how they are written. How deep they really want us to go into them (standards) because it has more advanced ways of solving them instead of basic ways” (p. 2, line 7). The respondent indicated the uncertainty of when to start topics and when to finish topics because of how the standards are written (Focus Group 2, Respondent 1, p. 2, line 7). Both focus groups found strengths to the new set of curriculum standards indicating the push for students to use higher levels of critical thinking. However, both focus groups expressed concerns about the depth to which the standards were taught.

Focus Group Question 2

How have the Georgia Standards of Excellence impacted your classroom/instructional practices?

The teachers from Focus Group 1 indicated they had to completely overhaul the curriculum for the following year. They indicated they had to spend the summer reviewing the new standards and updating their current curriculum or they would collaborate in the beginning of the year to help prepare for the upcoming school year.

Focus Group 1, Respondent 2, stated, “I need to do this and focus more on this, so I am planning on total curriculum overhaul for next year” (Focus Group 1, Respondent 2, p. 6, line 3).

Focus Group 1, Respondent 4 indicated a point of view from a parent and educator's perspective. Focus Group 1, Respondent 4 stated:

As a parent and a teacher, I feel like if the standards were strong through their time in school we would not be having to play catch up so much. I feel like if the standards for science could be stronger in the younger grades it could really help us out. As a parent (of an elementary student), I see my kid maybe they might hit (on science) a couple of days a week for something or do an activity but there is no foundation being created so I feel like it is difficult in high school for some students. (p. 4, line 4)

Focus Group 1, Respondent 2, added to the statement regarding the potential impact on elementary school teachers, stating:

For two or three years, CCRPI included science and social studies test scores and so we did training at the elementary schools to try to get them to do more hands on (science activities). They were all into it when it counted but now (the test scores are no longer used for science) you look at some elementary school teachers and they are just teaching science and social studies minimally, so it does not impact the school scores. (p. 4, line 14)

Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 added another point about the impact of curriculum in the classroom. Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 stated, "I think classroom interruption, too, doesn't matter whether you are on block or periods, I think classroom interruptions are going to impede you from completing all of the standards" (p. 4, line 17). Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 indicated a lack of training with the implementation of the new standards (p. 4, line 17). Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 stated, "We received like 30

minutes of professional development. You can rewrite the standards all you want to, but if the teachers do not know what the heck to do with them, what is the purpose” of re-writing the standards (p. 4, line 25). Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 added to the conversation by stating, “There was way more training with GPS [Georgia Performance Standards]” (p. 4, line 28). Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 gave an example regarding the lack of training, and the example was, “You can say the moon is red with the standards, and if the teachers don’t know better, they will teach the moon is red” (p. 4, line 29).

Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 added to the conversation by stating, “When GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] came out, I was the department head at another school. We had to go through a whole year of training ... like five times for training on how to ‘unpack’ the standards, and I had to go back and teach my department. We didn’t do anything like that [with Georgia Standards of Excellence]” (p. 4, line 31). Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 agreed with the statement that more training was needed for the new standards. Focus Group 1, Respondent 4 added to the topic by stating the state handed out the standards and stated, “Hey you all, they are changing (the standards) ...look it up” (p. 4, line 36). Focus Group 1, Respondent 1 stated, “I remember unpacking the GPS [Georgia Performance Standards], and I mean it was laborious, but more effective than what we received from these new standards” (p. 4, line 42). Focus Group 1, Respondent 1 went on to state that in the beginning of the following year, the team was going to conduct a similar training like they received for Georgia Performance Standards (p. 4, line 42).

Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 responded to the question and stated that they impacted mathematics as well as science curriculum. The teacher reflected, “The change

did impact science curriculum because the kids were not seeing factoring, exponential, and logs until their junior year. I remember one of the science teachers was really upset with the kids because they didn't know [factoring, exponential, and logs] and I was like, they haven't been taught that. He was like 'What?' He was floored. He said you've always done it, but I was like, we have but not this time [with the current standards]. So, the new ones [Georgia Standards of Excellence] fixed that, so I think it made it better for science as well" (Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, p. 2, line 16).

Focus Group Question 3

Did you have any input regarding changes to the standards? If so, what was the input? Was it having a voice in the creating of the standards or responding to the standards?

With regard to question 3, all of educators agreed that they had little to no voice in creating the standards or responding to the standards. Focus Group1, Respondent 1, stated, "I think there were opportunities presented a year or two for teachers to sign up to give input and share but it was a very nebulous type of offer" (Focus Group 1, Respondent 1, p. 7, line 23). Both groups responded in a similar manner and stated none of them were selected to be part of the creating and implementation of the new curriculum standards.

When the same question was asked to Focus Group 2, Respondent 2, stated, "With the Math 1, they just told us what was going to happen, and they did training for each level. We had training for each one" (p. 2, line 25).

Focus Group 2, Respondent 3 stated:

They had responded to a survey which had been sent out by the state; however, they could not remember which standard it applied to. Group two, respondent two

indicated that with GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] they were trained well and then when the standards were changed to Common Core State Standards they were given very little training, and when the standards were changed to Georgia Standards of Excellence they were given no training. (p. 2, line 30)

In terms of input on standards, respondents stated they had very little if any input when it came to rewriting or implementation of the standards.

Focus Group Question 4

What changes have you experienced in your classroom due to Georgia Standards of Excellence?

Focus Group 1, Respondent 4 stated,

I feel like the Biology clarification statements [part of the Georgia Standards of Excellence] do not clarify. So, you have standards based one where it is going to talk about living cells and enzymes, cell structures, energy of the cells, and the clarification is the function of protein as enzymes is limited to conceptual understanding. That is not clarifying. There is no clarification. (p. 7, line 4)

Focus Group 1, Respondent 1 agreed with the statement and went on further by asking the question, “How far in depth do we take the students with their required learning?”

Focus Group 1, Respondent 4 stated, “Yes, they might have said, know these structures.

It’s just they’re [Georgia Standards of Excellence] very awkward to be honest. They’re

just very awkward” (p. 7, line 11). Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 brought up a point about

the lack of resources for the new standards. Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 stated, “It’s

like there is no pacing guide. If they are really going to help us, they should come up with

a, like a pacing guide” (p. 7, line 15).

Focus Group 1, Respondent 5 added to the topic and stated, “When they did the GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] that was all provided on the website. You have a framework, you had a pacing guide, you had suggested activities” (p. 7, line 18).

Respondent 4 brought up the fact that the website for the new standards still had the old framework up and that both Georgia Performance Standards and Georgia Standards of Excellence standards were located on the web page. Other respondents from Focus Group 1 agreed concerning the lack of resources available for the new standards and how they were using other states’ resources to help implement the standards in their classrooms. Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 responded to the question by stating, “I think we need to do collaboration. We could spend another 15- 20 minutes” (p. 9, line 22).

Focus Group 2 responded to the question and indicated the flow of topics was better with the new standards than with previous standards but were unclear on how specific to be with each topic. Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated, “Just the topics you have to teach flow a little better especially for geometry. I think geometry was the one that had the biggest change when it moved again” (p. 2, line 4). Focus Group 2, Respondent 1 stated, “It’s a little steep but that also takes us back to how they [Georgia Standards of Excellence] are written. How deep they really want us to go into them?” (p. 2, line 8). Focus Group 2, Respondent 1 stated they were uncertain on how in-depth to go with topics because of the way the Georgia Standards of Excellence were written; however, Respondent 1 added, they did flow better and “they can see relationships like between the linear, quadratic and the exponential; to me that is a positive, but it’s a lot” (p. 2, line 11).

Focus Group Question 5

If you experienced Common Core or Georgia Performance Standards, what were some of your experiences? Explain.

When the question was asked, Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 stated:

It is hard for me, it is my 28th year, and I have been through QCC [Quality Core Curriculum], GPS [Georgia Performance Standards], and now GSE [Georgia Standards of Excellence], and I'm tired of adding stuff. I would rather just, it is hard for me to just sit there and go well, I spent all this time, money, and work putting into this curriculum and now you are changing it again. (p. 11, line 12)

Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 then added to it by stating,

I think we have to collaborate better. Because there needs to be some consistency, like most of us are pretty good with it and you never know when a kid is going to get moved from one class to another. We see this when they come from another school, you know we are on stoichiometry in chemistry and the kid they transferred from another school has not even gotten to parts of the atom or something like that. (p. 11, line 26)

Focus Group 2 indicated a different perspective. Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated, "We fought Math 1 full force. It is an awful way to teach. I mean we fought it, then we loved it" (p. 4, line 13). Focus Group 2, Respondent 3 added the mathematics teachers "only got through one full rotation of Math 1 before they decided to change it" (p. 4, line 15). Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 added,

Yes, we all would have rather stayed with Math one even fighting it the way we did in the beginning. It was actually better, so when they went to the CCGPS

[Common Core Georgia Performance Standards], they were reordering (the standards) and we kind of pretty much had to trash all of the stuff we had worked for four years. And then start completely over. (p. 4, line 16)

Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated when they had to change mathematics standards, “We have to pull this section from here and then pull this section from here. It was a lot of work” (p. 4, line 16). The respondents in Focus Group Session 2 reported that changing the standards was a burden. The teachers had to piece together information from the old standards to successfully teach the new standards.

Focus Group 2, Respondent 4 added, because of the many changes, they were unable to have a textbook and had to make copious amounts of copies so that the students had resources and materials to use in class and at home. Respondent 4 stated, “It would be so nice for us to have a book, but they don’t give us books because they may change it [standards] again so they don’t want to invest” in a new set of textbooks or other resources (p. 4, line 25). Focus Group 2, Respondent 3 added,

Resources would be nice. We have bought books because we have been forced to buy them, but they don’t match. We are buying something (textbooks and resources) we could pull from other places because we have to pull it anyways. They don’t match and that might become all of the subject areas but I’m not sure. But the biggest thing we got sold on GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] and then it got jerked out from under us, and I feel like a lot was because of the Common Core coming. I think because of the national push, and it also was a parent push because they did not like the names Math 1, 2, 3, and 4.(p. 4, line 27)

All of the respondents agreed that Math 1, 2, 3, and 4 made believers out of them in how the standards were grouped and what was required of the standards to be taught.

Focus Group 2, Respondent 3 stated,

I felt like our kids went from low to high then, kids could learn something that was useful that was at least to their next level. Sometimes I think we have some walk out of here now, have been through it all [mathematic classes], but probably can't apply much of it, if any. (p. 5, line 1)

Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated "I felt like even our lowest [students], like their knowledge level when they leave here [then] is much better than when they leave here now" with Math 1 (Georgia Performance Standards) than Common Core State Standards (p. 5, line 1).

Focus Group 2, Respondent 4 indicated,

I just remember having kids that would struggle, they would have test anxiety and you know all of these things, and the very next year once we went to GSE [Georgia Standards of Excellence], I remember thinking that if only they had been a year behind in school they would have had a completely different experience. You know, it was so different. (p. 5, line 23)

Difference one: professional development. Upon analysis of the focus group data, one difference, which emerged between the two focus groups, was in relation to professional development. The first focus group with science teachers reported not having enough professional development when it came to the implementation of the new science standards. However, when the topic of professional development arose with the second focus group with mathematic teachers, their response was different. Focus Group

1, Respondent 3, stated, “We received 30 minutes of professional development” (p. 4 line 26). Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 stated, “You can rewrite the standards all you want, but if the teachers do not know what the heck to do with them [standards]” (p. 4, line 26). Focus Group 1, Respondent 3 expressed the need for more information on the standards and more professional development on the standards, so they would know what to teach and how in detail to teach the standards (Focus Group 1, Respondent 3, p. 4, line 26). Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 agreed with the statement regarding professional development and stated, “There was way more training for GPS [Georgia Performance Standards]... when GPS [Georgia Performance Standards] first came out, we had to go through a whole year of training” (p. 4, line 29). Focus Group 1, Respondent 2 further stated, “[they] had training on how to unpack the standards and then had to go back and teach the department, we didn’t do anything like that with the new standards [Georgia Standards of Excellence]” (Focus Group 1, Respondent 2, p. 4, line 32). The first focus group expressed the need for more training on the new educational science standards.

In relation to receiving professional development, Focus Group 2, Respondent 2 stated,

I don’t think we would have handled professional development well. I think because of all of the changes (to the standards), trying to do professional development would have just made it worse. I think it was almost to the point they just had to say here, here it is or else they would have a complete revolt of math teachers. (p. 6, line 4)

The others in Focus Group 2 agreed with the statement. Mathematics teachers received a tremendous amount of training when the curriculum changed from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards, and then they received a fair amount

of training when the standards changed from Georgia Performance Standards to Common Core State Standards. Focus Group 2, Respondent 4 stated, “Let us figure out how we are going to do this as a department” (Focus Group 2, Respondent 4, p. 6, line 9).

Difference two: content alignment. With regard to content alignment, there was a difference between each focus group. Because the members of both focus groups taught different subject areas, the content alignment presented a difference. The second focus group focused on the addition or subtraction of topics, which were introduced into each section of mathematics, whereas the first focus group indicated no change in content alignment and focused on the complexity of the way the standards were written.

The major differences between the focus groups were the perceptions of curriculum change, content alignment, and professional development. Another difference between the two focus groups was in relation to the amount of changed experience with curriculum. Focus Group 2 experienced a greater change in standards. The respondents in Focus Group 2 went from Quality Core Curriculum standards to Georgia Performance Standards, followed by another change to Common Core State Standards, and more recently to Georgia Standards of Excellence. Focus Group 1 only experienced a change from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards, and in 2010, teachers were required to add the Common Core Literacy standards to the Georgia Performance Standards. Georgia Performance Standards was not changed in the science and social studies content standards until 2015.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources to develop a good understanding of a phenomena (Morse, 1991). In this study, the researcher compared data from a survey to two focus group sessions. Using data from the survey and focus groups

provided validation of the findings. The survey and focus groups had similarities in the aspects of teachers would like more decision making power when it comes to the implementation of new curriculum, an increase in stress levels, increase in workload, and 40% of the respondents disagreed with the new standards being easier to understand than the previous standards. The survey results indicated the respondents held perceptions they were spending more time to comply with mandates rather than teaching students to their ability, and when compared to the focus group, a similarity arose. The Focus Group Two indicated the previous standards provided a better opportunity for the students to leave high school with a better mathematical understanding than do the current standards. The components of stress and workload play pivotal roles in teacher efficacy and the ability for teachers to perform their duties and responsibilities efficiently.

Summary

The respondents indicated that teachers desired to have more input and decision-making power concerning the implementation of new curriculum standards. While teachers did report slightly higher stress and workload levels, the majority of the survey respondents reported neither strong disapproval nor strong approval of curriculum change. After the survey, focus groups were conducted. The research collected in each focus group was represented in this chapter.

When the researcher asked Focus Group Question 1, which was aligned with research question 1, with regard to perceptions of Georgia Standards of Excellence, all respondents reported contentions with content expectations and the ambiguity of the content standards. The survey results indicated no strong opinion about the perceptions of the curriculum. Results of the focus groups indicated stronger opinions with the

perceptions about the shift in the content curriculum, such as the ambiguity of the content standards. Results of the focus group sessions suggested that changing the mathematics curriculum alignment created gaps in other subjects, such as science. Most respondents from the survey indicated that the standards were more rigorous and were content with the ways the standards were aligned.

The second research question examined how the curriculum changes impacted educators' classroom/instructional practices. Most respondents across the focus groups indicated that the lack of content resources, such as a framework, pacing guides, and textbooks, negatively impacted their classroom practices. All subjects had experienced a curriculum change, the lack of resources was a point of contention among the focus groups. Focus Group 2 was especially concerned about getting a functioning textbook for students to have something tangible to study, the respondents had experienced more change than Focus Group 1.

The data represented in this section indicated many similarities and differences. Participants from the focus groups and survey who indicated the need for more input when changing the educational standards, increased in stress levels, and an increased in workload. The survey results and focus group sessions indicated teachers perceived spending more effort to comply with mandates than to teach students to their ability, and the previous standards (e.g., Georgia Performance Standards) were easier to understand than the current standards. Overall, the result indicated the need for teachers to have more input in the changing of standards, expectations of standards, and resources.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

There have been four changes made to the curriculum in the state of Georgia over the past 10 years. The curriculum changed from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards, to Common Core State Standards, and most recently to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2017; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). All areas of education have experienced changes in curriculum more than others, for example, mathematics and English language arts. The current change in curriculum took place in 2015 when the State Board of Education voted to revise standards from Common Core State Standards and Georgia Performance Standards to Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). The introduction and implementation started in 2015 and was expected to continue until 2019 with the final implementation projected to take place in the fine arts division of education. Teachers expressed concerns regarding the introduction and adoption of the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Some of the respondents concerns were due to the complexity of new standards, the successful implementation of the new standards in the classroom, and the lack of voice when the changes in the standards were implemented at the state level.

In 2008, the state of Georgia educational board made a change from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards. The change created a more focused set of standards than prior standards; however, in 2012, the state of Georgia introduced a new

set of curriculum standards called the Common Core State Standards. The goal of the Common Core initiatives of the standards was to improve educational practices, such as creating a set of common standards to prepare students for post-secondary education or career readiness, improve the quality of education, and increase the rigor of the educational content. The initiative impacted mathematics and English language arts teachers primarily.

Teachers in other areas were required to incorporate the literacy component of Common Core State Standards. With the change, teachers experienced a different set of expectations for student performance, testing, teacher accountability, and teacher classroom practices. In 2015, the state department of education revised and renamed the standards to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. All areas of education experienced changes in curriculum. With another change projected to take place in 10 years, the researcher conducted a study to gather information based on the perceptions and expectations of teachers who experienced curriculum change in one district in the Western Georgia.

The researcher collected the data by conducting a survey that was followed by two focus groups sessions. One focus group consisted of science teachers, and the other focus group consisted of mathematics teachers; both were conducted with high school teachers (ninth- 12th grade). The data were analyzed for word patterns and themes based on the responses from the surveys and focus group sessions. The results of the study are discussed about past studies as well as the implications of the study results and recommendations for future research.

In 2015, Georgia State Board of Education approved a revision of educational standards to Common Core State Standards and, for some contents, Georgia Performance Standards, which was the fourth set of change for mathematics and English language arts teachers or some third set of change in curriculum standards. The new standards were called Georgia Standards of Excellence. With a change in curriculum standards, there were expectations for teachers to change their methods for implementation of the standards, testing accountability, and how it impacted their classroom practices.

The researcher sought to examine the perceptions of high school educators on curriculum change and what impacts the change on educational standard had on classroom practices. The research conducted a mixed methods study, and the instrumentation included a web-based survey through Qualtrics software, QTrial 2018, and set of focus group sessions. The researcher first obtained permission from the superintendent and principal at the high school. Next, the researcher distributed an email with a link to the web-based survey. The email was distributed to 77 teachers, both content, and non-content teachers, and 34% responded to the survey. After 2 weeks, the researcher closed the window for the survey and distributed emails to teachers to participate in the focus group sessions. The first focus group session consisted of seven science teachers with 3 years of experience or more, and the second focus group consisted of four mathematics teachers with 3 years of experience in teaching or more. Both focus groups were scheduled and recorded on an electronic device. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and uploaded into NVivo 11 Starter for Windows Student software. The data were analyzed and organized in Chapter IV.

Research Findings

Data tables and narrative descriptions were used to synthesize the findings. Both thematic analysis and descriptive frequencies were used to organize the findings related to research question 1: What are educators' perceptions of curriculum change? The two major themes that emerged were (1) a desire of educators to have more input in the revision and development of educational standards and (2) content expectations. Sixty-five percent of teachers surveyed indicated they had no voice or input in the creation and distribution of the Georgia Standards of Excellence, and over 80% indicated they would like the opportunity to have input when it came to the creation or revision of new curriculum standards. Secondly, respondents indicated that there was little to no clarity on how in-depth to teach the standards. Both focus groups indicated the uncertainty with how in-depth to teach the standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence). When prompted with the question about the new standards being more rigorous than the previous standards, 39% responded by agreeing the standards were more rigorous, 27% disagreed with the standards being more rigorous, and 35% remain neutral indicating an uncertainty among teachers about how in-depth to teach the standards.

The researcher analyzed and organized the findings from the second research question: What effects does curriculum change have on classroom practices? Two major themes were identified: (1) professional development/teacher preparation and (2) stress level/workload.

Results from the participants of the study indicated the lack of resources for preparation of the new standards to be implemented in the following school year. The first focus group reported the lack of a framework, updated instructional resources, or

pacing guides for the new curriculum standards. The previous set (i.e., Georgia Performance Standards) of frameworks and instructional materials were available, but there was nothing for the new set of curriculum standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence). The second focus group reported a lack of resources having no textbook that related to the topic and organization of their current educational standards in addition to the lack of instructional resources. In the survey, 19% agreed with being prepared to implement the Georgia Standards of Excellence, while 26% disagreed with being prepared to implement Georgia Standards of Excellence. However, 54% of the sample population indicated a neutral stance on preparation for Georgia Standards of Excellence.

The final theme was stress and workload. Over 80% of the participants who took the survey indicated at least three curriculum changes in their career as an educator. Sixty-one percent of the participants in the survey indicated an increased stress level when implementing Georgia Standards of Excellence, while only eight percent of the respondents indicated no increase in stress level and 31% indicated there was no change in stress level with the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Eighty-one percent of participants that responded to the survey indicated an increase in workload, while four percent indicated a decrease in workload and 15% indicated no change in their workload. In both focus group sessions, participants indicated increased stress and workload with the implementation of the new standards. The second focus group stated they had to create new lessons and other materials after they had just adjusted to one set of standards. The first focus group participants indicated they were going to spend the summer revamping the lessons to match the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Over 80% of the sample surveyed indicated they had experienced three or more curriculum changes in

their educational careers, and some participants indicated a more than three curriculum changes.

There were two differences between focus groups, and they were themes on professional development and content alignment. Although, the survey results and Focus Group 1 session indicated a need for more professional development; Focus Group 2 stated that, because they were exposed to more changes in the curriculum than other subjects, they did not want more professional development. The next noticeable difference was content alignment. In the focus group sessions, it was apparent that the mathematics teachers had experienced more reorganization of their standards than the science teachers. In one of the standards changes, the mathematics teachers noted that part of geometry was being mixed with parts of algebra. Whereas Focus Group 1 only experienced revision in standards not a reorganization of standards.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Curriculum changes occurred over the past 10 years in the state of Georgia. The researcher used a mixed methods approach to explore the perceptions of educators about curriculum change and the impacts curriculum change had on their classroom practices.. The data from the survey and focus groups were compiled, coded, analyzed, and organized into themes. The four major themes were: (1) content expectations, (2) professional development and preparation, (3) stress level and workload, and (4) teacher morale and input.

The theme of curriculum expectations arose in the focus groups and on the survey. Davis, Choppin, McDuffie, and Drake (2013) conducted a research study on teachers' perceptions of Common Core State Standards in mathematics in middle school.

The survey was sent out to 43 of the 45 states, which had adopted Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. The researchers had over 400 participants in the survey and analysis of the data indicated the middle school teachers found the new curriculum standards more rigorous and the expectations were higher than in previous standards (Davis et al., 2013). However, the participants of the focus groups stated that the standards failed to indicate how deep teachers were expected to go when teaching the standards. The second focus group from this study reported the expectations of the new standards were a mix between the new standards and previous standards. Under the current set of standards, the teachers felt that they were well informed, there was a difference between the new curriculum and old curriculum, and the new curriculum had high academic standards and real-life implications similar to the study conducted by Cochrane and Cuevas (2015). However, the focus group sessions brought up some of the complexities of the new standards with regards to how deeply to teach the standards. Mathematic teachers did express they were happier with the new standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence) when compared to the former standards. Under the Georgia Standards of Excellence, mathematic teachers indicated Georgia Standards of Excellence were better organized than Common Core State Standards, allowing geometry to be taught in a geometry class as opposed to teaching algebra and geometry in a geometry class.

One major theme, which emerged between the current research and prior research, was the need for professional development. The results from the survey indicated the need for more professional development when new standards were created and implemented. The first focus group indicated a need for more professional development

on the current standards when compared to the amount of training they received on previous standards. In contrast, the second focus group indicated less need for professional development because of the abundance of professional development they had received during implementation of previous standards. Cheng (2012) reported the need to adequately train teachers when implementing new curriculum standards to avoid teachers feeling overwhelmed. Burks et al. (2015) conducted a survey on teachers' perceptions of implementing Common Core State Standards, and the results of the survey indicated that over half of the respondents of the survey did not receive adequate training with the implementation of Common Core.

Sanchez (2016) conducted a study, which indicated that the amount of resources the teachers received for the preparation, implementation, and teaching of Common Core State Standards was not adequate. Sanchez's (2016) study noted the frustration due to the lack of resources and preparation needed to adequately teach the new curricular standards. Respondents from both focus groups also reported the need for adequate resources to teach the new curricular standards whether it was a textbook that aligned with the current standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence) or a pacing guide with exemplar examples of work. Davis et al. (2013) also reported the lack of resources had an impact on teacher perceptions of standards.

Another theme that emerged from the survey and focus group sessions indicated a point of agreement and a point of difference on professional development. The analysis of the data from the survey and Focus Group 1 indicated a greater need for professional development; however, Focus Group 2 suggested there was not a need for professional development. Focus Group 2 indicated that they experienced so much change and had so

much professional development with previous standards that the need for professional development was limited. The second focus group stated they were just fine figuring it out on their own. However, the result from the survey indicated that 42% of respondents did not receive adequate professional development, and Focus Group 1 concurred in the lack of professional development they received on the Georgia Standards of Excellence when compared to the Georgia Performance Standards. The research findings from Cheng (2012), Cochrane and Cuevas (2015), Bostic and Matney (2013), and Sanchez (2016) also indicated teachers desired more professional development to help strengthen their knowledge of curriculum standards and help with implementation of curriculum standards.

The final difference between the focus groups dealt with content alignment. The focus groups were comprised of two different subject areas, mathematics and science. Focus Group 2, which was comprised of mathematic teachers, indicated a change in curriculum standards and the standards alignment. The designers of the content standards moved components of algebra and geometry around making the standards similar to Georgia Performance Standards but not identical to the standards. Respondents in the second focus group indicated that the change in content alignment in mathematics impacted science in specific subject areas, such as physics, physical science and chemistry. Logs, exponents, and other mathematical topics were not taught at the same time, which impacted students in science who needed the mathematical information to complete certain science tasks that required those skills. Respondents in Focus Group 1 indicated little to no change in content alignment.

Conclusions

- Most participants provided a neutral response to the survey questions; it could be an indication of the teachers' abilities to remain flexible through curriculum change.
- Teachers indicated other issues, such as stress, workload, and preparation, were impacted when the curriculum was changed.
- Most respondents have experienced more than three curriculum changes in their careers.
- Teachers indicated that changes in curriculum caused stress and increased workload that took away from their preparing to increase students' success.
- Respondents were required to have prior experience with different curriculum standards going into the process.
- Content and non-content teachers indicated the process of curriculum change as stressful.
- Mathematics teachers experienced more stress and a significant increase in workload because of changing standards more than other content areas.
- Science teachers experienced less change in curriculum; however, they still experienced stress during the curriculum change.
- Mathematics teachers were better prepared to instruct students with the previous standards than the most recent curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence.
- Because the change was mandated, teachers were not as eager to change as they would have been if their input had been incorporated.

- Teachers want input in curriculum change and had none.

Implications

The researcher added to the field of educational curriculum by studying the perceptions of teachers when curriculum standards were changed and how that change impacted their classroom practices. High school teachers were chosen because of the number of times the curriculum standards have changed in the past 10 years. The number of studies on the 2015 curriculum change was limited, and the researcher chose to use Cheng's (2012) study as a guide in understanding the perceptions of high school teachers on curriculum change and the perceived impact on their classroom practices. Similar studies conducted by Cheng (2012), Sanchez (2016), and Burks et al. (2015) were conducted using either surveys, focus groups, or both focus groups and surveys on perceptions of Common Core State Standards in various states. The current study helps fill a gap in research on curriculum change with implications regarding perceptions of teachers and the impact on their classroom practices in the State of Georgia.

The study had important implications for all content and non-content area teachers in the perceptions of curriculum change. The researcher was able to identify teachers' perceptions of curriculum change. Teacher's perceptions of curriculum change and the effects that curriculum change has on their teaching consisted of the following themes: (a) curriculum expectations, (b) stress and workload, (c) professional development and preparation, and (d) input in decision making on revision or development of new educational standards (teacher morale/teacher input). The research indicated having clear expectations could positively increase teachers' perceptions of curriculum change and decrease the amount of perceived stress and workload. Based on

the factors impacting teachers with curriculum change, the teachers were able to gain knowledge about how changing standards increased their productivity and stress and can use that knowledge to help implement any new curriculum.

State officials, local officials, district officials, and administrators could benefit by using the information in the study to understand how to help educators transition from one curriculum standard change to the next and reduce stress levels and the workload of teachers. In addition, both state and local officials could use information presented in the study to understand that a more diverse group of educators, from all counties in Georgia, should have input into revising or the creation of new standards and as well as providing officials with insight on how constant curriculum change plays a role in teachers' classroom practices. District officials and administrators can use the results to help teachers with the transition, preparation, and implementation of curriculum standards by first getting input from the educators about the amount of professional development needs and then providing them with the opportunities.

Limitations

One limitation was the possibility of bias because of the working relationship with the participants. Because the researcher had a working relationship with the respondents, it can bring into question the transferability; however, according to Creswell (2007), a relationship with the participants can provide more information and can strengthen the research.

The researchers perceived a potential issue with generalizing the results because of the convenient sampling. The researcher collected data from one high school in a rural county in Western Georgia. Inclusion criteria was used to identify teachers with enough

experience in teaching and in content areas where curriculum change occurred. The researcher was able to recruit 26 participants for the survey, which represented a 34% response rate, and 12 participants in the focus group sessions, which represented 6% of respondents. The result may vary when compared to other counties in the state of Georgia.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends to state officials that a systematic approach should be taken when implementing a new curriculum. A significant amount of research should be conducted before changing the curriculum standards, and teachers should have more input into the creation or changing of curriculum standards to allow for a smoother transition. The curriculum should be revised and then implemented in a systematic approach, such as implementing at an elementary level first and then progressing with each grade or school level, so that the curriculum changes with the younger generations making it easier to implement with older generations. Data could be compiled from each year of implementation, and changes can be made to ensure the success of the standards. Again, input from teachers will either validate or invalidate the success of the new standards. Starting in the earlier years would also make it easier to address any problems that might arise, determine the pacing of the curriculum, clarify the complexity at which the standard topics should be taught, and address any learning gaps.

The researcher recommends state and local officials involve teachers in decision-making processes regarding educational standards. State and local officials can build committees with not only large urban area teachers but also teachers from small rural

areas to get a variety of opinions and to ensure the standards meet the needs of all students. Meeting the needs of all students is vital to any educational program.

Seventy-three percent of the sample population surveyed indicated they were spending more time complying with the standards as opposed to teaching the curriculum to the best of their abilities. District officials need to provide teachers with professional development on how to implement the standards and provide suggestions on useful tools to help with the new curriculum standards. The data on professional development and preparation will provide insight for the administration, on both school and district level, to provide additional opportunities for learning experiences to ensure teachers understand the new curriculum before teaching it to students.

The researcher recommends fewer curriculum changes. Over 80% of teachers have six or more curriculum changes or reorganization of standards. State officials and policymakers need to let a set of standards remain for at least 10 years to be able to accurately measure the success of the educational standards.

Stress and workload were points on the survey yielding high results. Sixty-one percent of the sample population indicated an increased stress level, while 80% of the sample indicated an increase in workload with the new set of curriculum standards (i.e., Georgia Standards of Excellence). One way to help reduce the stress levels and workload of teachers is to provide them with adequate training and time to implement the standards. If state officials would give teachers access to the new curriculum standards a year in advance, then teachers could compare what they are teaching currently to the new set of standards. The teachers could then weed out any material or lessons that did not comply with the new set of curriculum standards throughout the year allowing them time

to implement the standards; it might reduce stress levels and the workload of teachers.

The data collected can help teachers with the implementation of new curriculum standards by allowing the school, district, and state level to see the need for frameworks, pacing guides, and exemplar work examples. Both focus groups suggested factors that would benefit teachers when implementing the Georgia Standards of Excellence.

If more curriculum change is to occur, state officials and policymakers need to have a more proactive approach to implementing the new curriculum and reduce the amount of time the curriculum standards are changed. Over 80% of the participants in the study indicated over three curriculum changes with some experiencing as many as six curriculum changes. State officials and policymakers should allow for at least 10 years of research to fully understand if the standards are effective before changing the curriculum standards.

State officials and policymakers are far removed from the classroom, so before a change in curriculum occurs, state officials should adequately research the issues with the curriculum and make a plan on how to improve the curriculum. State officials should gain the insights of teachers and a full understanding of what works as well as areas for improvement. State officials can provide a step-by-step process (e.g., vertical alignment) with implementing new standards. The state officials can start the implementation of new standards with the lower grades first and each year move up grade levels, so there is a smooth transition from grade level to grade level. Not only would changing the standards from grade level to grade level be a smooth transition, it would allow teachers the time they need to prepare for new standards. Appropriate training on the new curriculum would need to take place before the implementation of the new curriculum allowing at

least one year of training before implementation of the new curriculum. One year of training would allow teachers to fully grasp the new curriculum and appropriately prepare and implement the curriculum.

Future Research

The current study should be repeated with different populations and in different regions of Georgia to help provide insight for school, district, and state level administrators about the perceived impacts of curriculum change. If additional research is conducted in various regions of Georgia, a comparative study could then be completed to compare the results and see if the data present common trends.

Concluding Thoughts

Change to the curriculum is inevitable; however, the amount of change needs to be more manageable. The state of Georgia has been in a consistent state of change. In 2010, the science teachers were preparing for a change in the curriculum called the Next Generation Science Standards; however, this change never took place. The Georgia Standards of Excellence were implemented in 2015. Being in the classroom as a teacher has led me to an understanding of how curriculum change occurs and what to expect. I understand the continuing need to improve; however, the amount of change is somewhat burdensome. As a teacher, you find activities that are appealing and applicable to the lessons and standards, and they are required to change based on a new set of standards. Dealing with change in the curriculum has taught me to become more flexible and resilient in my educational endeavors. My own research has taught me that teachers have learned to become flexible because of multiple changes. Being an educator, participating in this study, and experiencing a change in the curriculum has allowed emphasizing and

identifying with the participants and how they dealt with change. I can translate how they feel about the change in curriculum and encourage others who might see curriculum changes as a deal breaker in education. I will never be able to control changes in the curriculum for change is the way we evolve and improve, but my own research has made me aware of future changes and given me the ability to handle a complex task that may arise. My research has taught me about my ability to persevere, allowed me to tell the stories of the participants, my journey, and myself.

Dissemination

The researcher planned to share a completed copy of the dissertation to the superintendent. Following the shared copy of the dissertation, the researcher would set up a meeting to share and discuss the results of the dissertation with the superintendent and other local officials. In addition, the researcher planned on contacting ProQuest at disspub@proquest.com to receive information on publishing the dissertation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

2/20/2018

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear _____

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at _____ I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Columbus State University, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled CURRICULUM CHANGE: A Case Study on the Impacts of Curriculum Change.

I hope the school administration will allow me to recruit faculty members from the school to anonymously complete an online survey (questions included) and conduct a focus group with teachers who have experienced curriculum change. Interested teachers, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form of the survey to complete before beginning of the survey process.

If approval is granted, faculty members will complete the survey online and those who participate in the focus group will participate in an in-person interview and this portion will take no longer than 2 hours. The survey and focus group results will be pooled for the thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either by the district or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address: Kessler-Hopek_Tiffany@columbusstate.edu.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Kessler-Hopek
Doctoral Candidate

Approved by:

Print your name and title here_____
Signature_____
Date

2-27-18

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Columbus State University, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *Curriculum Change: A Case Study on the Impacts of Curriculum Change*. If permitted to conduct the study, I will do the following: (1) recruit faculty members from the school to voluntarily and anonymously complete an online survey; (2) conduct a focus group with a voluntary group of teachers who have experienced curriculum change; and (3) conduct a voluntary focus group of administrators who have experienced curriculum change.

First, faculty members will be sent an email with a link to click to complete the survey online. The first question in the survey will include an acknowledgement of their consent to participate in the survey.

Focus groups will take place outside of school hours; participants will complete a consent form and the focus group will last about 45-60 minutes. Participation is strictly voluntary. Results of this study will remain confidential; participants will not be identified. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either by the district or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address: Kessler-Hopek_Tiffany@columbusstate.edu.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Kessler-Hopek
Doctoral Candidate

Approved: _____
Printed name and title

Signature

Date

3/1/18

Principal

APPENDIX C

EMAIL RECRUITMENT FOR SURVEY

Email to Teachers

My name is Tiffany Kessler-Hopek, and I'm a doctorate candidate at Columbus State University. I am researching the impact of curriculum change on teachers and would like to ask to you to complete a survey on curriculum change. The survey will be sent to you through an email. You will need to open the email and click on the link. The first question in the survey will be your consent to participate in the survey. Once you have agreed, you may go on to complete the survey.

The survey will also collect some demographic information. The information gained in this survey will be kept confidential and only used to gather data. No personal information will be revealed in this survey.

If you click on the survey and agree to participate in question 1, you are volunteering to participate in the study. Again, no identifying information will be shared.

Thank you for time and help. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Kessler-Hopek_Tiffany@columbusstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Kessler-Hopek
Columbus State University Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

WEB-BASED SURVEY CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tiffany Kessler-Hopek, a doctoral student in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership Department supervised by Dr. Michael D. Richardson at Columbus State University.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of curriculum content standards on teachers and school administrators. The researcher will conduct a survey to gather perceptions of teachers who have recently experienced changes in standards.

II. Procedures:

The researcher will send out an email inviting teachers to take the online survey to obtain perceptions of teachers regarding the effects of changing content standards. The survey will be administered online using a survey system called Qualtrics and will last no longer than 45 minutes. There will be no identifiable information used in this survey and response are kept anonymous.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

There are no possible risks or discomforts for participants in this study.

IV. Potential Benefits:

This study will yield feedback for school leaders and policy makers about the effects of making changes in curriculum content.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There is no compensation or costs associated with participation.

VI. Confidentiality:

The data will be indirectly coded and summarized by the researcher; no participant identifiers will be included in summary results. All responds will be kept anonymous. The research will be the only one that has access to any information.

VII. Withdrawal:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Tiffany Kessler-Hopek at Kessler-Hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By selecting the *I agree* radial and *Submit*, I agree to participate in this research project.

I agree.

I do not agree

APPENDIX E

SURVEY PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

1. Consent to participate in the study.
- DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
2. What is your age?
 3. What is your gender?
 4. Ethnicity?
 5. How many years have you worked as a teacher?
 6. How many years have you taught in this county?
 7. What is the highest degree you hold?
- CURRICULUM CHANGE INFORMATION
8. How many hours a week do you spend preparing your curriculum?
 9. How many curriculum changes have you experienced?
 10. New curriculum standards will have little impact on my everyday practice.
 11. I believe that the curriculum change will be more effective than current standards at preparing students to be college-career ready upon high school graduation.
 12. The work that I will put into preparing and transitioning to the new set of curriculum standards will be worthwhile.
 13. I am well informed regarding what the new curriculum standards are.
 14. I am sufficiently prepared through professional development to transition from teaching current standards to the new standards.
 15. The new curriculum standards will help me become a more effective teacher.
 16. The new curriculum standards makes me feel more like a professional.
 17. Especially with the emergence of the Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel that I am spending more effort to comply with mandates rather than to teach students to the best of my ability.
 18. I am concerned that the new curriculum standards will restrict my creativity and the types of instructional strategies that I may use.
 19. I am concerned that under the new set of standards, I will spend too much time preparing students for testing.
 20. I would like more decision-making power over the curriculum than what I believe the new set of standards will permit.
 21. Transitioning to the new curriculum standards will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials and lesson plans.
 22. The new curriculum standards will enable me to spend more time teaching higher-level (i.e. critical and creative) thinking skills.
 23. The new set of curriculum standards – as a single, common set of curricular- will help to make collaboration and sharing of instructional materials more efficient.
 24. The new curriculum standards are easier to understand than current standards.
 25. I have a voice in creating and responding to new education-policy legislating, such as the Georgia Standards of Excellence.
 26. With the implementation of Georgia Standards of Excellence my stress level: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly
 27. With the new curriculum (Georgia Standards of Excellence), I feel that I am preparing students for success.
 28. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence, I feel more prepared in creating the new curriculum.
 29. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my workload: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly
 30. I feel that there is a difference between the old and new curriculum.
 31. The Georgia Standards of Excellence are more rigorous.
 32. I spend more time preparing for the new curriculum than the old curriculum.
 33. I was able to properly prepare for the implementation of the new standards.

34. I received professional development on the implementation of the new standards.
35. The new curriculum standards have high academic standards and real-life implications.
36. With the new curriculum change to Georgia Standards of Excellence my productivity: increase significantly, increases somewhat, no change, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly

APPENDIX F

RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR FOCUS GROUP SESSION - TEACHER

Email:

Hi, my name is Tiffany Kessler-Hopek, and I'm a doctorate candidate at Columbus State University.

I am researching the impact of curriculum change on teachers and would like to ask to you to complete a **focus group interview** on the impact that curriculum change.

The information gained in this focus group will be kept confidential and only used to gather data no personal information will be revealed in this survey. Again, no identifying information will be shared. Thank you for time and help. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Kessler-Hopek_Tiffany@columbusstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Kessler-Hopek
Columbus State University Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL QUESTIONS - TEACHERS

1. What are some of the strengths of Georgia Standards of Excellence (likes) when compared to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)? What are some of the weakness of Georgia Standards of Excellence (dislikes) Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)?
 2. How has the Georgia Standards of Excellence impacted your classroom/instructional practices?
 3. Did you have any input regarding changes to the standards? If so, what was the input? Was it having a voice in the creating of the standards or responding to the standards?
 4. What changes have you experienced in your classroom due to Georgia Standards of Excellence?
 5. If you experienced Common Core or Georgia Performance Standards, what were some of your experiences? Explain
- Are there any questions or comments that you would like to add?

APPENDIX H

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY AND TO MODIFY SURVEY

2/8/2018

Columbus State University Mail - Survey on Teachers Perceptions on Common Core



Tiffany Kessler-Hopek [Student] <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu>

Survey on Teachers Perceptions on Common Core

2 messages

Tiffany Kessler-Hopek [Student] <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu>
 To: Albert_Cheng@hks.harvard.edu

Mon, Aug 28, 2017 at 2:45 PM

Dr. Cheng,

Hi, my name is Tiffany Hopek. I am currently working on my dissertation and came across your paper. I was wondering if you would let me use your survey to gather data for my dissertation? I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Sincerely,
 Tiffany Kessler-Hopek

Albert Cheng <albert_cheng@hks.harvard.edu>

Mon, Aug 28, 2017 at 3:09 PM

To: "Tiffany Kessler-Hopek [Student]" <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu>

Hi Tiffany,

Yes. Feel free to use the survey. Good luck with the dissertation!

Albert
 [Quoted text hidden]



Tiffany Kessler-Hopek [Student] <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu>

Survey on Teachers Perceptions on Common Core

Albert Cheng <albert_cheng@hks.harvard.edu>

Tue, Feb 27, 2018 at 9:52 AM

To: Tiffany Kessler-Hopek <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu>

Certainly, Tiffany. Modify as you need. I'm sure the issues have slightly changed since I administered it.

Albert

On Tue, Feb 27, 2018 at 8:30 AM, Tiffany Kessler-Hopek <kessler-hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu> wrote:

Dr. Cheng,

I have another quick question about your survey. Would I be able to modify some of the survey questions to fit my study? I apologize for not asking this in my initial email.

Sincerely,
 Tiffany Kessler-Hopek

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEACHER FOCUS GROUP

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tiffany Kessler-Hopek, a doctoral student in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership Department supervised by Dr. Michael D. Richardson at Columbus State University.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of curriculum content standards on teachers and school administrators. The researcher will conduct a teacher focus group to gather perceptions of teachers who have recently experienced changes in standards.

II. Procedures:

The researcher will interview members of a teacher focus group to obtain perceptions of teachers regarding the effects of changing content standards. The focus group will meet after school hours, participants will not be identified in any manner, and participants may leave the focus group at any time should they be uncomfortable. The interview will be recorded; however, no data will be identified with participants. Study results may be used in future projects.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

There are no possible risks or discomforts for participants in this study.

IV. Potential Benefits:

This study will yield feedback for school leaders and policy makers about the effects of making changes in curriculum content.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There is no compensation or costs associated with participation.

VI. Confidentiality:

The data will be indirectly coded and summarized by the researcher; no participant identifiers will be included in summary results.

VII. Withdrawal:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Tiffany Kessler-Hopek at Kessler-Hopek_tiffany@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing, I agree to participate in this research project. I am over the age of 18 years.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX J

EMAIL TO ASCERTAIN TIME AND DATE
FOR TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

Dear Participants,

I am contacting you to ascertain time and date where we could conduct the focus group. Please send me a date and time that will not work for you, and I will send you an email back with the date and time of the focus group. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at Kessler-hopek_Tiffany@columbusstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Kessler-Hopek
Columbus State University Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX K

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Focus Group Session:**Date:****Audio Tape number:****Introduction**

Hello, I am Tiffany Hopek. Thank you for your assistance in this research project about curriculum change. Before we start the focus group session, I would like to assure you that this focus group session is confidential. The audio tape and transcription of the interview will be secured at CSU. Excerpts or key phrases may be part of my final research report, but your name or any identifying characteristics will not be included in the report.

The focus group session will be approximately 45 minutes long. I will be recording the interview for accuracy, depth, and further analysis. A copy of the transcript will be made available to you for review to confirm your responses. You will have seven days to make any corrections or comments about the transcript. If I do not hear from you by the end of the seven days, the transcript will be added to the research for analysis.

Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin? May I turn on the audio tape? If during the focus group sessions, there is something you do not want recorded, alert me and I will turn off the audio tape.

Ice Breaker Question:

Please tell me about curriculum background; how long you taught, and what degrees you hold.

PROBE/FOLLOW-UP: Confirm demographic information.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the strengths of Georgia Standards of Excellence (likes) when compared to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)? What are some of the weakness of Georgia Standards of Excellence (dislikes) Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Common Core (CC)?
2. How has the Georgia Standards of Excellence impacted your classroom/instructional practices?
3. Did you have any input regarding changes to the standards? If so, what was the input? Was it having a voice in the creating of the standards or responding to the standards?

4. What changes have you experienced in your classroom due to Georgia Standards of Excellence?

5. If you experienced Common Core or Georgia Performance Standards, what were some of your experiences? Explain

Transition to closing: Thank you for your responses, in closing I would like to give you an opportunity to make any comments or add any information you think is important. Remember, the purpose of this study is to gain information from you about your experiences and perceptions regarding Curriculum Change.

Is there anything you would like to add? Is there anything you feel was left out of this interview?

Thank you for your time and sharing your experiences.