Reading Strategies in High School Social Studies:
Implementation of Common Core Requirements

A doctoral thesis proposal presented
by

Tabby Grabowski

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the barriers teachers face in implementing high school reading strategies in social studies classrooms in the aftermath of the adoption of the 2009 California Common Core Standards (CCCS) which require the teaching of literacy skills in addition to content. Mezirow’s (1991) transformational learning theory provides the framework to analyze how, and the extent to which, professional development, professional learning communities, and district initiatives help social studies teachers transform pedagogy to include reading strategies in addition to social studies curriculum.

Keywords: common core, reading strategies, critical reading
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Chapter 1: Topic Overview

Statement of the Problem

As a literacy coach in a poor rural high school in the farming valley of Central California, it is my job to assist teachers with pedagogical transitions brought on by district, state and federal mandates. Through professional development, professional learning communities, and in-classroom guidance, teachers and I work in to address the literacy needs for our students and to comply with directives. To date, some of our efforts have had great success, while others have stagnated.

These failures to move forward bring up a series of important questions. As a teacher myself, I understand the pressures educators face on a daily basis: student apathy, curriculum changes, state mandates, and many others. The state of education is always at the forefront of debate, and teachers are typically criticized and blamed for the lack of student growth. This study aspires to document the barriers inhibiting the implementation of literacy strategies in high school social studies courses and to outline what can be done to improve effectiveness.

This particular transition began with a statewide conversion from the California State Standards (CSS) to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, which represented much more than the replacement of one curriculum with another. Secondary educators who have traditionally taught from a content-driven and teacher-centered approach in the classroom have been asked under the new standards to overhaul their pedagogy into what is known as a student-centered approach. During this transition, teachers have been required to anticipate the needed reading instruction, which provided secondary students with a deeper level of accessing text. These new standards required teaching and learning to move far beyond memorization of rote content into a practice that integrates critical and analytical thinking. This means particularly
acute transformations for social studies teachers who struggled to incorporate significant changes in their teaching methods as part of literacy development (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2015). In particular, the CCSS brought ten new literacy standards to the social studies curriculum to address rigorous multiple text reading. Teachers are now required to embed reading instruction that includes analyzing the relationship between primary and secondary documents, distinguishing facts verses opinion, and synthesizing information from multiple texts. Enriching curriculum with critical reading instruction is a new skill for most secondary educators in California. It was a difficult transition for most of them because, for over 15 years, they have practiced the former California State Standards (CSS) as the goal of their teaching, which relied primarily on successfully supplying content to the students for testing based on multiple-choice questions. And, according to state policy, literacy standards were to be fully implemented by the 2014-2015 school year.

In light of CCCS adoption, this study focused on the experience teachers have had as they are asked to comply with the new literacy requirements. Through an intrinsic case study, I observed six social studies teachers as they interacted with other social studies teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings held specifically for this literacy inclusion objective. I also interviewed each educator about their perceptions of their implementation under the new law. And finally, as a secondary source, I reviewed recent workshops and professional development documents that were provided during three training sessions about literacy practices. Using these sources of information allowed me to journey back through the educational experience with the participants and determine to what extent, if any, transformational learning for the required implementation of reading standards has occurred.

Identifying social studies teachers’ challenges during this transformation provided an
understanding of the dynamics involved in implementing innovative critical and analytical reading instruction in the secondary school social studies curriculum.

**Context and Background**

The major instructional changes made through the adoption of the CCSS were brought on by the consistently low performance of K-12 students across all subjects in California’s schools. Policymakers noted that American students were scoring far below their European counterparts in critical reading (Bidwell, 2014), and adopted the CCSS. In addition to low-test scores, based on annual data, six out of every ten high school students in the United States are required to take a remedial course in college (Bray, 2015). For those students who choose to forgo college and enter the work force directly, opportunities are limited when they read below grade level (Massengill, 2013). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017), only 38% percent of American seniors scored at or above grade level in reading; and only 44% of California students scored at or above grade level in reading (NAEP, 2017). In response to this type of data, the task of better preparing California’s high school students to be critical readers was prioritized and resulted in the adoption of policies aimed at reinforcing major curriculum changes, specifically in reading.

To achieve the stated goals of the new reading standards -- that graduating students are going to be able to read, analyze, synthesize, and critique the material typically encountered in college and the workplace -- the current-day text complexity gap needs to be addressed (Williamson, Fitzgerald, & Jackson-Stenner, 2014). A text complexity gap can be understood by measuring the difficulty of the text in relation to student learning and aptitude. Qualitative dimensions address the levels of meaning or purpose, structure and knowledge demands, while quantitative dimensions consider word length, sentence length and text cohesion. If students
cannot read complex expository text to gain information, they will likely turn to text-free or text-light sources, such as video, podcasts, and tweets. These sources, while not without value, cannot capture the nuance, subtlety, depth, or breadth of ideas developed through complex text (Kress, 2003). In considering the complexity of grade appropriate rigor, today’s students need to access large amounts of information provided by the Internet and to apply the appropriate reading skills to break down biases and generalities (Kress, 2003). Newly adopted policies to incorporate complex reading material and to synthesize information call for a different form of pedagogy than the one teachers’ have been using to meet the requirements of the now-obsolete California State Standards (CSS).

Under the previous CSS, the assessment that students and schools were measured by was referred to as the California Standards Test (CST). During the CST phase, most social science teachers were not implementing reading skills because it was not a part of their curriculum. In short, critical reading skills were not tested; instead historical facts and timelines were the focus. The curriculum lacked rigorous text that required students to read for content and analyze documents, and teachers were not trained to implement reading strategies. However, the newly adopted Common Core Literacy Standards require teachers to do so. Therefore, gaining a clear understanding of how teachers can move beyond providing rote information is important for preparing students for state assessments, college readiness, and career paths.

The newly adopted California Common Core Assessment is referred to as SBAC, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Unlike the CST, California students tested under the SBAC method must exhibit their understanding of rigorous, non-fiction and fiction text. The test has multiple short responses that are article/story based, which require students to explain an in-depth understanding of the provided text. In addition, students must compose an essay, which
references complex articles and videos supplied by the testing site. The changes in the curriculum and test are distinctive, so much so that the CST and SBAC data should not be compared (Torlakson, 2015). The SBAC focuses on crucial abilities, such as analyzing problems, thinking independently, and writing clearly with evidence (Torlakson, 2015). Students who meet the state standards on the SBAC can forgo college entry placement tests (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2013). The former standards test did not offer college placement or usable data to colleges, universities, or the military. While students’ tests are high stakes, teachers are still grappling with these changes.

As a result of the former standards, social studies teachers are facing these changes with little or no training to implement reading strategies within their curriculum. For veteran secondary teachers, who have been in the teaching profession for over five years, reading instruction was not required during their teacher-credentialing program. Similarly, districts offered no reading training to social studies teachers because it was not tested on the CST. Besides a lack of training, these teachers assumed that students were mastering reading strategies in English classes (Macphee & Whitecotton, 2011). Although most reading strategies are addressed in English classes, understanding the need for content area literacy strategies is crucial in all areas of curriculum. According to Daniels and Zememan (2004), secondary teachers assign a variety of reading that is not accompanied with teaching reading. For those students who are unable to access the content of the reading because of its rigor, the student learns very little in the class. Since reading is assigned in all content area classes and national scores show that a majority of students possess low reading abilities, providing reading instruction across content areas would assist students in acquiring the skills necessary to meet the high demands of English as a written language.
In creating the curriculum and assessments, the authors of the new Common Core State Standards referenced Hess’ Cognitive Rigor Matrix, which has six levels of student understanding: Remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Hess, Carlock, Jones, & Walkup, 2009). By using Hess’ matrix, the curriculum was designed to guide students as they move along a continuum that requires deeper levels of understanding. The California Common Core Standards used Hess’ matrix to focus on leading students through an in-depth understanding of fiction and non-fiction text, which develops independent opinion and analysis (Hess et al., 2009). Preparing students to develop reading skills that move past remembering historical timelines is the clear goal CCSS, and assisting educators in becoming innovative teachers of reading compliments the goals of Common Core.

**Research Question**

How have teachers, working in a Title 1 school, experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy requirement into their social studies curriculum?

**Definition of Key Terminology**

**California State Standards (CST):** A collection of identified kindergarten through 12\(^{th}\) grade standards that each teacher was responsible for teaching, from 1997-2009.

**California Common Core Standards (CCSS):** A set of educational standards for teaching kindergarten through 12\(^{th}\) grade, from 2009 to Current.

**Reading strategies:** Research based reading instruction used to provide students with a deeper level of understanding text.

**Critical reading:** An active style of reading that encourages deeper level of understanding and questioning of the text.
Positionality Statement

As a Literacy Coach in one of the poorest communities in America, my educational role offers insight into the selection of my research topic. Understanding positionality as a latent force that becomes apparent to self and others (Teo, 2015), I will outline my background and experiences as an educator and beyond. I realize my role as a mother, community member, and educator formed my interest in this subject.

Growing up in a rural area of central California, my educational beginnings were very limited. Neither of my parents graduated from high school, and there was no value placed on education. My herd of brothers and sisters and I simply went to school when we felt like it. My sophomore year of high school, I became a mother. I left our family home and lived with different family members. Eventually, I dropped out of school to work full time as a phone operator at an insurance company. Single, a teen, and a mom, I was barely paying the bills; I realized I needed to make better choices. I started taking classes to get my high school diploma. I eventually passed my classes and enrolled in lower-level classes at our local community college.

Wanting a career that complimented my role as a single-mother, I transferred to our local state college and earned a degree in English and a California Teaching Credential. With my degree in hand, I was hired at a continuation high school. A continuation high school is an alternative placement for students who do not perform well at a comprehensive high school. Even though I was a high school dropout and struggled in school, I always was a proficient reader. But watching these students struggle with reading comprehension, it became obvious that they were failing out of high school and life because they could not read. The majority of these high school students read at a 3rd to 4th grade level. The students were frustrated with
education, and I was frustrated because I did not know how to teach reading to my struggling students. As a secondary educator, I was not offered classes that instructed me on reading strategies.

Motivated by my role as a teacher and mother, I wanted to help my students and my daughter to have a positive educational experience. I became interested in reading and earned a Master’s degree in reading instruction. I used my newly acquired reading skills to diagnose and assist my students with reading deficiencies and to promote literacy in my home. After eight years at the alternative education high school, I moved to a comprehensive high school, which led me to my position as the literacy coach.

As a literacy coach and a community member, my job requires me to present reading strategies and implement new state, district, and school-mandated changes. But, I often perceive that teachers view the process of implementing change as a source of frustration. With changes in the curriculum that have been brought on by the CCCS, I have observed that many teachers struggle with incorporating literacy training into content area curriculum. As a literacy coach and workshop leader, I feel it is essential for me to understand the dynamics contributing to this gap in their application of the trainings in order to contribute more effectively to the professional development of these teachers.

Given this background, guaranteeing my biases do not affect my research is critical. Machi and McEvoy (2012) warn that researchers have opinions about problems in their field and often have preferred answers which they commit to study. Knowing this, I must realize my biases coming into the study and focus on finding impartial answers to my questions. Being neutral during this study will assist districts, teachers, and students. The opportunity to provide teachers with a safe, non-biased setting in which they are encouraged to discuss their limitations
in teaching reading, will offer valuable evidence for teachers and districts to meet and exceed our newly implemented Common Core Literacy Standards. I want to understand the participants’ experiences so I can look closely at their hesitancy, if any, to include reading strategies in their curriculum, and then provide them with the needed resources to transform their learning and their teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The following section of this chapter includes a description and discussion of Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory (TLT), which served as the theoretical lens for this study. TLT is a conceptual framework for adult learning based on communication, which is defined as the process by which individuals change problematic frames of reference (mindset, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – in other words, sets of assumptions and expectations - to become more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change (Sutherland & Crowther, 2006). The progression involves personal change and includes how one views self and the world (Mezirow, 2004). Outlining the phases of the framework provided additional information regarding transitions in adult learning, which assisted in better understanding social studies teachers’ needs in meeting the newly implemented literacy/reading standards in Common Core (CC).

Mezirow (2006) condensed these ten stages into four major phases: mindset, communication, action, and exploration. As Mezirow outlined the phases of learning, in the mindset stage the learner explores his/her frame of reference. As the adult learner transforms mindset through reflection and communication, the learning is acquired by taking action and applying concepts. By allowing the adult learner to come to a realization of the purpose of learning, through self-reflection and/or discourse, an authentic transition can occur that assists in
developing a new mindset towards learning. This ultimately leads to innovative action incorporating the learned concept.

Mezirow’s (2006) breakdown of the learning process included the following components:

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. Exploration of option for new roles, relationships and action;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing a plan;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (p. 28).

Table 1

*Mezirow’s Ten Phases of Learning as they relate to the Four Major Phases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Disorienting dilemma</td>
<td>• A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
- Provisional trying of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new role and relationships
- A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspectives

**Mindset**

Mezirow began his theory by examining the background of the learner. He asserted that the learner must first understand his/her mindset, which can occur through reflection on past experiences or culture (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow developed the concept of meaning perspectives, which include overall world-view and meaning schemes. Both of these concepts include specific knowledge, values, and beliefs about one’s experiences (Kitchenham, 2008).
Considering the background of the learner is an important component in building and combining different perspectives that relate to the new content being taught.

After understanding the background of the learner, Mezirow established that there are two kinds of learning styles that must be considered: instrumental and communicative (Mezirow, 1991). They provide a structure from which to understand the process of adult knowledge acquisition, the focus of this research. As Mezirow (1991) stated, instrumental learning happens when an individual can manipulate or control the environment to enhance performance or prediction. Instrumental learning is involved in designing automobiles, building structures, and diagnosing disease. The developmental logic of instrumental learning is hypothetical-deductive (Mezirow, 1991). Instrumental learning typically happens through quantitative research. In contrast, communicative learning gains understanding through purpose, values, and beliefs, and is less amenable to being tested empirically (Mezirow, 1991). The learner realizes a concept through building on one’s background knowledge of the newly learned notion. Communicative learning often involves critical reflection on the part of the learner. Mezirow (1991) asserted that the ultimate goal of communicative learning is reaching a consensus, where there is a clear understanding of the information being taught. After establishing the participants’ background and linking their experience to their mindset, Mezirow (1998) identified the paradigm shift, which is an understanding that a change in mindset often resulted through exploring a shared perception of the problem or desired outcome.

This phase in Mezirow’s TLT evolved from Kuhn’s (1962) habits of mind and meaning perspectives. Transformation of learning cannot cognitively occur unless meaning is made of the information and connected to something that is currently understood. Therefore, learning must have a practical application for a paradigm shift to occur. Responsible for the term “paradigm
shift,” Kuhn addressed *fundamental changes* in basic concepts occurring during research. Kuhn (1962) noted that scientific teams often shift their thinking when considering a solution to inquiry, which suggests paradigm shifts happen if we can relate them to concrete circumstances. Until learners combined aspects of others’ research into their inquiry process, their progress can remain unbalanced or stagnant. Kuhn (1962) noted this necessary step in expanding one’s knowledge, and he argued that identifying one’s own perspective and embracing the views of others could result in a paradigm shift.

Influenced by Kuhn’s research, Mezirow (1991) identified the frame of reference as having two different parts: habit of mind and point of view. “The habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 92). Mezirow (1991) contended the habit of mind is more durable and less likely to change. Influenced by culturally, socially, and educationally embedded assumptions, habit of mind is less malleable. In contrast, point of view is subject to continuous change. “Point of view is more accessible to awareness, to feedback from others” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 93). Mezirow described the processes of learning that can emerge through changing one’s point of view.

**Communication**

Mezirow contends the impressionable point of view has the ability to change through reflection and communication, which adjusts the learner’s mindset. After establishing the teachers’ background and linking their point of view to their mindset, communication contributes to transitional learning by addressing the need for acquiring the information (Mezirow, 1998). Mezirow (1997) argued that without the valuable communication piece, change in a framework does not authentically develop into a transformed behavior. To understand the meaning of what
is being communicated - especially when the persons’ intentions, values, moral issues, and feelings are involved - requires critical reflection. Mezirow (1998) asserted this by noting, “in cultures where the objective is to perpetuate a religion or a regime, or to produce a docile workforce, critical reflection and discourse are commonly limited” (p. 188). Providing a structure for reflection and discussion offers the learner ownership and the space and skills to question their mindset.

Mezirow adopted this theory of communication of beliefs or mindsets from Habermas’s (1984) powerful study on the impact of discussion. Habermas stressed the importance of people communicating in an effort to come to a common understanding of the learning experience. Connecting communication and the learner simply depends on interaction. Basically, learning transforms into a deeper understanding through connection to a related reality of meaning. Through conversation, learners reflect on the purpose and value of the proposed change (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow (1991) incorporated changing one’s mindset through communication as a major tenet of his framework. He suggested the equally important principle that learners cannot take action in applying new content until they make sense of it by critically engaging in the environment in which it is being presented and by fully understanding the content being taught.

**Action**

Mezirow (1996) claimed that acquiring a new concept requires practitioners to prepare for a deeper understanding by connecting meaning schemes to the newly studied view. This involves considering what has been done in the past and building on that experience to create a more successful outcome. By implementing the newly learned idea, the learner builds confidence and starts to plan a course of action that promotes an innovative use of the learned
concept. In other words, “learners can transform an individual meaning scheme by examining previous actions or where the actions and their related factors originated” (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 114). Meaning schemes, part of the action phase in Mezirow’s theory, assists the learner in the application of the newly learned skill.

Mezirow’s derived the action phase from Freire’s (1970) initial theory of the “banking” method. Freire suggested that learning will not produce active learning if it only involves the teacher merely depositing knowledge and holding students responsible for remembering simple facts (Kitchenham, 2008). Freire recognized that learning requires more content reflection and process on the part of the learner. He contended that students do not become learners until they think critically about the subject and are given the opportunity to plan a course of action and actually attempt to apply the newly learned concept. Freire argued that, “learning to perceive social, political, and economical contradictions - developing a critical awareness - so that individuals can take action is true learning” (Freire, 1970, p. 19). Freire wanted people to be critical learners. He asserted that people who feel vested in learning or changing take action by merging critical thought and an understanding of a concept (Kitchenham, 2008). Thus, taking initiative to “acquire knowledge and skill to implement one’s plan” (Mezirow, 2006, p. 28) reflects on a broader perspective, which encourages the learners to problem solve and evolve.

**Exploration**

Finally, Mezirow asserts that transformation can happen within the goal of thinking for one’s self and allowing the learner to build competence and confidence in new roles and relationships (Mezirow, 2006). Critically reflective learning goes beyond replacing knowledge to be more efficient; it exchanges the habit of mind and becomes part of the learner’s established mindset. The learner has acquired the skill. When applying the skill independently, the learner
confidently explores different characteristics and features, which ultimately leads to refinement and autonomous application.

**Rationale for using Mezirow’s Theory**

Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory will provide the framework for exploring the experiences of social studies teachers as they transition from teaching content, as was expected by California State Standards, to the newly adopted California Common Core Literacy Standards. Since the social studies teachers were exposed to three workshops that focused on implementing reading strategies, the opportunities for learning and using them were presented. However, social studies teachers within our school district are struggling with this pedagogical transition. Studying the change of teaching behaviors during this transition will offer insight into the curriculum transformations brought on by the newly adopted Common Core and will help identify more effective training and implementation strategies for the future.

Mezirow’s framework considers the learners’ past experiences and mindset, offering awareness of the transition into the newly adopted Common Core Literacy Standards. Using Mezirow’s theory, I will note the changes in the social studies teachers’ pedagogy brought on by collaboration and communication of the new expectations, while considering the learners’ past experiences with teaching reading.

Exploring the need for developing reading strategies within the social studies curriculum through communication and collaboration will offer an understanding of the teachers’ preparedness for the action phase of TLT. The action phase of Mezirow’s TLT requires the learner to interact with the material by taking action. A successful transition would mean that teachers have acquired and are applying the skills involved in teaching reading in their content area. This phase of Mezirow’s theory offers an interesting lens to understand the learners’ sense
making. When teachers take action, and apply what they have learned, the understanding of the material becomes more efficacious. Exploring the action component with these social studies teachers will provide a better understanding of their transformation to innovatively applying reading strategies to the social studies curriculum.

The fourth phase of Mezirow’s theory, experimenting, occurs when learners have acquired a universal understanding of the problem and what is needed to address it. They then explore initial applications of the skill set, eventually becoming innovative thinkers who can adapt or modify practices as needed. The process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experiences as a guide to action would allow social studies teachers to act autonomously towards applying literacy standards to the social studies curriculum.

Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory allows for the study of reintegration, taking possession of reading strategies, and knowing when to apply them in the social studies content. Mezirow (1998) argued, “learning to think for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intention, values and feelings” (p. 190). Pulling the learning together through practice and discovery provides a foundation for the learner to truly transform and apply ownership to the learned skills.

Conclusion

This chapter described the transition from CST to CCSS and the necessary changes social studies teachers are required to implement to bring the teaching of literacy skills into a previously content-based curricular design. This shift began when state policy makers recognized consistently low reading levels among students in the United States and created a mandated literacy component for all areas of the curriculum. For the State of
California, exceedingly low secondary reading levels compared to the national averages have increased the importance of teaching reading at the high school level. At the sub-state level, schools in this economically depressed region are comprised of a high number of ELL students who are even further behind the already compromised state proficiencies in their development of literacy and critical reading skills. In the site that is being studied, students are reading far below the already compromised state standards, making teaching students both literacy and content – and training teachers to effectively implement these standards - of vital importance to this student population.

As described above, this study will focus on how social studies teachers endorse and implement this pedagogical transition. The social studies teachers have experienced professional development opportunities and they have been provided with concrete pedagogical methods that they can employ to effectively teach reading in addition to content. However, transforming teaching is often monumental. Many veteran teachers did not forego reading instruction while meeting the requirement for obtaining a teacher credentialing. This could lead to some frustration. In addition, teachers have not been offered a voice in the adoption of CCSS. Knowing these problems exist, exploring how teachers experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy requirement into their social studies curriculum will provide answers to better informing future trainings and assist with the transition of mandated change.

The following chapter provides a review of scholarly literature examining the components that can contribute to the successful teaching of literacy at the adolescent level and to effective transitions in pedagogical practices. It also addresses the importance of professional development during transitional processes and offers examples of effective
approaches. Chapter 3 will discuss my use of a case study methodology to understand this problem.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study focused on the transformational learning needed by high school social studies teachers to successfully incorporate reading strategies into their curriculum. This literature review probed three strands of research that were keys to understanding the components contributing to an effective and sustainable implementation of pedagogy that addresses the needs of teaching reading in high school social studies. These areas of inquiry include: adolescent reading requirements, the teacher’s role in the transformation of pedagogy, and effective professional development.

Adolescent Reading Requirements

Since the adoption of the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, high school reading material has increased in volume and complexity (Swanson et al., 2015). Additionally, the CCSS incorporated several areas of reading that are not typically taught in beginning literacy instruction at the elementary and secondary levels (Swanson et al., 2015). Under the standards, in addition to acquiring a direct knowledge of the facts and content contained in the text, high school students must be able to analyze an author’s point of view, determine word meaning and the impact of word choice, integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats, and evaluate arguments and substantive claims in texts (Swanson et al., 2015). They also are expected to learn to analyze relationships between primary and secondary sources (Corestandards, 2016). In short, the CCSS addresses reading as a critical skill throughout the curriculum (National Assessment Governing Board, 2017).

Traditional high school students are exposed to at least four to five different classes per day, and each class requires the mastery of distinctive forms of complex informational text. Therefore, teachers face particularly acute challenges in teaching students the skills required to
develop a deeper understanding of complex text across content areas (Milliano, Gelderen, Sleegers, 2016). Spratley (2010) emphasized the challenges that adolescents encounter in reading for complex understanding, particularly that they struggle with concepts and with relating text-dependent questions concretely to factual evidence. However, Spratley (2010) also noted that these challenges are different across content areas. English classes, for example, demand a less literal translation of evidence than history or social studies courses, requiring students instead to be more familiar with inferences and with the identification of relationships. Reading skills in English classes often are used for fictional literature, where students identify character motives, themes, and plot. Social studies courses, in contrast, require an interpretation of history, where students need to understand the causes and effects of events. This is a more linear interpretation of a text that may deepen in complexity if the material includes primary written documents, such as letters, diaries, manuscripts, consensus records, or newspaper articles. In addition to analyzing written documents, social studies classes require students to interpret primary sources of visual artifacts, such as maps, drawings, and posters (Chan, 2015). According to Massey (2015), students in elementary school are introduced to social studies topics. However, by the time students enter middle and high schools, entire courses are devoted to the study of history. Commonly, students have not acquired the skills and competencies needed to address numerous genres and text structures with the level of analysis that the more advanced study in this content area requires (Santi & Reed, 2015).

**Teaching Reading to Adolescents**

Because a high percentage of California high school students are reading below grade level, the CCSS Curriculum established a policy insisting that 70% of reading should be focused on non-fiction material (Common Core, 2015). Although, there are a number of studies that
support providing students with multiple genres and high volumes of reading material, a component of reading complex informational text is teaching the students how to read critically. Providing difficult reading material to students that is not accompanied by reading strategies does not deliver appropriate instruction (Williamson et al., 2014). According to a study by Gamez and Lesaux (2015), high school students’ reading comprehension levels made significant gains when teachers used reading instruction to support students’ understandings of the text. “Educators who modeled critical reading to promote student learning provided connection to the text, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of an article” (Gamez & Lesaux, 2015, p. 451). Making a cognitive connection to the text is often difficult for students who have had minimum exposure to reading.

Assisting students to participate in cognitive engagement, or “unseen mental processes and strategies readers use to access challenging reading tasks” (Cantrell et al., 2016, p. 261) allows students to interact with the text. “Cognitive engagement strategies consist of using prior knowledge predicting and inferring, discerning main ideas, visualizing, summarizing, taking notes, scanning and questioning” (Rainey, 2016, p. 12). Goldman’s review of evidence on different instructional approaches to adolescent reading revealed that the primary instructional influences of effective teaching of teen readers depends on “readers moving beyond what text says to what text means” (2012, p. 90). Teaching students to extract meaning from the text requires the students to be actively engaged in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the text (Goldman, 2012).

Encouraging students to be cognitively aware while reading requires teachers to possess the skills to combine the teaching of literacy and content simultaneously. Hagaman and Casey’s (2017) review of reading instruction used with high school students determined that “reading
instruction starts with assessing students’ connection to the text” (p. 212). Measuring students’ familiarity with concepts introduced in the text allows the instructor to make valuable connections to unfamiliar terminology or ideas. “Students need background knowledge to perform in depth reading of unfamiliar concepts” (Hagaman & Casey, 2017, p. 214). Bringing contextual knowledge also requires “explicit vocabulary instruction” (Wexler, Reed, Mitchell, Doyle, & Clancy, 2014, p. 143). Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) confirmed this finding, stating: “Vocabulary instruction is an essential component to teaching reading” (p. 629). Delivering instruction of unfamiliar words can be accomplished by providing visuals or by using context clues to extract the meaning (Wexler et. al., 2014). Although the most effective vocabulary instruction occurs through teacher instruction, one good approach to teaching an extensive vocabulary happens through Student Selected Vocabulary (SSV)” (Guthrie et al., 2012). When students are provided a text, they are encouraged to identify unfamiliar words, which allow them an opportunity to have a voice in their own learning (Perkins & Cooter, 2013; Hagaman & Casey, 2017).

When educators focus instruction on background knowledge, “teachers should also make certain all students understand the concept of paraphrasing,” which requires students to summarize the text in their own words (Wexler et al., 2014 p. 212). C. Lee and Goldman (2015), studying students’ experiences with connecting paraphrasing to reading comprehension, found that “asking students to paraphrase the main idea of a non-fiction passage created a deeper level of connection to the text” (p. 223) and provided an opportunity for teachers to check for student mastery (Wexler et al., 2014). Van Loon, De Bruin, Leppink, and Roebers’ (2017) mixed method study of 167 middle school children discovered that a student’s ability to paraphrase what they learned was an effective means of assessing student understanding of a complex text.
The researchers found a connection between students’ understandings of the text and their ability to “identify, summarize, and articulate” (Van Loon et al., 2017, p. 81). Without the ability to self-regulate through paraphrasing, students were unable to confidently provide information on the assigned reading material. Reading instruction using cognitive engagement, background knowledge, vocabulary instruction, and paraphrasing can be readily secured through teacher modeling.

Goldman’s (2012) research found that systematic modeling requires the teacher to show students how proficient readers interact with the text. For example, a Think Aloud is a technique used for modeling reading. Think Aloud requires the teacher to methodically walk the students through the reading, thinking, and analytical process. This would include circling unfamiliar words, noting questions in the margins, and making connections to background knowledge Aukerman, M., & Schuldt, (2016). In this context, students watch and listen to the teacher as he/she reads a paragraph and highlights, underlines, or circles main ideas and supporting evidence. This requires the teacher to actively interrogate the text. This has been found to be highly effective. For example, Mason, Pluchino, and Tomatora (2015) conducted a study of 53 students who attended 7th grade and found that teachers who modeled the “reading and thinking process” were more likely to impact students’ ability to engage with the text. By thinking through the text, by writing questions and underlining main ideas, students begin to master the capacity to create connections to previous conversations or reading material (Wexler et al., 2015).

**English Language Learners (ELL) and Low Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

Moving high school learners toward reading proficiency is difficult. This becomes significantly more complex in the case of teaching reading to students who are economically
disenfranchised or for whom English is a second language (Herbers et al., 2012; Ransdell, 2012; White, Kim, Kingston, & Foster, 2014). Students with limited English proficiency perform below their English-only counterparts on measures of reading comprehension, particularly in high school (Gamez & Lesaux, 2015). Thus, the acquisition of the critical literacy skills included in the CCCS becomes even more problematic for ELL students.

Gamez and Lesaux’s (2015) large scale experimental evaluation of 14 urban middle schools documented that a growing linguistic diversity in the United States is requiring teachers to implement additional changes in curriculum that specifically address the needs of language learners relating to reading instruction and vocabulary development. When ELL students were provided reading instruction in context of the material they were learning, just like English only students, ELL’s were more likely to make a connection and apply the concepts to other areas of study (Gamez & Lesaux, 2015).

“In California almost 1.5 million students (roughly 24% of the student population) attending public schools in 2009 were designated as English Language Learners (ELLs)” (L. Swanson, Biachini, & Lee, 2014, p. 31). L. Swanson et al. (2014) conducted a case study of 54 Californian high school ELL students examining reading within science. They interviewed the teacher who had written the ELL curriculum for the urban school district. The researchers discovered that supplying students with vocabulary and reading instruction to read higher-level science curriculum increased students’ ability to discuss and debate the material, which often secures the students understanding of the content.

Like ELL students, most low SES students enter high school with years of negative educational experiences due to significant deficits in language, processing, and motivation (Davis & Heller, 2017). Neugebauer’s (2016) study of 140 students in 15 middle schools found
that poverty was a significant influence on student success. Students of poverty were less likely to “engage in a reading activity for its own sake or because of curiosity or interest” (p. 393). The study attributed lack of motivation to low performance, which impacted the students’ ability to gain information from reading. Several studies (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2017; Ransdell, 2012; Stowe & Stephens, 2015) have linked students who are living below the poverty line to low academic success. Duncan et al. (2017) presented a longitudinal study that examined the compounding struggle students of poverty endure with reading. The authors found elementary school students living in poverty were more likely to fall significantly behind their middleclass peers. By middle school, students living in poverty lacked skills to make important cognitive connections to reading assignments. By high school, these deficits severely impacted students’ ability to read for information, which led to low motivation and a greater disparity of reading scores (Duncan et al., 2017).

With studies highlighting the socioeconomic impediment to students’ achievement, “teachers are given a good explanation as to why reading strategies need to be implemented at a secondary level” (Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, & Parkhill, 2013). These students, and many second language learners, may read words accurately but they have particular difficulty with comprehension due to knowledge deficits in vocabulary, grammar, making meaning of text, and identifying the author’s purpose. Diagnosing this category of shortfalls in reading is often more difficult because these high school students may appear to read effortlessly, but their level of comprehension is poor (Kucan, Hapgood, & Palincsar, 2011).

**Teaching Reading in Social Studies**

To address teaching reading in social studies at the high school level, teachers must assist students in recognizing the uniqueness of the history text and the role of a reader (Massey, 2015).
Practices, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, guided training, graphic organizers, and student collaboration enhance reading comprehension and other forms of literacy achievement in the area of social studies (Barber et al., 2014). These strategies have a greater impact when they are integrated with the content of the curriculum, rather than as an isolated strategy. Fisher and Frey (2014) extensively researched teaching adolescents to read using content-area text. They found that that social studies content often requires a higher lexile level, which is a measurement of text complexity and reading level. Presenting more complex text that is connected to the curriculum and is supported by reading instruction “offers students an opportunity to advance their reading repertoires with an increased level of engagement” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 347).

Thus, reading and social studies should be taught as a whole, not in fragmented lessons. As Macphee and Whitecotton (2011) confirmed this point, “We have all observed where reading strategies are taught in isolation: students are learning about literacy, but not using literacy as a tool for learning” (p. 263). A study using teen students from Indonesia who were struggling with English and reading comprehension showed improvement when teachers connected reading strategies to social studies content (Setiasih, 2015). Using multiple forms of information, students were provided reading strategies that assisted in synthesizing content by providing vocabulary, background, and paraphrasing instruction. The growth in student comprehension far exceeded those students who were offered instruction that was not connected to the content (Fisher & Frey, 2015; Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, Schonewise, & Almanza, 2012; Setiasih, 2015).

The effectiveness of teaching reading within the content area is well documented. Researchers have recognized that providing reading instruction along with content represents a major transition in pedagogy for teachers at the secondary level where the curriculum broadens
beyond the simple textbook to include a variety of informational sources that require students to synthesize instruction, cognition, and learning (Barber et al., 2014). While many strategies have been proposed to provide this synthesis, scholars studying social studies instruction have found teaching reading in context is most effective when teachers connect students to an historical event by making it relevant to daily life (Cantrell et al., 2016; Goldman, 2012; E. Swanson, Reed, & Vaughn, 2016; Wexler et al., 2015). This increases student engagement, which leads to cognitive connections, providing a deeper level of understanding and a higher-level engagement between the student and the curriculum. According to Cantrell et al. (2016), proficient readers and struggling readers engage in the cognitive aspect of reading engagement when a personal and relevant connection to learning is identified. “Once a real-world connection is made, the student, regardless of their proficiency, feels more compelled to use presented reading strategies to research significant information and identify unfamiliar vocabulary words” (p. 319). This approach also leads the student to become a more autonomous learner. Furthermore, in addition to relevancy, “if the teacher is effective in repeatedly modeling reading and questioning strategies, these techniques become almost second nature to the students” (Hagaman & Casey, 2017, p. 214). As Macphee and Whitecotton (2011) have observed, with time and practice, “the student can acquire and integrate the critical analytical skills and thinking through synthesis that she or he can readily transfer to other areas of study” (p. 258). Thus, modeling the strategy in the teaching of reading literacy, while teaching content, provides the students with the ability to apply the reading instruction to different topics.

Wineburg, Martin, and Monte-Sana (2011) emphasized that this intersectional approach to reading, or this “protocol of decisions that [individuals] make when reading” - sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization – is essential to the development of students’ ability to
“think critically, guided by discipline-specific processes” (p. 27). Training teachers through such modeled protocols helps them guide students through textual evaluation and analytical processes that bring students along the learning continuum to become responsive, critical readers.

The Role of the Teacher in the Transformation of Pedagogy

As Fullan (2007) asserted, “Teachers, as the agents of change, play a crucial role in the implementation of evolving curriculum” (p. 96). In recognizing the effect of the role of teachers in this transformation, three common themes emerged from the literature review: (a) job satisfaction and its effect on pedagogy; (b) the level of teachers’ endorsement to incorporate reading strategies; and, (c) teacher self-efficacy, or one’s belief that he/she can succeed in a specific situation or task.

Attitude of the Teacher Influences Change

In creating an environment that elicits productive classroom instruction, teachers’ attitudes towards job satisfaction are vitally important (Metcalf, 2017). Teachers who feel dissatisfied with their professional roles are less likely to embrace pedagogical change (Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, & Flanders, 2013). Several factors can lead to a level of frustration that ultimately creates a feeling of job dissatisfaction and, consequently, stagnant pedagogy (Cameron & Patterson, 2015; Emo, 2015; Kaniuka, 2012; Rennie, 2016; Simsek, 2013).

As Rennie (2016) documented in a qualitative study of 14 secondary reading teachers, educators, just like students, need to feel successful to stay motivated, “Teachers who work at low performing schools are less satisfied with their job and are less likely to use innovative teaching strategies” (p. 48). Documenting factors such as staff support and student motivation, the case study found “teachers, who do not see progress in student reading comprehension, are less satisfied with their job” (Rennie, 2016, p. 52). Similarly, a case study performed by
Cameron and Patterson (2015) involved interviews with 17 staff members from seven different departments who participated in a pilot study, which introduced a new curriculum. The study concluded that teachers who teach advanced placement and honors classes were more likely to implement the new curriculum with fidelity. The teachers with lower performing students abandoned the new curriculum because they did not see the instructional gains or student engagement they hoped the new curriculum would provide (Cameron & Patterson, 2015).

Concurring with these findings, Emo (2015) studied 30 teachers in primary, secondary, and university settings. The focus of his study was teacher motivation and the use of innovative strategies. His study found “no connection between years of service” and teachers’ willingness or ability to use more current teaching strategies (p. 22). However, the participants did say that they were more likely to engage in innovative teaching with students who were engaged and motivated to learn. When students appeared uninterested in their education, teachers were not as motivated to alter their pedagogical style (Solini, Pietarinen, & Pyhalto, 2016).

In considering teachers’ attitudes, researchers documented that teachers felt that implementing reading strategies in addition to content at the high school level was only necessary for struggling readers (Alexander-Shea, 2015; Barber et al., 2014; Chan, 2015; Paris, 2012; Reid, 2015). In short, teachers perceived that teaching literacy strategies simultaneously with content in history was not necessary for proficient students (Reid, 2015). An autoethnographic study conducted by Chan (2015) found that teachers who were given an opportunity to reconstruct social studies curriculum did so without incorporating a literacy component. Although teachers knew they needed to incorporate the literacy reading element based on standards, they said that “reading instruction was only necessary for struggling students” (p. 325). In better understanding teachers’ attitudes with respect to teaching reading
within the content area, Paris (2012) found that social studies teachers tended to align curriculum to meet the needs of “white, middle-class norms” and established languages and literacy practices (p. 93). Thus, Paris (2012) determined that many teachers did not see the importance of merging literacy strategies with content because they considered the curriculum was accessible in its present form to most students in America. Barber et al. (2014) found a similar outcome in her seven-week study of thirteen middle school social studies teachers. Barber found that if reading support was implemented, it was only with ELL students.

Researchers have established that another factor influences teachers’ attitudes towards implementing changes in curriculum: self-efficacy (Cantrell et al., 2016; Metcalfe, 2017; Parker, Patton, & Sinclair, 2015). Teachers “who perceive themselves as efficacious educators face difficulties more constructively and persevere longer when they encounter obstacles in changing pedagogical styles” (Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Barbaranelli, & Farnese, 2015. p. 481). Kwok (2014) asserted, “While some teachers may embrace change and see it as an opportunity to make a difference in education, others may doubt their own effectiveness and see the change as a threat to their profession” (p. 53). A case study in Belgium (Marz & Kelchtermans, 2013), which included 20 teachers and focused on levels of confidence during curriculum reform, discovered that teachers who “had self-confidence in their practices were more likely to engage in the actual implementation of change” (p. 18). This concept also was supported by a study done with teachers in a “fast-emerging Middle Eastern countries characterized by dynamic change” (Wyatt, 2013, p. 220). The case study consisted of five English teachers, who were representative of the culture. Although there appeared to be support in the form of professional development, teachers felt overworked and lacked the time to improve their craft, which led to teachers feeling unprepared to teach the assigned curriculum. “Like all human beings, teachers can be proactive
and engaged, or passive and alienated. Teachers who lack the confidence to teach the assigned curriculum are far less likely to incorporate innovative teaching strategies or instructional changes” (Wyatt, 2013, p. 222). Knowing that the teachers must first feel self-reliant regarding their ability to provide necessary instruction relates to the importance of professional development as a key factor in transforming curriculum changes, which is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

**Effective Professional Development**

Implementing newly learned skills into the classroom is imperative in moving along in the change continuum, and helping teachers to apply those skills often results in professional development (PD). Using a highly effective PD structure to educate teachers and promote needed change can enhance the experience of the PD facilitator, the teacher, and students (Yoo, 2016). In distinguishing the practices that best serve a productive and sustainable professional development model, common themes emerged from the literature review: (a) embedded instruction; (b) offering PD at the appropriate time; (c) teacher voice in selecting PD; and, (d) ongoing support of newly learned concepts (Bayar, 2014; El-Deghaidy, Mansour, Aldahmash, & Alshamrani, 2015; Mundy, Howe, and Kupczynski, 2015; Ross, Guerrero, & Fenton, 2017).

Learning experiences that are embedded in teachers’ work practices are particularly effective (Camburn & Han, 2015; Capps, Crawford, & Conistas, 2012; Shea, Mouza, & Drewes, 2016). Using embedded training allows teachers to fluidly transition newly learned concepts into classroom instruction (MacPhee & Whitecotton, 2011). For example, Pomerantz and Pierce’s (2013) two-year study on teachers who received reading comprehension training found that modeling the strategies, while giving the teachers an opportunity to apply the teaching approach, offered more sustainability to the newly learned comprehension techniques.
According to research by Goodnough, Pelech, and Stordy (2014), primary teachers who were expected to change their style of pedagogy to implement additional STEM curriculum benefitted from PD strategies that modeled the same type of instruction. Lesson modeling, often referred to as active learning, requires teachers to participate in the same instructional environment that is being taught in the PD. Exposing teachers to similar learning opportunities engaged educators in activities that required teachers to experience the lesson increased teachers’ understanding of the concepts (Shoulders & Myers, 2014). Shoulders and Myers’ (2014) study on the effects of high school agriculture teacher PD found “active learning that mimics the instruction being taught during the PD is crucial to teachers feeling confident about adding new material to state mandated curriculum” (p. 184).

To remove teachers’ uncertainties about using new skills in the classroom, modeling instruction that compliments the teacher’s curriculum allows them to critically reflect on pedagogy, either while it happens or after the fact (Camburn & Han, 2015). According to Camburn and Han’s (2015) study, teachers who were given the opportunity to see embedded instruction in their content area during PD were more likely to continue the literacy practice in their classroom.

Camburn and Han’s (2015) study of 887 teachers in a large urban school district focused on fostering a deeper integration of new practices into teachers’ repertoires. Since a great deal of PD focuses on delivering content rather than enhancing learning (Webster-Wright, 2010), the study concentrated on teacher change by implementing embedded PD and time for reflection on implementing new strategies that assisted student learning. In presenting their study of teacher change, the researchers noted that often the PD offered does not match the teachers’ needs. Similarly, teachers are not given time to practice or reflect on what they have learned, which
leads to the abandonment of the practices shortly after the PD. Teachers need time to critically reflect on their instruction. Like adults in other fields, teachers cultivate their craft by learning through experience. Continuity of experience involves bringing something from the past into the present, which then modifies the experiences to come (Armour, Quennerstedt, Chambers, & Makopoulou, 2015). Individuals respond to perceived dilemmas by working through what troubles them and by analyzing potential solutions (Camburn & Han, 2015). This analysis phase involves reflection where one observes and evaluates his/her practices and experiments with new ways of doing things.

Another factor that leads to effective PD is the ability to use the content being taught in a timely manner. According to Chen and Mccray’s (2012) case study on PD, which researched elementary educators who were implementing a new mathematics curriculum, the timeliness of PD helped in teacher implementation. When teachers are provided PD within two weeks of the expected classroom implementation, there is a greater probability that application learned during training will actually take place. DeSantis’ (2012) study on PD which incorporated interactive whiteboards into high school curriculum, found that scheduling the PD within ten days of the teacher receiving the tool “allowed for the teachers to experiment and share their successes and failures with other teachers during organized reflection sessions” (p. 55). According to Velardi, Folta, Rickard, and Kuehn (2014), presenting the PD within ten days of expected instruction also encourages teachers to use the information learned and master the skills within their own classroom.

The role of the teacher is crucial in implementing instructional changes (Shea et al., 2016; Witworth & Chiu, 2015; Yoo, 2016). A study conducted by Plough and Garcia (2015) used a mixed method approach to research the sustainability of teacher change during school reform.
They administered questionnaires to eight middle school teachers. The questionnaires were presented both before the PD and after. In addition to the surveys, the researchers interviewed the teachers about the quality of the PD being offered during the reform.

Heeding the call for establishing PD that complimented the school wide reform and offered sustainability, the district opted to pursue a model that extended beyond the workshop format. The district selected an inquiry model. “The inquiry model of professional learning was designed based on the individual and organizational culture of the school as well as the research on the contextual constructs” (Plough & Garcia, 2015, p. 5). This model for professional learning is based on teacher reflection on the process and student outcomes, which offer teachers a sense of self-discovery in the implementation phases. The findings of the surveys suggested an upward trend in teacher PD via the inquiry model for professional learning that enabled the implementation of change (Plough & Garcia, 2015).

When considering traditional workshop formats, scholars agreed that unless collaboration is a component of PD, there is little hope of a sustainable outcome (Madden, 2015; Plough & Garcia, 2015). Lieberman & Miller (2016) contends that school reformers should encourage greater collaboration among teachers as a means of enhancing student achievement. Plough and Garcia (2015) found that once staff members were able to articulate their concerns and consider next steps in implementing strategies learned during the PD, teachers were invested in establishing and participating in instructional changes. Their findings provide evidence that collaborating and reflecting on newly acquired PD training material offers improvement to the initiation and sustainability of a reform initiate.

To continue the effectiveness of PD often requires peer collaboration. Research has determined that PD used during changes in standards and practices is most effective with
community support (Hung & Yeh, 2013; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstom, & Anderson, 2010; Olivier & Huffman, 2016; Parker et al., 2015). According to Svendsen (2016), observing teachers’ pedagogical progression as a result of PD is more likely if there is constant support by invested members of the community. He claims that providing workshops without follow-up activities or goals creates an atmosphere that encourages teachers to abandon learned concepts because there is little support. The collaboration component is essential to successful PD, which promotes reflection on what is known about the topic and what can be used in the classroom. Without the reflection component of PD, there is the strong possibility of teachers abandoning the process (Lumsden & Mitchell, 2015). PD follow up promotes positive changes within the workforce and acts as a support for long-term professional learning.

**ELL and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students and PD**

Professional development is used to keep teachers up-to-date on current trends and changes within their occupation and to provide training, which is essential during times of transition. Since the number of school age children who speak a language other than English at home continues to increase nationwide, specifically attending to the language and cultural needs of ELL students is an essential component to effective PD in diverse classroom settings (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013; O. Lee & Buxton, 2013; Li, 2013).

Hamann and Reeves (2013) highlighted American’s long history with the complexities of teaching ELLs. Within their review of literature, they noted, “ELLs are placed in so called *mainstream* classrooms, where so called *mainstream* teachers are expected to use different teaching styles.” (p. 81). Understanding that ELLs require additional needs is not new to most schools, districts, or teachers in the United States. Hamann and Reeves (2013) argued that placing ELL students in a class of English Only (EO) students and requiring additional ELL
teacher training for mainstream teachers is more productive when modeling the content is included and the skills are not taught separately. Teachers who experience PD that offers insight into cohesive teaching that includes ELLs and EOs are likely to transfer those skills to the classroom (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

Implementing these practices is challenging. Lee and Buxton (2013) also stressed the importance of including culturally responsible ELL and CLD instruction as a component of pedagogically motivated PD. “Creating fluid instruction that incorporates the needs of all students, including ELLs and CLDs, models continuity in instruction” (Lee & Buxton, 2013, p. 111). However, they noted that structurally, schools and districts may not be set up to be successful in this endeavor because most approach ELL and culturally responsible instruction training during a PD that is separate from the regular trainings, which has the propensity to create reluctance among teachers because additional workshops add an extra task to educators’ already hectic schedules (Lee & Buxton, 2013). Combining culturally relevant pedagogy and ELL trainings with regular PDs can address this dilemma, not only in terms of time constraints, but also because it leads teachers to understand that cultural mediation can happen with all instruction (De Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013).

Heafner, Handler, and Journell (2016) documented that, indeed, such an approach can be successful. They studied effective PD over a two-year period which included 50 teams of various schools, grade levels, districts, disciplines and states with the goal to offer insights regarding strategies for effective literacy instruction. Their qualitative study found that teachers responded positively to trainings that combined general PD instruction with ELL and CLD strategies. This approach led many of those involved in the study to move past reluctance and to accept ELL, CLD, and culturally responsible pedagogies with greater ease. When the ELL PD was not
incorporated as part of the overall instruction and schools created a separate PD to address the needs of ELLs and CLDs, the educators were less likely to use or promote the strategies during classroom instruction (Heafner et al., 2016).

Including culturally responsible teaching into instructional PD offers teachers real life skills that can lead to effective pedagogies with ELL students (Li, 2013). “Culturally responsible teaching incorporates students’ rich heritage into learning experiences, which can have a positive academic outcome” (Li, 2013, p. 134). Li (2013) asserted that in diverse classrooms, a PD format that models and encourages teachers to use culturally relevant material while simultaneously meeting curriculum needs is considered a best practice of pedagogy. However, Li (2013) advised, that a PD that includes such an approach to responsible teaching must not be superficial -- it must go beyond the “hallway multiculturalism” of incorporating food or holidays from different ethnicities that happens in most American schools. A deeper approach would “include curriculum that that gives meaning, security, and identity to different ethnic groups” (Li, 2013, p.138). Through this process, identifying the needs of ELL and CLD students and incorporating culturally responsible teaching practices into the embedded professional development programs offers strategies such as culturally relevant material to which students feel more connected to the curriculum that provides educators with additional lesson delivery approaches that serves all students (Li, 2013).

Echevarria et al. (2013), developed teacher-training material to promote the use of culturally responsible teaching. These resources provide reading material that includes voices and stories from different cultures that can be used to assist with implementing reading strategies. The authors asserted that PD and pedagogical approaches that balance content, reading instruction, and values from different cultures are crucial, particularly with the diverse
American classroom. “Providing students with accessible material by designing lessons that meet the critical needs of 21st Century learners, while assisting with cultural connections is essential to today’s classroom instruction” (Echeverria et al., 2013 p. 16). Balancing the needs of ELL students by promoting culturally responsible teaching is effectively introduced as part of the curriculum, rather than an afterthought of PD.

**Conclusion**

Given the complexities of social studies teachers embracing a new form of pedagogy that requires incorporating reading instruction with their content, it is no surprise that teachers have been struggling. Teaching students to read critically at the secondary level, when most teachers assume that most students do not need reading instruction or that it should be taught in English classes, identifies a need for PD that promotes teacher acceptance, implementation, and sustainability of the practice, especially in a district with a large population of ELL and low SES students like the one that is the focus of this study.

The literature indicates that for teachers to transition into incorporating literacy reading strategies within their social studies curriculum, they need to be trained to embed reading instruction within the course content and to adopt new pedagogical approaches and practices. This would provide a more efficient way to reach our students and permit us to comply with the new mandates in national and state standards. The literature revealed that, as well as identifying and training teachers in adolescent reading strategies, addressing teachers’ attitudes towards implementing literacy skills in addition to content is essential to detecting causes as to why teachers might not be open to changes in their pedagogy. Finally, the literature outlines the importance of addressing the need for specific components of PD to help teachers make the transition to incorporating literacy successful. However, in this area, the literature is the least
robust. Many studies describe the essential components of PD, but there is limited information available that specifically addresses PD to incorporate reading strategies into social studies curriculum.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The focus of this qualitative study was to explore how teachers experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy strategies into their social studies curriculum. This chapter outlines the methodology used. It begins by restating the research question, and the paradigm and methodology that frames the research design. It then explains how participants were recruited, and data collection. The chapter closes with a discussion of trustworthiness, including processes that used to ensure validity, such as member checking and bracketing of biases, and threats to internal validity. In particular, this discussion addressed the challenges that I face as an “insider” who not only has in depth of knowledge of the phenomena, but who also has been involved in teacher trainings with the participants on these issues.

Research Question

How have teachers experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy requirement into their social studies curriculum?

Paradigm and the Role of the Researcher

This research was grounded in the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm since it was my intent to focus on the “lived experiences from those who live [the phenomenon] day to day” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Under the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, all knowledge is constructed and then interpreted to understand “multiple, distinguishable, and equally valid realities” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 21). In order to understand the meaning made by the participants of their realities as they articulate them, it is important to closely evaluate the language they used in describing their experiences.

Using the knowledge of the participants to construct this study, the world of “human experiences” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36), constructivist-interpretivists will not begin with a
hypothesis. Study outcomes are accomplished through close analysis of data and “generating or inductively developing a theory or patterns of meanings” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). The researcher’s interaction with participants must be dynamic (Ponterotto, 2005) since their truth and meaning are co-created.

A case study grounded in the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm leads the researcher to “acknowledge, describe and bracket his or her values, but not eliminate them” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 131). I have the dual role of “insider-researcher” (Unluer, 2012, p. 1). I coach high school teachers to use literacy strategies. I have both led and observed PD workshops with the social studies teachers who will be my participants in this study. Using a constructivist-interpretivist design to discuss and observe social studies teachers’ experiences as they implement literacy strategies into their curriculum will allow me for a clearer understanding of methods needed to promote this pedagogical transition.

**Qualitative Research Design**

Using a qualitative method to investigate instructional change encourages “flexible, emerging structures and evaluative criteria” (Creswell, 2014b p. 16), which allowed for an interpretation of the participants’ experience (Ponterotto, 2005). According to Creswell (2013), “Qualitative researchers strive for understanding, that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants and probing to obtain detailed meanings” (p. 243). In contrast, quantitative methods focus on measurable data rather than descriptors (Creswell, 2015). Neither approach is superior to the other; they simply differ in the type of data that can be collected and the process of analysis. Using responses that do not require a comprehensive description would be a difficult approach to this study, which aims to capture the details of how social studies teachers grapple with the complexities of curriculum change. The purpose of this
study is to employ rich, thick description to understand and analyze the instructors’ lived experiences and the context within which this transformation is occurring. Furthermore, Yin (2003) asserted that answering questions regarding complicated interactions - which characterizes this research project - is too involved for methods like surveys or simplified questionnaires. Therefore, a qualitative method is the appropriate choice for this study.

**Research Tradition: Intrinsic Case Study**

The research method used for this project was an intrinsic case study. This method allowed for the interpretation of teachers’ perceptions of including reading into existing content instruction. According to Stakes (1995) “an intrinsic case studies is undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants a better understanding of the particular case” (p. 136), which creates a foundation to hear the stories of those living the situation. This allows for an understanding of real-world circumstances and permits an analysis of important contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014).

Using an intrinsic study is well suited since there have been teacher trainings, curriculum changes, and staff personalities, that are of genuine interest to the researcher. Acquiring a better understanding of the teachers’ experiences will assist in future curriculum adoptions and transitions. Knowing these changes impact local school and schools outside of our district, the six high school social studies teachers, who have taught during the CST era and are now teaching in CCSS period, will be explored. Discussions with those teachers will focus on their perceptions of what they have experienced during this state mandated transition and the meaning they make from those experiences.

This study examined both the extent to which teachers have received sufficient support to successfully implement the shift described above, and the obstacles that continue to deter their
use of reading strategies while teaching the content in the social studies curriculum. The phenomenon lends itself well to the case study approach, because, as Creswell (2013) states:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes (p. 97).

The case was explored through the following data collection techniques: in-depth interviews with teachers; observing the pedagogy employed by the teachers in their classrooms concerning literacy, if any, attending a weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting that are obliged to focus on literacy instruction; and using the documentation of past PD trainings as a secondary source of data. When combined, data from these sources will fulfill the requirement of triangulation, which “makes use of multiple sources, methods, investigations, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Triangulation, or the collection of data from multiple sources, increased the trustworthiness of a case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using different sources to collect data validated themes and conclusions that could otherwise be misinterpreted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach allowed an acquisition of data from multiple sources to conduct an in-depth, sophisticated, and empirical inquiry that elicits “richly descriptive” material (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). This study was also bounded (Yin, 2014). Selecting a time, a place, and a group provides clear limits to a bounded case study and “ensures the study is reasonable in scope” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). I focused on six social studies teachers who teach at the same high school in Central California. These instructors teach the same subject and have participated in three PD opportunities together.
They have all have me as their instructional coach in the area of literacy and they attend the same PLC, which is devoted to the objective of including literacy in their teaching strategies. All instructors are required to teach the same content and use the same reading strategies. Thus, the case is a bounded system because the researcher has determined “the scope of data collected and, in particular, [has distinguished] data from the case study to data external to the case study” (Yin, 2014, p. 34).

This is a single case study. Yin (2005) maintains that a “single case study is analogous with a single experiment” (p. 51). Although implementing reading strategies to complement curriculum has been mandated in many states over the past decade, comparative or multiple case studies are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Thus, I have determined that the single case study approach is most appropriate for this project because I am focusing on a single school and one social studies department experiencing this particular transition.

Complementing the structure of this design, Yin (2014) discusses the holistic versus embedded single case study unit of analysis. A holistic unit of analysis represents a single item of information; an embedded unit pursues multiple resources, “offering units and sub-units of data” (Yin, 2014, p. 55). Selecting the embedded unit of analysis “can often add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing insights to the single case” (Yin, 2015, p. 56). Using the embedded approach offers flexibility in understanding the complexities associated with the transition that is the focus of this study.

**Site and Participants**

The site chosen for this study is located in Central California, which is known for its conservative views and fertile farm ground. Central California produces the highest cash receipts of farming products in America. Because of our rich agricultural background, Central
California has always faced a growing disparity between the mega-rich farmers and the very poor field workers. The middle class primarily seeks employment within education, medical professions, and the prison systems. These jobs offer opportunities to many, but our unemployment rate still holds steady at 11.5% (the national average is 4.9%, National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017, p. 1).

Disheartening unemployment has caused many problems within the school district that is the focus of this study. As of 2016, 88% of district students qualified for free and reduced lunches (NCES, 2016). Each year, gang activity and dropout rates escalate, and the average reading level within the high school district is fifth grade. In 2016, the student population was 78% Hispanic, 11% African-American, 7% non-Hispanic, 4% White (NCES, 2016).

The student demographics in the district, however, are not comparable to the teaching staff. The high school that is the site of this study has 78 full-time teachers, and 44 of those teachers are white and graduates of the same high school selected for this study. Only 7% of the teachers on staff are of Hispanic descent, and there are no African American teachers.

Staying within the selected school, this study examined the experiences of six social studies teachers from grades 10 to 12 who possess a California single-subject teaching credential and who belong to the same professional learning community (PLC). According to Polkinghorne (1989), participants should vary in demographics, age, and experience. Because the selection is limited, a convenience sampling method was used (Creswell, 2012), selecting from the entire department of nine social studies teachers.

Using multiple measures to identify if the participants are using literacy practices, and then asking about the barriers to successful implementation was the focus of this study. Therefore, during actual social studies classes, I observed one weekly social studies PLC
meeting and note the collaboration among colleagues around this topic. Since it is a district mandate to address literacy during each PLC meeting, recording the exchanges between coworkers that address literacy strategies enhanced this study. In keeping with multiple measures, I interviewed each participant using open-ended questions (See Appendix E), which provided further information. In addition to collecting data from observation and interviews, I used the documents, power points, and feedback forms from their PD training to gain additional insight into barriers, if any.

**Recruitment Strategy**

Upon acceptance of my dissertation proposal, Northeastern University’s Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was required. The IRB chairperson acts as a contact point and that ensures this study is operating ethically and that it safeguards participants. To ensure the study is held to the highest standard, participants was not contacted and data was not collected until IRB approval was granted.

To be IRB compliant, I first requested written permission to conduct the study from the district’s superintendent and the building principal (See Appendix A and B). The letter explained the study in detail. Upon gaining IRB approval for the study, a letter was sent to the field site’s social study teachers via district email (See Appendix C). The email thoroughly explained the study and requested social studies teachers’ participation, while ensuring anonymity. In this email, I asked that all responses for participation be sent to my Northeastern University student email address within two weeks. Once six participants were selected, an email was delivered confirming a time for interviews and classroom observations.

**Confidentiality**
I will protect the participants’ identities. Pseudonyms will be created for participants and all recordings and transcripts will be labeled accordingly so that any identifying information presented will be altered to protect anonymity. These pseudonyms will be used within all notes and recording labels to maintain a high level of confidentiality.

**Informed Consent**

When meeting at the designated area, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form including the following (See Appendix D):

- Name and purpose of the research project
- Information about investigator
- Acknowledgment of voluntary participation within right to withdraw at any time with all personal contributions destroyed.
- Procedures
- Safeguards regarding confidentiality; de-identification of all identities through coding.
- Guarantee of no cost to the participant
- Notice that participants’ questions will be answered by the researcher throughout the process and that participants also have the option to address any issues to Northeastern University’s IRB.

Prior approval by IRB will ensure all ethical standards will be strictly enforced regarding compensation.

**Data Collection Process**

The purpose of this study was to collect data that identified social studies teachers’ experience as they implemented mandated reading strategies that complement curriculum. Therefore, multiple forms of data was collected, including classroom observations, interviews,
examples from the reading strategies PD, and one PLC observation.

The form of the research questions required chronicling the meaning for participants “subjective understanding” of an experience (Schutz, 1967, as cited in Seidman, 2006, p. 11). These questions required data collection through interviewing in an open-ended or semi-structured format (Creswell, 2009). An interview protocol (See Appendix E: Interview Protocol) was utilized. Therefore, the protocol contained questions that served as a reminder and guide during the interviews (Yin, 2004). Through this study, I examined participants perceptions and experiences “to identify and interpret the relevant meaning that are used to make sense” of the transitions (Reid et al., 2015, p. 22).

Since this case study is focused on the transformational learning of social studies teachers, the questions elicited teachers’ understanding of the PD programs and the support provided by PLCs, including educational experiences and their knowledge about the implementation of literacy standards.

**Interviews**

Each social studies teacher was interviewed separately for approximately one hour. The participants were provided a choice of off-site locations for the interview, or they could choose the research site. Interviews were recorded with a digital phone recorder as back up. The audio files were uploaded to the software program MAXDQA12 for transcription and coding.

**Document Review**

The review of secondary source documents included files used in the PD on literacy training to gain “insight relevant to the research question” (Merriam & Tissdell, 2016, p.181) and to triangulate data. The document analysis assisted in validating and analyzing the types
of support systems social studies teachers’ have been offered during this transition.

**Observations**

**PLC Meeting**

The research site provided teachers one hour every Friday to meet with their content area PLC team. During these meetings, PLC teams discuss teaching strategies and changes in curriculum. As a researcher, I will attend one PLC that focuses on reading strategies. I assumed the role of a participant observer. “A participant observer is an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe” (Creswell, p. 214, 2014). Using an audio recorder to collect information on the PLC interactions provided additional data for this study.

**Managing and Verifying Data**

Managing and storing interview data is imperative to maintaining the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2013). Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder and transferred to a home computer. That data is password protected. Likewise, copies of informed consent forms and paper notes were kept in a secure locked file in my home office. Only I have access to the data. Each participant had the opportunity to verify the data they provided by having two weeks to review a copy of their interview transcript.

**Data Analysis**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “all the information about the case study should be brought together - interview logs or transcripts, field notes, and reflective memos” (p. 233). The inductive analysis process for this qualitative research project followed the Descriptive Coding, or Topic Coding, methods described by Saldaña (2009). This method of coding “summarizes in a word or short phrase- most often a noun- the basic topic of a passage of
qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 88). I first applied round codes throughout transcriptions, observations, and artifacts. After the first-round coding process was complete, I then looked for similarities among the many first-round codes. The first-round codes were grouped into categories that fit under the main research question and also portrayed the application of the transformational learning framework. The entire coding process was done using manual coding, where I used “paper and pencil on hard copies of the data entered and formatted with basic word processing software only” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 25). The manual coding process was used over the use of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) due to the small sample size.

Clarifying Researcher Bias

My background as a teacher and literacy coach has been explicitly established from the onset of this study. Knowing that I come with my own biases about using reading strategies in addition to content, I used every precaution to bracket them. In addition, I kept a journal of my own thoughts regarding the research and used these records to ensure that my position stays clear during the process.

Trustworthiness

According to Merriam and Tisdale (2016), it is critical to maintain validity, reliability and credibility in research. Within this study, I ensured fidelity and upheld integrity of the project and its findings by clarifying my research biases. This study provided a rich description of the setting and of the participants, accompanied by interview quotes that acted as evidence to explain my findings and outline the analytical coding process. In addition, dependability was attained through an external inquiry audit by the advisor or principal investigator responsible for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an advisor, this individual exercised her expertise by
carefully reviewing data collection and analysis throughout the process and by providing consistent feedback.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

This study was conducted at one location. Since human subjects were involved in this study, approval from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) was obtained prior to the start of the study. In order to gain IRB approval, I submitted a completed IRB application form that included details on the consent process, study procedures, associated risks, and confidentiality for all participants. To avoid any dilemmas when working with human subjects, I demonstrated respect for each individual involved. Additionally, I have completed the web-based “Protecting Human Research Participants” training video and included the certificate of course completion in Northeastern University’s IRB application (See Appendix B).

All procedures and processes for obtaining consent were adhered to the guidelines of the IRB. A copy of the approval application and all consent forms are provided in Appendices A and B. Prior to being asked to sign the consent forms, all participants were told of the purpose of the research, the research plan, and the risks and benefits of the study. The Superintendent of the district and the principal of the school were presented with a consent form (See Appendix C) to acknowledge the study and grant permission for to use teachers from the school in the study.

All data was reported in an anonymous manner. The confidentiality of each participant was preserved throughout the entire study and any identifying elements were eliminated. The teachers in the study were given the opportunity to review the draft report for accuracy and to confirm confidentiality.

**Conclusion**
This study explored barriers to transformational learning and the successful implementation of reading strategies by high school social studies teachers under the CCCS. A qualitative research design is most appropriate to analyze this phenomenon because it facilitates the examination of the teachers’ perspectives regarding this transition by encouraging open discussion of obstacles in implementing reading strategies with fidelity. The case study approach, meanwhile, permitted collecting data from multiple sources to provide rich, thick description and reliability. Material collected was categorized into emergent themes for analytical rigor.
Chapter 4: Findings

Research has shown that as students’ progress from primary to secondary school, reading instruction is important for them to understand increasingly complex written material, particularly in text-heavy subjects such as social studies. However, scholarly studies examining the experiences of secondary social studies teachers who are adapting to standards requiring them to integrate reading into the teaching of regular curriculum content are lacking. The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to reveal the experiences of social studies teachers who, because of the implementation of the 2009 California Common State Standards, are required to teach reading in addition to the social studies content. Given that the school district chosen as the site for this study was is situated in a rural area of California, the researcher also considered additional stressors teachers undergo due a lack of financial and personnel resources within the community. In this context, the research question guiding this study was: How have teachers working in a Title 1 school experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy requirement into their social studies curriculum? To answer this query, the researcher triangulated the collection of data, begging with interviews with six high school social studies teachers immersed in the curricular change. In addition, the researcher examined artifacts in the form of training materials and other written documents from professional development opportunities and observed and analyzed in depth one social studies teachers’ Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting.

Physical Artifact Data

Table 1 lists and describes the demographic characteristics of the six social studies teachers who were interviewed for the study. At the time the study was conducted, all participants had taught the subject for over two years and were fully credentialed to teach social
studies in the state of California. To maintain confidentiality, participants were given a pseudonym.

*Table 1*

*Summary of Demographics and Characteristics of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>High school of study is his/her alma mater</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA Masters</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fritz</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanny</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**George.** George is in his mid-forties and has been teaching for over twenty years. His entire teaching career has been in the same district, where he teaches five sophomore world history classes. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in history and a California Teaching Credential. George is very active on campus. He is the girls’ golf coach in the fall and the boys’ cross country coach in the spring. He did not graduate from the high school that is the site of the study.

**Henry.** Henry is in his mid-forties and has been teaching close to twenty years. His teaching career started at a school within the same school district. He transferred to the school that is the focus of this study eight years ago, where he teaches two junior-level U.S. history
classes and three AP courses. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in history, a Master’s degree in secondary education, and a California Teaching Credential. Henry is the department head for the social studies division, and he teaches credentialing classes at a local private college. He is not involved in any extracurricular school activities, but he did graduate from the high school in the study.

**Kenny.** Kenny is in his mid-forties and has been teaching for over twenty years. He started at the school 2005 when he married a teacher who was also teaching on the same campus. Kenny has two children who currently attend the school. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in history, and a California Teaching Credential. Kenny is the Associate Student Body (ASB) Advisor. He teaches four periods of U.S. history and two periods of ASB, Student Body Government, and he graduated from the high school in this study.

**Harley.** Harley is in his mid-forties and has been teaching for almost 20 years. He graduated from and has only taught at the school of study. Harley earned a Bachelor’s Degree in history, and a California Teaching Credential. Harley is very active with extracurricular school activities. He is the girls’ soccer coach and the boys’ dive coach. Harley has four children attending the school that is the focus of the study.

**Fritz.** Fritz is in his early thirties and has been teaching for four years. His entire teaching career has been at the high school of study. Fritz earned a Bachelor’s Degree in history, and a California Teaching Credential. He graduated from the school serving as the site for this study.

**Fanny.** Fanny is in her early-forties and has been teaching for sixteen years. She graduated from and her entire teaching career has been at the high school in this study. Fanny
earned a Bachelor’s Degree in history, and a California Teaching Credential. She is currently working towards a Masters in secondary education.

The researcher determined the key factors shaping the teachers’ experiences as they enacted the curricular transition by analyzing themes from the interview data. Each person was interviewed once within a 60-minute time frame, and an additional interview was scheduled to probe follow up questions. Participants were asked a total of 20 questions (appendix D). The questions were developed to align with the research question and the transformational learning theories of Jack Mezirow, which served as the theoretical framework for this study. The first interview captured background information and explored the participants’ instructional practices with teaching reading within the social studies curriculum. A follow up interview served the purpose of delving more deeply into the participants’ experiences with teaching reading.

Several steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. First, the researcher used member checking, which allows the participants to review the transcripts of their responses to correct or amend the documents for accuracy. Second, the researcher invited all social studies teachers from the school to participate in the study. Only six social studies teachers responded to the email. Thus, all six participants were available for the study.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section offers an overview of the community. The second section reviews artifacts that are important to teacher trainings offered by the district during this transition. The third section examines the Professional Learning Community (PLC) that was put in place to offer assistance to teachers during the CCSS transition. The fourth section uses interview data in the form of narratives to present the participants experiences with implementing reading strategies within the social
studies curriculum. The final section summarizes the findings resulting from the themes of the study and provides a conclusion to this chapter.

The Community and the School District

The school district where the research was conducted is located in Central California, which is known for its unwavering conservative political views and fertile farm land. Central California produces the highest cash receipts of farming products in America. Because of its rich agricultural background and historical demographic dynamics, Central California has always faced a growing disparity between the mega-rich farmers and the very poor field workers, which creates an interesting middle class. Many people who identify with the middle class seek employment within education, the medical and health sectors, and the prison systems. These jobs offer opportunities to many, but the unemployment rate in the region holds steady at 11.5%, compared to a national average of 4.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

Disheartening levels of unemployment have caused many problems within the community. Currently, according to the 2015 United States Census, over 28% of Tulare County citizens live below the poverty level. However, that percentage would increase dramatically if undocumented families were considered. The high poverty rate has led to a large number of citizens who attempt to raise families and find work, possessing little to no education, which exacerbates the problems the community faces. The area has the highest teen pregnancy rate in California, which often limits young parents’ access to education. Only 40% of teen mothers and fathers graduate from high school; a mere 2% of teen mothers graduate from college (NCLS, 2013).

The number of students living in poverty increases annually, and as of 2016, 88% of the district’s students qualified for free and reduced lunches. Each year, gang activity and dropout
rates rise alongside poverty levels, and the average reading level within the high school district is fifth grade. At the time this study was conducted, the student population consisted of 73% Hispanic, 15% African-American, 7% non-Hispanic (Ed Facts, 2016).

The student demographics do not reflect the teachers’ demographics, which causes some concern. The school has 78 full-time teachers, and 44 of those teachers, when this study was conducted, were white and had graduated from the high school. Only 7% of the teachers on staff were of Hispanic decent, and there were no African American teachers.

**Physical Artifact Data**

Documentation of professional development opportunities, which were pertinent to the CCSS mandate to incorporate literacy into the content curriculum, as well as an observation of a PLC meeting were included as part of the data collection to provide a broader perspective of the support offered by the district. The district offered three separate reading workshops for social studies teachers as part of the process of preparing for the curricular transition.

A notable social studies teacher and vendor, who developed social studies text-sets, offered the first workshop off campus at the beginning of fall semester, 2015. Social studies text-sets are a combination of non-fiction documents that focus on an event in history; using text-sets allow teachers to introduce and explore different perspectives of historical events. In addition to text-sets, the facilitator explained and modeled annotation, since most of the texts are written at a tenth-twelfth grade reading level. The workshop facilitators provided evidence that showed when students read a book at an instructional level, annotation ensures the reader is actively involved in the text. Thus, annotation improves the user's concentration and assists with checking for understanding.

The second workshop was offered on campus Spring 2016. Because of the adoption of
literacy standards, the English and department and myself facilitated a two-hour workshop that included strategies for teaching reading. The English teachers explained procedures and modeled reading skills building activities for the social studies' PLC group.

The third training, a component of the second, consisted of an informal meeting with social studies teachers in their classroom. After attending the social studies’ PLC meeting, an appropriate date and time was established to visit each class. The English Language Development Consultant and I, literacy coach, visited classrooms and modeled reading strategies.

Each workshop/training supported the literacy standards. Still, through formal observations and classroom visits, little evidence was collected that the social studies teachers were using reading strategies within their curriculum. Noting the inactivity towards implementing reading strategies, the exploration of this phenomenon through this study was considered.

**Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

After the adoption of CCSS, the district mandated the use of literacy strategies across the curriculum. In this context, weekly PLC meetings were scheduled as a support system for each department across the campus. Before creating the PLC meetings, each department head and administrator attended a PLC training, which outlined the elements of a PLC: creating department norms, creating goals, collecting and sharing data, and implementing best practices. During the trainings, it was very clear that PLC time was not an opportunity to address anything other than student literacy. The PLC groups were constructed of teachers within each content area. The PLCs met every Friday to ensure teachers had a support system to discuss implementation of literacy standards, among other pedagogical issues.
For this study, the researcher attended one Friday morning meeting. The meeting took place in the department head’s classroom. All attendees of the meeting knew about my scheduled visit. I was not put on the agenda, simply because I was there to observe. The meeting start time was 8 a.m., and attendees arrived between 8:10 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. Out of the twelve teachers who were scheduled to attend, only eight were present. I noted that four sat together on the opposite side of the room, while four others sat close to the facilitator, the department head. The meeting’s discussion focused on the use of Google Classroom and the fact that the district was mandating the use of this management system to increase accessibility to parents. The department head presented a PowerPoint on creating a Google classroom, which included adding students and creating an assignment. The department head also mentioned briefly that too many copies were being made at the clerical pool and that classroom printers were not to be used as copy machines. The meeting ended promptly at 9:00 a.m. I did not note any camaraderie among the teachers, or any mention of reading, writing, speaking or listening strategies.

**Interview Data Analysis**

Each participant was individually interviewed with follow up interviews as needed. Each individual transcription was coded to provide a profile of meaning. Passages were collected into a narrative. The narratives of each individual were then blended with other participants to create a cross-matrix analysis. Results describe the teachers experience to using reading strategies within the social studies curriculum.

**Interview Narratives**

**George** and I met in his classroom during his prep period. He was very willing to discuss implementing reading strategies and felt very passionate about structuring each assignment to
“teach foundational skills, which are very important to our student demographics.” Although George was never formally trained in teaching reading, he explained that his first assignment at this school was “split between social studies and English.” He taught two freshman English classes and three world history classes for three years. This experience helped him integrate reading instruction into his social studies curriculum and showed him the value of connecting students to reading. He felt teaching reading and writing to different levels of learning groups (migrant, ELs, and Special Ed.) made him a more informed teacher. He attended SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction for English) and specialized teaching reading and writing to secondary students workshops.

He felt “fully supported” during this transition, “I feel those in charge went above and beyond to support and assisted us in making sure we teach reading with our social studies content.” But, I saw some tension when he mentioned the district’s efforts to support him. He felt the staff developments where the districts brought in professionals within the educational industry were helpful. However, George explained that often the support is “a good bad sandwich.” He valued the professional developments and the products they brought, but he also sensed it was another opportunity for the district to make sure we are doing our jobs.

I was surprised by this response because George is a mainstay on our campus and always appears grateful for support. He continued to identify how the district made him feel he was being “policed.” He began with the issue of time and how it affected quality enactment of teaching reading. “Even though our district has supplied all of these safe-guards for training, it seems like they don’t give us any time to adjust our curriculum outside of the classroom. We are really asked to build the ship while it’s in the water.” He explained that teachers had been given multiple opportunities to learn about reading instruction, but there had not been any release time
to plan or prep their lessons to reflect reading instruction. He felt the professional developments are often a time of bringing teachers together to “ensure teachers know how important reading is to our students.”

George explained how he experienced the professional developments offered by the district, and he became frustrated. He looked up and said, “I think we learn too many.” As George referenced the workshops, he explained that the trainer had provided reading strategies that could not be used in social studies because the strategies were too in-depth: “For example, social studies teachers would never attempt to use the Power Thinking strategy. It was way too complicated and social studies teachers have too much content to cover. We need easy stuff.”

As he referenced a specific strategy, he mentioned other strategies that he felt did not make the best use of student class time.

In addition to professional development trainings, we discussed how he felt the reading strategies were not really the problem with promoting literacy within his classroom. “A lot of the material that was taught during the training is common sense stuff,” he said. Then, he spoke in length about the overall difficulty of teaching reading in high school:

If you look at our kids reading scores, it’s obvious that many of them don’t know how to read. I question if high school teachers arrived too late for intervention. Our kids just don’t have foundational skills. And if the kid knows how to read well, they don’t want to work with the kids who struggle.

This became apparent to George during his tenure of teaching. He noted that many high performing students complained about being partnered with “someone who doesn’t know how to read.” The students who did well, according to George, “felt like they had to teach the struggling reader the content of the article.” George explained that he did not like to put students in that
situation. He perceived it as unfair to both the struggling reader and the successful student. So, George said he “spends a lot of time reading out loud.” He provided an example of his experience and referenced, “The district supplied these DBQs (DBQs are collections of several articles, cartoons, graphs, etc. that are combined to give students a better understanding of a period in history. Students use these documents to learn about the event and write a response paper to a prompt), but the documents our district purchased, which I am sure cost a lot of money, were too advanced for our kids. So, I read it to them.” He felt defeated when he is expected to supply students with material, reading, diagrams, and cartoon that are not within the students’ instructional range of reading. He addressed the problems within our community and blamed most of the low reading scores on poverty and lack of support at home. “Most of our kids have no clue how to read between the lines. If the student isn’t a second language learner, than the student comes from a family where there’s no discussion about history or politics. The poor kids don’t have a foundation to make sense of our nation’s past.”

George continued to discuss his frustration with the state and the district’s assumption that all students should learn the same curriculum and pass the same test. He strongly felt that this style of top down instruction is not considering the needs of the student or the teacher. It became obvious that George had given his perceived problem a lot of thought. He felt most of the district’s energy and recourses spent on teaching teachers to use literacy strategies should be used to help teachers organize their classes so that students are more willing to take risks. He addressed the problem by acknowledging research proven strategies are important to good instruction, “but frankly kids are afraid to look stupid. I don’t know how to address that other than try to build relationships with kids so they feel safe to make mistakes.”
With all of his passion aimed at being an accessible educator, I asked George how he had personally experienced the transition from CSS to CCSS. He responded by reminding me, “Good teaching means the kids understand what you’re trying to teach them. If they have to break it down a bit further for some, than that’s why you get paid the big bucks.” The CCSS mandate was “another way for politicians to make it look like teachers are not doing their jobs.” George did not feel CCSS has changed the classroom. “We are all trying our best to reach these kids who come to us with very little background and language skills.” He was more concerned with showing them how to voice their concerns and creating a better quality of life. “That might be teaching kids how to read. But I feel a lot of pressure because these are high school students and I am running out of time to teach them stuff that might help them in the future.”

Appreciating George’s passion, he changed topics to discuss his concerns during PLC meetings. “Most of our PLC time is dedicated to stuff that could be addressed on a Google doc or email. The district didn’t give guidelines to our PLC meetings. I think it would benefit our district to be more structured.”

**Henry’s** long career as a high school social studies teacher makes him the perfect resource for learning about teachers’ experiences, because he has faced many changes during his tenure as social studies teacher. We met outside of school at a local coffee shop. Henry said he has made it a point to leave campus “once the bell rings” refusing to stay for after-school meetings or participate in athletics because he has “put in my time.” He mentioned that his last eight years at his current job had been difficult because “administration wants a little more out of teachers every year, and I can’t give anymore.”

As we talked, he shared his teaching schedule, which includes three senior AP courses and two junior level US history classes. He also serves as the social studies department head.
When I asked him to tell me if he has any formal reading training, he paused and explained that he teaches AP courses. “There’s not a great demand for reading instruction at the AP level. There’s more of a need at the lower levels, and my credentialing program was so long ago, I don’t remember if I had formal reading training before I began teaching.” Knowing that he teaches at a credentialing college, I asked him if he covers reading strategies in his teacher prep classes. I learned that he teaches a class on project based learning, where teachers connect students to real world companies, small businesses, or non-profits to encourage real-world learning.

He immediately lit up and offered more insight on his teaching philosophy: “The old way of teaching students to learn by using a text book, if it’s on an e-book or hardbound, is over. If students are honestly interested in something, they can Google it.” Loving the direction of our interview, I asked him how that philosophy works in his classes.

Easy, I give my kids a lot of choice. I give them a time period, and they pick something they want to learn about and they go from there. It’s rare that kids ask me for help. I just lay out assignments with their projects. There are always reading and writing that accompanies the assignment, but students aren’t always on the same assignments. So there’s rarely full class lecture or handouts. It’s kind of hard for grading purposes, but it works in my classes because I have kids who want to learn.

As the interview continued, I learned more about his projects. And, I asked him if he uses the same “voice and choice” style of teaching in his junior classes. Since he only teaches two junior level US history classes, he attempted project-based learning in those classes. But he discovered that some students were not motivated to complete assignments, so he had a very low pass rate. He had to go back to a more traditional style of
teaching, which he “despises” because it’s “painful for everyone—teachers and students.” He blames CCSS for keeping the traditional style of teaching that “does not help today’s student.” He further explained that even though the district had been very supportive by offering reading workshops and curriculum to help our struggling kids, he was “unsure that PD is the answer to the bigger problem.” As Henry acknowledged his frustrations about the reading workshops, I noted that he was irritated. He liked that the district wanted teachers be compliant with CCSS. However, he also felt that some of the strategies were a waste of time. “Teachers learned how to have kids do the exact same thing that we all did in college: annotate the text, read and re-read, find connections to other texts, and summarize.” He further explained that most teachers use those reading strategies already. However, the district seems to want to remind teachers “producing good students means being a better teacher.” I noticed his sarcasm and asked him to clarify. Then, I learned he felt the professional developments offered by the district were another source of frustration. “I appreciate the help and the fact that our district attempts to support teachers, but when does the district recognize that we are professionals. People trust us with their kids.” As our conversation continued, Henry apologized for being so agitated. He felt the district wants more instruction from the teacher, but he is not sure where the “more is going to end.” Henry’s annoyance tied back to his experience of feeling he needed to set boundaries with his district, where he “makes himself leave work on time and attempts to keep a piece of himself.”

He praised the district’s attempt at bringing formal reading strategies, but offered additional insight. He explained that the strategies taught were not a good fit for his students. He wanted the district to recognize that our school has reluctant learners. Low motivation is pervasive in our district, and the “accessibility of technology has brought our students to another
level of being uninterested.” Students struggle. Then, students are asked to learn about something they are not interested in learning. “It doesn’t matter if we combine it with a reading strategy, and they still don’t see how it will serve them in the future.” So, students disengage. He felt the district does not understand the foundation that drives the problem of low reading levels.

I asked Henry how he felt about the apparent indifference shown by his students: “Our students are not worried about past American wars. They are more worried about how they are going to live or how they are going to get a job to help their mom with rent. But, it breaks my heart when smart kids just check out of school.”

Henry continued to talk about the adoption of CCSS and the mandated literacy component. He felt it was a step in the right direction because students are graduating from high school with low reading and writing levels. But, he included, coupling reading strategies with information that students are disinterested in only compounds the problem.

Then, Henry spoke briefly about his experience with students’ reactions to reading strategies:

It makes students feel dumb. High school students do not feel comfortable enough to show they are struggling through a text; they shut down and start playing with their phone. Using reading strategies that were supplied by our district could support in student learning, but I don’t believe it makes that great of gains. I would rather read the text or lecture on it. That gives them some sense of history.

It was obvious that Henry felt very responsible for his students’ learning. So, I asked him to summarize how he had personally experienced the transition from CST to CCSS. He responded: It’s pretty darn easy to summarize. Speaking for others, and myself I am frustrated as hell. Policy makers do not ask teachers for their opinions. Hello, we happen to spend a
lot of time with kids. Do you think we might know a little more than the figureheads?

But things are not going to change in education—oh, excuse me, they will change. They will change again and again, but policy makers will not seek advice from teachers. They will just make sure they are placating the public and continue creating mandates.

When asked about PLC time, Henry seemed annoyed. “We use our PLC time to discuss anything but literacy. I know that falls on me because I am the department head, but I am just speaking the truth. We really don’t address student issues.” We discussed the PLC training that all administration and department heads had attended before the PLC meetings were put into action. He recognized that it was his role to facilitate the PLC meetings more as a team. But he tied it back to teaching. “I feel like our PLCs are a lot like project based learning. If the students are uninterested in learning something new, it doesn’t matter how I package it. It doesn’t work with this group of teachers.” He mentioned that he was excited about the possibilities of meeting with his team of social studies teachers on a weekly basis. He also liked the protocol of a PLC meeting: setting norms, discussing best practices, reviewing data. “But once I brought it to our department, everyone shut down. They all hate CCSS, and no one wanted to be a part of stroking the beast.” He and his peers have never discussed CCSS during PLC meetings because “it is another area of frustration.”

**Kenny** is a veteran teacher and very involved in student activities. We met in his classroom during his two-hour prep. His classroom is filled with historical artifacts from every decade. There are stacks of biographies and non-fiction war stories in all four corners. And the room centers on a poster of John Wayne. It’s a messy/ dynamic room. When we started the interview session, he expressed his excitement because “reading is the key to social studies.” He explained to me that one can’t just read history, “you’ve got to process it.” Using text, realia,
and documents to “convey the suffering and the celebrating during our past requires students to marinate in the experience.” Using the cover of the New York Times to express the pain of 911 is just one of his many laminated treasures.

When I asked Kenny to tell me about his formal reading training, he immediately mentioned Madeline Hunter, who is known for her formulaic approach to teaching reading. He learned about Hunter’s approach to reading over 35 years ago while attending Oregon State. Specifically, he attributes Hunter’s approach to providing students with years of loving history:

There are so many approaches to reading. And there’s so much depth to reading analytically, if we don’t break it down for kids, they won’t be able to access the hearty information some of these articles and books are providing. I know that Hunter’s approach is more data driven, but I like that. I can see if the kid understands it or not.

He is fascinated with the whole language approach to reading: “damn the punctuation and spelling—let’s just read it and see where it takes us.” With the understanding that Kenny is passionate about his books and history, he led me on a discussion about reading instruction. He recognized that his students have a difficult time reading, so he used articles that have been written at different levels. Each student gets an article on the same topic but within his/her own reading level. I know it’s not a popular way to teach because it’s not CCSS, but I have been using this strategy for years and kids get the gist of an article this way.” He further explained that giving kids an opportunity to access reading material on their own allows for students to interpret the past. “If we just explain it to them, it’s our interpretation.”

Then, Kenny explained that some of his colleagues take a different approach to teaching, and he felt the district gives plenty of PD for those teachers who don’t feel as confident. The district has offered multiple trainings and we now have our PLCs to discuss new and innovative
efforts to bring about literacy. However, he felt the district brought in all these trainings to “make sure we understand the importance of reading with our kids.” There was a clear a sense of regulating with the district’s PDs.” George spoke in earnest as he shook his head and further explained the problem of monitoring good teachers. “Sometimes the district should recognize that we are all here because we are passionate about our subject. I realize they want to offer trainings, but I know it is the ‘politically correct’ way of making sure we are all being compliant.”

He explained, “CCSS has been the least planned educational change.” And, he refused to blame our district for the holes in implementing a huge educational makeover. However, he tied his own style of teaching into the state mandated changes, “I have always made sure my students can read the articles I give them. If it’s too difficult, I’ll give the student an article at a lower reading level. The district knows this because I am evaluated as a teacher.” He wanted the district to acknowledge that most teachers are already implementing reading strategies. Professional developments “are usually an item they can check off their list to show they have done this to support state mandates”

Kenny explained he planned on using some strategies that were introduced during the PD.

I thought about using that one… Questioning the Author. I liked that one because it makes kids critically think about biases. But to tell you the truth, once I start my day, it is difficult to get new things folded into the old way of doing things.

His honestly was refreshing. He explained that he did not plan lessons. He used a timeline of material to ensure students get the instruction they need.
Nonetheless, his approach to literacy had greatly impacted his teaching and experience with the transition to common core. As a veteran teacher, he said, “I already felt armed with best practices in teaching reading.” However, he admitted that implementing changes like CCSS “comes with the territory. Lawmakers are always trying to implement changes: No Child Left Behind, standards based, now common core.” In the contexts of such changes, Kenny said he trusts himself as an educator and enjoys being in the classroom:

But lawmakers are getting it wrong. They need to bring teachers into making decisions that affect classroom instruction. The pendulum continues to sweep in education. At some point we need to focus on getting the majority of our students interested in becoming educated. I am not happy to hand a seventeen-year-old kid an article written at a fourth grade level, but they [students] just sit there if they don’t understand it.

Noting Kenny’s frustration, he changed the subject to address the department PLC meetings. He discussed his frustrations during the weekly PLC meetings and indicated, “Someone is always worried about an issue that doesn’t involve literacy.” He felt the department used PLC time to discuss room layout, student phone usage, and tardies, which left little time to work on instruction together.

Kenny further explained that his department has strong personalities and often does not work well together. The majority of social studies teachers, he noted, have been on staff for over a decade. He felt, for example, “at some point someone probably offended one another and they can’t let it go.” Very few people are willing to collaborate “Our department is the only team on campus that does not have common assessments.” Each department, on this campus, is given the freedom to select or create units to teach particular concepts. But at the end of six weeks, all students who take that specific subject must pass the same test. The teachers from that content
area agree on the standards that are being addressed and write a six-week benchmark for all students. Common assessments often assist with comparing data and opens discussion for best practices (Fletcher, 2015). It concerned Kenny that social studies does not have those assessments in place and his social studies team refuses to create them.

Harley and I met for the interview at a local sandwich shop. Notably, Harley is congenitally missing the lower part of his left arm (from the elbow down). During our interview, he referred to his missing limb as a source of strength. In high school and college, he was a superb athlete who won his high school division boys’ diving championship and played soccer in college. Knowing this about Harley made it easier to understand his can-do philosophy in life. He is a well-liked teacher who teaches five periods of sophomore world history. Harley said he considered reading instruction a “vital” component of social studies, and he takes pride in being an extremely honest and open person. He has a lot going on in his life, including four gorgeous, athletic daughters who attend the high school where he teaches.

He has had no formal reading training, but he felt the district provided ample opportunity to practice literacy instruction through workshops. He explained the most effective workshops dealt “with one content.” He explained: “When I attend a reading training and there are science teachers and art teachers, it’s not effective. I just tune it out because I feel like it doesn’t apply to me.” Harley explained:

Reading instruction looks very different for each content area. Science is more concerned with its extensive vocabulary and teaching kids how to extract the evidence. That’s not social studies. We have to teach about something that happened in history and hope the kids think about the impact on society. It’s not black and white.
He expressed appreciation for district trainings because it supplied him with additional strategies that incorporated reading in history, but he passionately advocated for the district to keep “each training separate for each department.” As he explained his frustration with attending meetings that did not involve social studies curriculum, his comments made sense. He was frustrated because he “spent two hours out of his class, which is valuable teaching time.” And he felt like he learned nothing that applied to him. He referenced this training three times during our interview; it was clearly a source of frustration. On the other hand, the district training that offered individual department training was very useful to him. “When I attended the training and all of my fellow social studies teachers were present, I felt like I belonged there. Plus, we had to bring reading material that we use in our classes.” He preferred trainings that provided material, which could be used in the classroom without a lot of those strategies.

At the same time, Harley felt the instructional focus of the district was confusing. “We have too many trainings. If we aren’t meeting on teaching EL’s how to read… we have to learn how to teach reading within our content. It seems like all the reading stuff keeps us out of the classroom.” As he commented on the district “pressuring” him to attend the PD opportunities, he explained that he has used some reading strategies from the PD, but he “does not use it all the time because it’s too monotonous. Kids will checkout.” Harley has assessed reading instruction, but he was clearly concerned about “losing kids’ attention.” He undoubtedly agreed with the changes brought on by CCSS, which “seems to really be a good thing. Students need to know how to read for content. However, we still have to teach kids 300 years of history and now we have to teach them to read it too.” His frustration came from teaching a “huge chunk of history” while keeping students engaged and “not making high schoolers feel stupid.”
As we discussed the transition between the CST and the CCSS, Harley seemed frustrated. He stressed that he felt like, “CCSS should have supported the classroom environment too.” Harley noted that in the school district, “the majority of families are so poor, they don’t think about school. They come from a culture where you don’t need an education, you need a job.” Harley emphasized, he felt the entire CCSS movement had been placed “in the teachers’ lap. If the state wants to make improvements,” Harley said, “We need less help with reading strategies and additional help that focuses on motivating students.” Given his passion for sports, Harvey equated his classroom to a soccer field he is bothered about student motivation. He noted the most frustrating experience is trying to teach the kids something they don’t care about:

It’s easy to motivate students to run across the field and get the ball into your opponents’ net because those kids want to be there and most of them have a passion for it. Being in the classroom is much different. Students have a difficult time understanding why learning about history might help them in the future. Most kids just sit there and act like they are interested.

He explained it is like anything else with education; districts are going to do what they have to do to do to stay compliant with state policy makers. Knowing this, he felt grateful that he worked for a district that at least attempted to give the teacher tools. However, he felt discouraged because “kids need more than--more to read.” He did not believe most of his kids noticed the transition because teachers have always provided reading material that is accessible to kids or they help them read it. He felt CCSS added more pressure on the teacher to show they are doing it.

Then, Harley explained that he felt the district was very supportive during the transition, but he was discouraged because he felt the district does not value teachers’ time. “The district
could have offered additional time to work reading strategies into social studies curriculum.” He specified that most of the support the district office provided was only instructional strategies: “Teachers need release time to score essays together and see what is working for other teachers. I think the district expects us to do that on our own time.” Since Harley is extremely busy on campus and off campus, he suggested the support from the district should be emphasized through time to implement these changes. “It really seems like the district wants us to make these vital changes to our curriculum, but they want us to do it during PLC time. One hour a week is not sufficient.”

His department used PLC time to discuss issues that were not related to student literacy. “Most of our PLC meetings focus on stuff that doesn’t help students. We talk about safe stuff, like comp time and parking. We really never mention literacy because everyone feels that it’s over done on our campus. We all know we have to implement reading strategies.”

Fritz and I met at his home for our interview. He lives in a middle class neighborhood with his beautiful young wife, who is a nurse, and his adorable two-year old son. Fritz has a welcoming personality and an abundance of life experience. During college he lived in Southern California and worked as the personal assistant to a famous actor. He traveled, attended soirees, and lived in the celebrity’s guest house. The students and faculty love to hear stories about his adventures that are out of reach for most Americans. Fritz teaches two AP Civics courses and three US History courses.

When I asked Fritz about his formal training, he said, “I had to take a reading class in my credentialing program. But I thought it was stupid and I would never use it. I actually thought it was for middle school teachers. I had no clue some high schoolers read a third grade level. That’s mind blowing.” When he reflected back on some of the strategies taught by his
credentialing class, he felt that they were entangled with other subjects. The classes taught reading in different content areas. There were very few examples of teaching reading in social studies.

But, Fritz reminded me that he was initially hired, at the school of study, as a freshman English teacher. He worked closely with the English staff and learned how to teach students to “break down a text.” “Teaching English for a year was the best and hardest year of my life. English teachers work really hard to get all those essays read and help the kids understand what they read. When the social studies position opened, I jumped on it.” But, the transition from English teacher to social studies teacher has been difficult.

Fritz is frustrated because he “didn’t expect teaching to have so many hurdles. No one lets you just go into your class and teach.” As a new teacher, Fritz must comply with state guidelines that require him to attend additional classes to obtain his final teaching credential. Since he has been teaching, he explained “I have spent hours writing lessons and attending trainings that have very little to do with my job. It seems like I am being pulled out of my class for various reasons—it’s so frustrating.” At this point, Fritz is considering other careers.

Fritz attended all three reading instruction PDs. He felt the trainings were beneficial and specifically mentioned the PD where strategies were focused specifically on the social studies curriculum. “It’s always refreshing to go into a training knowing that—hey I can take this back to my class tomorrow.” Fritz also appreciated that the trainer required everyone to bring reading material from an upcoming lesson.

I learn by doing. So when we had to build a lesson around material we were planning to use, it all came together. Plus, members from our department helped each other and offered ideas on how to expand the lesson to best meet the needs of our really low kids.
He described a specific strategy from the training: “I use the history frame/story map strategy that was taught in the PD. I like that one because the kids create a map and a visual for a time in history. Then, he grabbed a piece of paper and created a diagram that showed how the reading strategy worked. “This helps students visualize the event. I get excited when I see my seniors actually use their creativity to explain what they know. It’s so cool.” However, I knew Fritz implemented reading on his own, with a clear sense that the district was patrolling him. “I am glad I like to see my students make connections because I would probably lose my job if I didn’t implement these strategies.”

However, he felt that he is “coping with the fact” that history teachers are asked to cover material spanning thousands of years. “Offering students a glimpse into a brief time period is not sufficient because we history teachers know how one event in history leads to the next.” The passion felt towards his subject area was evident, while the frustration came from feeling pressured to teach centuries of history coupled with reading strategies. When he questions if teaching reading in high school is “showing up after the revolution.” It is unlikely that high school students who read at a primary grade level will make reading gains to be proficient at the high school level (Hogen, 2015)

Fritz did not feel the districts PD offered a negative experience to the transition, but he felt the district’s PD focus should be reevaluated. Fritz expressed that he actually felt overwhelmed, “Our district is so worried about making the transition into CCSS. They forgot teachers should build relationships with kids. If the students don’t trust the teacher, they won’t take chances in class.” Fritz felt the district showed a lack of support for teachers as professionals. “The culture of our school doesn’t match the culture of our students.” According
to Fritz, the district believed it represented a culture where most kids value education; whereas, “students on our campus just want to turn 18 and get a job so they can help their family.”

Fritz explained his frustration with “all these mandates.” Being new to teaching, he described, “I am not affected by the transition from CSS to CCSS. Common core and creating a classroom where literacy strategies must be paired with lessons, was taught in my credentialing classes. But that doesn’t mean I agree with CCSS.” He spoke briefly about his colleagues’ frustration.

Watching my mentors feel like their entire educational career is becoming a joke is tough. Even though I haven’t gone through the transition, I hear about the glory days where teaching was a craft and educators got to engage kids using passion for the content. I wish teaching was like that again because I love history, and I think I can make my kids love it. But I have to make sure they can read and write instead.

In this context, Fritz said he felt close to his colleagues and indicated that he welcomed the PLC time. But he sensed that one-hour a week was not sufficient time to make necessary changes to the curriculum. He related:

The focus of our PLC meetings gets a little cloudy. We know that we are supposed to follow a protocol, but we seem to use our PLC time for housekeeping issues, like we need to use less printer paper. Our focus should remain on student motivation and literacy, but that is not going to happen. We have big personalities in the room and not everyone gets along.

Fanny is the only female in the social studies department. When we met in her room for our interview, she initially asked to have our meeting during class time. She felt that her kids would “appreciate watching two professionals interview.” But, we settled on meeting during
winter break. When I asked her to pick the place for an interview, she wanted to come back to campus because “everything else in my life is kind of a mess. This is my happy place.”

She has been on the same campus and in the same classroom for 16 years. Her classroom reflects her loyalty to her subject matter. Portraits of all 45 presidents line the walls, along with 16 years of former students’ pictures. Fanny teaches one sophomore European history AP class and four sophomore world history classes. She teaches only sophomore students. Fannie mentioned, “I stay in my classroom and do not mingle with other teachers. I am not appreciated on campus, so I stay in my room. I am kind of on a different level than my colleagues. Most of the teachers on this campus just want to put in their 40 hour week and go home.”

When I asked her about the obligation, brought on by CCSS, to teach reading in her social studies classes, she explained that her early years of teaching required her to remediate instruction. “Common Core hasn’t changed anything for me.” Using reading strategies for students to understand the content is something that must be “dealt with.” Scaffolding reading within the social studies content has to be done, or students will walk away knowing nothing about our past.

Fanny has not had any formal reading training, other than the PDs offered by the district. When I asked her about district support during the transition of CST to CCSS, she felt the district has been supportive, but she “might be bias because it is just good teaching.” She mentioned, “Trainings are often subversive ways of making sure all teachers know they are expected to implement certain practices in the classroom.”

Reflecting on the trainings, she felt “they were helpful because they gave specific strategies for teaching reading in social studies. But, the one where everyone was included didn’t work well.” Fanny felt the training that included other content areas was not valuable because it really didn’t
apply to social studies. It was not a “true reflection of our difficult task of teaching kids about something they really don’t care about.”

However, when we discussed the specific trainings, she said, “Most of the trainings don’t really apply to us because we have to cover so much history, we can’t spend that much time on teaching reading. We have to give the kids something that is more accessible (a lower reading level).” She feels confident in using reading strategies, but finds it more successful to supply students with reading material that is within the students reading instructional range. She does not adjust her lessons to meet the needs of EL students because all of her students are reading right around 3rd to 4th grade level. All students need material they can read. “I just make sure there are a lot of pictures and I show tons of videos.” Some teachers think the social studies department shows too many movies. Well, it’s the best way to show our students what happened in our past.”

As she addressed the issue of poverty in our community, she noted that most of her students come to class unprepared. “It is frustrating. My students are provided a laptop, but they won’t charge it at home. One student told me that her mom gets mad at her for using electricity to charge her computer.” Fanny addressed the needs of her students, but clearly felt frustrated by lack of parent support. As an educator, she has been helped students try to envision a better life, but she experienced frustration when she attempted to help students. “They really don’t see a way out of poverty and they don’t listen when we tell them that an education will be their ticket.” Fanny offered examples of reading strategies that work in her class. However, she sensed the students get “uptight if [the teacher] is teaching down to them. Students want to be treated like adults, but they don’t have the skills to digest upper level material.” The use of reading
strategies was a source of defeat. She tried timelines along with a picture. That helped students visualize what they read, even though “I dumb down the reading.”

Fanny described the extent to which complying with the CCSS mandate really frustrated her. She felt that education is always changing but not in the direction that helps students of poverty. “What do people know about our kids? However, I have been in the field of education long enough to know that this too will pass. Policy makers make changes to education without asking teachers what kids need to be successful. It is certainly not another mandate.” Fanny expressed frustration with her social studies team and her position. She said she perceived that her fellow social studies teachers shared a male bond:

Even if they don’t hang out after work, they still have that attitude that most kids will be fine. When, that’s not true. Our kids come from homes where sometimes they don’t even have running water. So, you can’t really blame the kid for not being interested in the Korean War. But, my colleagues just complain about the kids and their indifference towards education. And, I feel frustrated with my position because my standards are higher than my colleagues, so my fail rate is higher than others.

This frustration, she explained, had led her to pursue a position at our local community college. I asked her if she received any relief from her PLC time. She actually laughed and said, “That was implemented by our district. The figureheads have no clue how we should run a PLC. We basically meet to discuss things that don’t matter to kids because everyone feels helpless.”

Themes

Three themes emerged from the data collected in the interviews that portrayed social studies teachers’ experience with implementing reading instruction in addition to content. Six teachers from the same site, who all are mandated to implement reading strategies along with
social studies content, shared their perceptions of how they have experienced this directive. The narratives focused on the three identified areas: advocacy for teaching reading, district support, and student engagement.

**Theme 1- Advocacy for Teaching Reading**

Focused on teachers’ experience with implementing the CCSS literacy mandates, this study is specifically concerned with how social studies teachers experienced and enacted reading instruction in addition to the curriculum? Understanding there is a need for teaching reading has established a foundation for the teachers’ experiences and further explains the participants’ feelings towards enacting this mandate.

The social studies teachers consistently advocated for teaching reading within their content area. “Reading is really the foundation of what we do in social studies.” All participants recognized that implementing reading strategies along with the content area curriculum set the groundwork for student learning. There was a particular interest in making sure students were able to access the written material. As a whole the participants explained that they used articles at a lower reading level and images to assist with student learning.

Participants were willing to share their preparedness to teach reading, which provided clarity to their experience and endorsement of using reading strategies in the social studies classroom. “Most of my success with reading instruction came from my early years of teaching English. That’s what English teachers do to help their students better understand fiction or non-fiction material. It is seamless to apply the same strategies to social studies.” Although each teacher had a different experience with readiness to use reading strategies, between credentialing programs, PDs, and experience, all teachers felt confident in their ability to teach social studies and embed reading instruction:
Without a doubt, we can’t expect kids to just take this very complex historical material and test our kids on it. We have to give students tools to look at historical documents and connect their own meaning. If we can show kids that history is important because it’s about interpretation, then we have done our job. But that won’t happen if teachers just hand the materials to kids.

During the interviews, all teachers referenced student population and the need to reinforce learning due to low reading levels. Teachers are clearly frustrated by students’ lack of motivation but each participant recognized that low motivation was connected to low reading levels,

17-year old students, who are juniors in high school, should be able to read a primary historical document and synthesize the information with other articles. But the majority of our 17-year olds are reading at a 4th grade level. We can’t ask kids to do higher-level reading without instruction. They will just become disengaged.

As each participants spoke of their frustration, it was clear that all participants yearned for students to become engaged in the content.

Students act like they don’t care, but I know if I offer students something to read and a way to read it, they usually like it. I know they like it because a lot of kids ask questions about the event. But, that wouldn’t happen if I just handed them the article or book and told them to read it. We have to show students how to visualize the event and connect it to something that is important to them.

Promoting and advocating reading instruction was also evident in the attendance of professional development opportunities.
In reviewing the artifacts from the reading workshop offered by our district, all participants in the study attended both workshops. As evidenced by attendance, all social studies teachers advocated for the use of reading strategies with their high school students.

In reviewing the artifacts from the reading workshop offered by our district, all participants in the study attended both workshops. As evidenced by attendance, all social studies teachers advocated for the use of reading strategies with their high school students.

Attending the PD’s was like reinforcements. We all know we live in a community where there is a high rate of illiteracy. Being involved in the district’s scheduled reading professional developments teased out the fact that this is a huge problem in our school.

Each participant providing a plan to implement reading strategies. This plan was a wrap up activity during the professional development, where teachers were given a form to address next steps in providing reading strategies within their classroom. Table two presents examples from those completed next steps arrangements. Since the district is a 1:1, where each student has her or his own laptop, teachers were encouraged to use Google Read and Write to assist with annotation of the reading:

Table 2

Summary of social studies teachers plan for implementing reading into curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>George</th>
<th>• Implement daily quick writes that connects students’ prior knowledge to content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use venn diagrams with reading selection to promote connection to prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Henry | • Require exit slips to check for student understanding  
       • Upload documents into drive so students can use Google Read and Write to annotate reading material.  
       • Pair students according to reading level |
| Kenny | • Upload documents into drive so students can use Google Read and Write to annotate reading material.  
       • Use "Questioning the Author" reading strategy with all reading material and videos.  
       • Use venn diagram to compare similarities and differences in documents |
| Harley| • Upload documents into drive so students can use Google Read and Write to annotate reading material.  
       • Continue to model fluency while reading to the students  
       • Continue to model annotation techniques as I read aloud to students |
| Fritz | • Upload documents into drive so students can use Google Read and Write to annotate reading material. |
- Use History/Frame Story Map strategy to assist kids with creating a visual of learning
- Use exit slips to check for student understanding

| Fanny | • Upload documents into drive so students can use Google Read and Write to annotate reading material.  
• Partner students according to reading level  
• Use at least one visual an hour |

The endorsement of reading strategies was supported when four out of six participants invited the district and county coach into classrooms to review and coach reading strategies. Table three provides actual teacher feedback from the participants’ experience of the district coach modeling lessons. Names were not permitted on the feedback cards to promote reliability:

*Table 3*

*Summary of Social Studies Teachers’ Experience with Literacy Coach:*

<p>| Participant 1 | Today’s coaching session was valuable. Scott had the entire class engaged and encouraged student discussion. I especially appreciated the use of Socratic Seminar where the students had to use textual evidence to support their opinion about the war. I hope to use this strategy, but it took a lot of class time and I am not sure my schedule supports this type of lesson. |
| Participant 2 | Great session. I enjoyed watching Scott work with my students. Everyone (all students) was engaged and asked a lot of questions. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scott’s style of teaching took a lot of energy. It was interesting to watch, but I don’t think it is realistic for everyday teaching. But, I am going to try.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the professional developments offered by the district, each participant either collaborated with colleagues from the English department or attended professional learning workshops outside the district.

**Sub Theme-Experience with Teaching Reading**

A big part of understanding the teachers’ experience and implementing the transition from CST to CCSS is gaining a clear understanding of the comfort-level in administering reading
strategies. Throughout these interviews, teachers described their experiences with teaching reading.

First of all, teachers who were trained by the English department gave a clear sense of comfort with teaching reading. “Veteran English teachers taught me everything about breaking down a text. Because I was new to teaching, I made it a point to observe the teachers in action. That was an awesome experience because the English teachers felt very comfortable with implementing several reading strategies. Plus, the students were so used to applying these skills, it was second nature for the kids.” Although it had been several years, teachers who experienced modeling and close connections with veteran colleagues brought these skills into their social studies classrooms.

As Kenny discussed his formal training of Madeline Hunter, another layer was exposed to this study. Although Hunter’s approach to reading is longstanding, Kenny embraced the formulaic approach to teaching and felt confident with his method. However, Hunter endorsed methods that were used in elementary schools, and Hunter’s reading methods would not be seen on a high school campus. But Kenny, a veteran teacher, felt confident in delivering this style of teaching. “My students read at an elementary level. Why shouldn’t I use elementary lessons for them.

The teachers who experienced reading training in their credentialing courses were equally as comfortable with sharing their skills. Even though one teacher could not recall the formal training and another teacher excused the lessons because he felt that he would never use them, both teachers used the resources supplied by the district to develop their proficiencies in teaching reading.

**Theme 2-District Support**
In efforts to better understand the teachers’ experience with the transition from CST to CCSS, establishing a clear understanding of district support was fundamental. Across the board, participants felt supported by their district. The most sincere form of this support came from the district offering professional developments that addressed reading strategies:

I can find fault in our district, but one thing I can say is there has not been a mandate passed down without reinforcements. We are not a rich district, but for the most part, our administration team makes certain that we are supported during change.

Clearly, the participants value district support. However, the lack of release time supplied by the district sparked much discussion. During the interviews five out of six participants noted their district provided PD to address the needs of mandated literacy brought on by CCSS but failed to provide adequate time to adjust all lessons that encompassed the literacy strategies:

Our district knows that teachers need training, and they do an over-the-top job of supplying professionals to teach us certain skills. But, when do we have time to work these into our curriculum? We got an opportunity to apply a strategy to one piece of student reading material. Now, we need release time to figure out how we can make it work with the stacks of material the kids still need to read.

The lack of time was a source of frustration. In addition to the acquiring or honing in skills that assisted students with reading text, teachers needed to rebuild their arsenal of reading strategies to best serve a struggling student population.

Yet, the participants highlighted another issue brought on by district support. Although all the participants agreed that the district supports the transition, teachers voiced their concern about the district offering too much training. Three out of six participants noted the district was “all over the place.” With trainings that covered reading instruction, PLCs, and coaching,
participants felt the district should offer less training and more “focused, structured” opportunities to learn skills that assisted with the district becoming compliant with CCSS.

**Sub Theme-Professional Developments**

Offering PD to ensure teachers were CCSS compliant was well received by teachers. All six participants agreed the district’s intentions were in line with the changes brought on by CCSS. The feedback from each participant provided valuable feedback for this study: combining trainings with other departments were not as effective and the district should provide PD that assists teachers in addressing cultural and motivational factors.

Each participant noted that combining trainings, which included teachers from other departments, was not effective. Teachers had a difficult time envisioning how to apply the strategy to his or her specific content area. “Seeing the trainer modeling a reading strategy to science material was counter-productive. I just kept thinking that this doesn’t apply to me or any of my social studies colleagues.”

Another reoccurring theme that was addressed by each participant was the wastes of time teachers spend outside of class to address the needs of English Language Learners (ELL).

I don’t understand why our district breaks up all these trainings up. All of our kids need the same instruction, a lot of visuals and front-loading of vocabulary and events. Those are ELL strategies. But we have to attend one training for our English only students and another training for our ELL, when all of the students struggle.

However, all participants agreed the training that solely used social studies material was effective in delivering instruction. “When we got together and watched the trainer model how to apply some of the reading strategies with primary documents, that’s when I got it.” Although some
reading strategies apply to all content areas, watching the trainer use documents that participants brought to the training “made it more relatable.”

Another finding addressed the need for additional trainings on the needs of the community and student motivation. All six participants agreed that even though the district created ample opportunity for teachers to train and practice using reading strategies, the problem of student motivation was an issue that needs to be addressed.

Using these strategies are great, but many of our students are not motivated to learn about history because they don’t think they will ever use it. How do we help our kids whose parents are uneducated and their grandparents are uneducated? We live in a poor place and there are generations of families who don’t value education.

**Sub Theme-PLC**

Although teachers felt supported by the district, the PLC meetings were a point of irritation. There was little to no discussion about teaching strategies and teachers felt the meetings were a waste of valuable time: “Teachers usually see the late start Friday meetings as a waste. One hour is not enough time to discuss the implementation of literacy and how to grade all this stuff.”

Fanny: I don’t feel heard in my department. We really don’t discuss anything during PLC or outside the classroom. There has been a lot of effort put forth in making the transition from CST to CCSS evolve into a product that meets the needs of our students along with being compliant to state and district policy. However, no one wants to talk about what they are doing in the classroom. If I happen by a room, kids are listening to a lecture or watching a video. That’s not reading. But, my colleagues won’t talk to me about it. I just wonder what other teachers are doing after the lectures or movies.”
Each participant expressed the same concern about PLC time. Although these meetings are district mandated, teachers did not experience support and felt one-hour per week was not enough time to address the literacy concerns of their department.

The PLC observation bore similar evidence. There was no literacy discussion and the entire department appeared anxious about attending. Only two participants suggested or commented during the meeting. The department head spoke about issues, but there was no response from the other social studies teachers.

**Theme 3 - Teacher’s Concerned About Student Engagement**

The third theme addressed student engagement and teacher frustration. Designated a Title I school because of the high rate of poverty that plagues California’s Central Valley, each participant spoke about the frustration they felt in the classroom. “The disturbing student performance levels add to the teachers’ frustrations” and experience of transitioning from CST to CCSS.

Absences of foundational skills acted as a barrier to implementing reading strategies. “When the majority of my junior class reads at a fourth grade level, it’s hard to engage students into deeper conversations about nations’ past. All participants identified student low reading levels as a source of frustration. “We’re supposed to deliver information to our kids that requires some evidence of prior knowledge. When the kid can’t read and he has never heard of the Vietnam War, it’s difficult to get into higher level thinking material because we have to backfill so much information.”

“Our students have had so little exposure to history”, the lack of background knowledge is a source of frustration. “I don’t believe the majority of our students discuss any historical events outside of school. We can’t expect our kids to learn their 300 years of history without
some support from home.” All participants noted that applying reading instruction while students have few experience or possess little knowledge to connect new concepts created a difficult learning environment, one that “reading instruction does very little to help students make sense of documents.”

100% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunches due to the majority of learners living below the poverty line, and each participant consistently addressed the problems associated with poverty. “Our district wants us to be CCSS compliant, but the majority of our kids have major issues that need to be addressed before we can engage them in learning about history.” The participants agreed that addressing students hunger by giving them free breakfast, lunch and an after school snack is a start, “but these kids still have to go home to single-parent families and problems that are compounded by poverty. Using reading strategies to help kids understand the material is a great idea, but many of our kids have adult problems, which makes it difficult to focus in class.”

Because poverty is a multifaceted problem, all participants in this study addressed reluctant learners. “It is difficult to administer these ‘research proven’ strategies when kids show no interest in earning a passing grade, let alone learning about a time in history.” Addressing these problems is monumental, but all participants felt the need to speak to these frustrations and hoped to find a solution in the near future.

Summary

The goal of this study was to examine the experience of social studies teachers, who teach at Title 1 School, as they transition from CST to CCSS. The six social studies teachers who participated in the study were very direct in their answers and supplied valuable data to drive this study.
The professionals who acted as the participants overwhelmingly endorsed the use of reading strategies within the social studies curriculum. Pulling from their reading training during teacher credentialing classes, collaborating with staff on best practices, or attending professional developments that addressed reading, all participants noted that social studies curriculum is best delivered with reading instruction.

In addition, all the participants agreed that district support is crucial to adhering to state mandated curriculum changes. Even though the participants noted that most of the mandates were passed along from the state and did very little to assist in student learning, the participants in this study established that their district went to great lengths to ensure all teachers were properly trained. Plus, the district offered support systems to ensure all teachers continued to include literacy strategies that encouraged student learning.

Although the teachers felt supported by the district, the participants recommended several changes to the professional development offered by the district. First of all, they recommended that professional developments, which are focused on classroom skills, be divided into sessions according to departments. The teachers identified that meeting as one school to address literacy needs that are specific to content are more effectively modeled when the presenter uses material that educators can use within their classrooms. Another recommendation the participants made addressed the uselessness of too many training. Although they suggested that each content area attend trainings separately, they recommended that ELL and EO strategies should be combined because the entire student population require remediation that addresses reading skills, vocabulary development, and scaffolding.

The participants addressed the PLC Meetings that were put in place by the district to support transition into CCSS. All participants agreed the PLC meetings did not serve as a
support system. First of all, the participants identified the main problem was lack of time. The PLC met one-hour per week. Teaching literacy had many components, which required more than one hour a week to infuse research proven strategies into daily lessons. Another theme that was constant to this study addressed the lack of communication in the social studies department. All of the participants noted that PLC time was not being used to address literacy needs.

Student engagement was a reoccurring theme in this research. As noted earlier, each participant addressed the issue related to poverty. All of the participants believed that low motivation, low reading levels, and lack of prior knowledge was the direct outcomes of the schools poverty-stricken community.
Chapter 5: Discussions, Implications, and Conclusions

Introduction to the Problem of Practice

This chapter reviews the problem of practice that was explored through an intrinsic case study, highlighting the research question: How have social studies teachers, working in a title 1 school, experienced and enacted the implementation of literacy requirements into their social studies curriculum? Considering the transition between CSS and CCSS was essential to fully understanding the mandate that called for pedagogical changes in California high schools. Examining the role of social studies teachers and how they experienced this transition was the foundation of this study.

This study offers insight into how teachers experienced transitions brought on by mandated curriculum changes. Finally, the research provided reflections on identifying key elements that may assist with changes in education, particularly pedagogy in teaching literacy through content.

This research has significant implications on local, state, national and international levels. At the local level, districts can use this research to identify concerns arising in the classroom because mandated changes are usually designed, approved, and implemented without teacher input. Knowing the experiences of the teachers and how the directives have impacted classroom instruction could offer more insight into ensuring directives are implemented without losing the essential component of teacher input. At a state level, this study can inform members of the educational community about ways in which to more effectively enact mandated curriculum changes. Like district level impact, the state will benefit from understanding the teachers’ perspectives during transitions. Hopefully, facets of time management, collaboration, and teacher support will be considered before major changes are adopted or legislated into California
classrooms. In addition to local and state affects, this research addresses the problem of practice at the national level. Rarely, do presidential candidates run without enacting changes to our educational system. By informing those who create and pass laws about the impact that delegated changes have at the classroom level, this study can assist in generating feedback from educators who work directly with our youth. Finally, at a global level, it is essential that our teachers are trained appropriately to assure that the students they teach are receiving an education that prepares them to compete competently and rank highly professionally in our global economy and employment market.

Theoretical Framework

Jack Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) served as the theoretical foundation guiding this research. TLT centers on the learners’ perspective and operates along three axes: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle) (Mezirow, 1991).

Scholars have documented that change can occur through the process of developing a deeper understanding of a problem or concept (Kitchenham, 2008). This effort provides a grounded authentic experience in the learning progression, which often results in an innovative style of applying a learned concept. Foundational to this perspective, in 1978, Mezirow presented a theory of adult learning based on his extensive observation of women returning to higher education. He focused on education that enabled adults to become autonomous reflective thinkers, capable of critically engaging with their environment (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow noted that individuals use a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised understanding of the meaning of an experience in order to guide future action (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).
Themes Associated with the Theoretical Framework

All participants in this study were social studies teachers from the same high school. Through detailed analysis of interviews, an observation of a meeting of a PLC, and a review of artifacts, common themes related to teachers’ experiences during the curriculum and standards transition emerged.

Table 4

Summary of Mezirow’s Transformation of Learning Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>THEORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each participant in this study advocated for teaching reading within the social studies curriculum.</td>
<td>• Mindset plays a crucial role in examining feelings that allow individuals to embrace change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication of impending change is critical to the exploration of new roles and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking action to create an acquisition that addresses mandates is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building competence and self-confidence in new role and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in this study confidently spoke of district support. In addition, the artifacts of this study supported the emergence of this theme.</td>
<td>• For change to take place, the mindset of the group, including those who are requesting change, should embrace the idea of adapting to a new environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Social studies teachers articulated issues with student engagement as a barrier to implementation. | • The mindset of a community or group greatly affects the possibility for change.  
• Discussing and addressing the mindset of those involved in a transformation allows a group to gain cohesiveness.  
• Searching for possible professional development topics that address student engagement constitutes an important source of action from both the district and the teachers. |
| --- | --- |
| • Communicating struggles and accomplishments is vital to transitioning into a new domain of performance or existence.  
• Creating a plan of action establishes a foundation of support and vision that often encourages change.  
• Exploring different ways to accomplish change and infusing multiple perspectives and personalities promotes discovery that ultimately leads to making the change authentic. |
Identifying the components of TLT that emerge when change is being placed on individuals is essential, and they include: mindset, communication, action, and exploration. The underlying concepts in this theory assert that individuals, the participants, continue through these phases before fully accepting change. Since this intrinsic case study explored teachers and their experiences during mandated change, applying TLT to their involvement provided a lens that allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine different aspects of the transition.

During this study, all teachers acknowledged that reading is essential to the social studies curriculum. The mindset of the educators recognized that literacy instruction required by the introduction of CCSS was “vital.” However, an additional mindset surfaced: teachers had accepted that change is a constant in education; however, they remained clearly frustrated with change implementation. As one of the participants distinctly stated, “The rules are always changing. K-12 education is a magnate for policy change.” Mezirow’s theory assisted the researcher in identifying each participant’s mindset and how it related to a profession that is constantly evolving.

TLT identifies a second phase of change: communication. Within this study, teachers coincided in identifying that their district communicated the need for reading instruction, but there were some discrepancies among them regarding the effectiveness of the district’s professional development training and approach to offering support. The PLCs offered by the district provided an avenue for opening lines of communication and nurturing team building. However, the social studies team “has different personalities that don’t always work well together.”
Identifying the action plan for transformation is another phase of Mezirow’s theory. Within this study, the district had established a clear action plan for implementing change. Yet, the social studies teachers experiencing the change did not have a voice in the plan of action. This became apparent during each interview. All participants welcomed the trainings and attended the PLCs, but the plan was clearly not designed implemented with teacher input, which created a negative experience for the educators.

In the exploration phase of Mezirow’s theory, only one participant attempted to explore different teaching styles. However, that quickly changed when the teacher noticed students grades were dropping because of student motivational factors. The additional participants continued using the same reading instructional strategies and did not waver from their style of teaching reading. However, all participants noted that the experience of the transition had encouraged them to try new strategies; they continued to consider implementing different approaches.

Themes Related to Literature

Numerous studies have been conducted on mandated changes in education. Exploring the experience of teachers during transformations shaped the literature review that was guided by three important features: adolescent reading requirements, the teachers’ role in the transformation of pedagogy, and effective professional development.

As social studies teachers presented their experiences with implementing reading instruction in addition to social studies curriculum content, the literature review was aligned with this study’s findings. Teachers interviewed expressed that they felt adolescent reading instruction and the need for using strategies complemented the rigorous social studies curriculum and assisted students in developing a deeper understanding of the materials presented. However,
teachers also identified that adolescent reading instruction is difficult because high school age youth are not always receptive to material that identifies student weakness – such as reading. This study revealed that reading instruction is embarrassing for some struggling high school students. The participants in the study noted that the application of reading strategies could lead to a divide in the classroom between those students who were strong readers and those whose literacy skills were lacking.

The literature review indicated that most reading instruction assists with “cognitive engagement, which aided in predicting, inferencing, and visualizing (Rainey, 2016). The study identified that reading instruction is considered “valuable at the high school level,” which complements an understanding of written material and the connection to content. This study identified that teachers’ felt reading instruction supported student learning and assisted students to “make connections.”

Teachers in the study noted the growing linguistic diversity in America, and they identified the benefits to using instructional strategies that “make connections and apply the concept to other areas of study” (Gamez & Lesaux, 2015). Identifying language learners as a population that “thrived with reading instruction,” this study also recognized that in a title 1 school district, participants identified that all students needed additional reading support. Teachers considered it was their role to provide instruction to all students, not just English Language Learners.

The literature review also highlighted the influence teachers’ performance levels had on their acceptance of the changing curriculum. This study focused on teacher’s experiences, which uncovered that teachers identified frustrations when students were not academically successful
and not fully engaged in the curriculum. This connection to the literature review showed a real link between teachers’ willingness to incorporate curricular changes and student success.

Another finding in this study that related directly to the literature review was that the amount of time the teacher taught had no impact on the willingness to make changes to their curriculum. According to the findings from this study, newer and veteran teachers’ alike felt making instructional changes to assist in student learning was an important component of their career. Years of service had no bearing on the occurrence of teachers using the newest or best strategies within their classrooms.

Another concept the literature review outlined was that teachers are more likely to embrace mandated changes when they feel more confident in their instructional practices (Patton & Sinclair). According to the findings in this study, teachers thoroughly understood their approach to teaching reading and could adeptly explain it, which resulted in confidence in implementation. Professional developments and past collaboration provided teachers with the assurance to promote reading instruction within the social studies curriculum.

In the area of professional development, the feedback from teachers, a review of artifacts, and the literature review complimented each other. Teachers expressed that they felt the professional development opportunities offered by the district were instrumental in preparing them to use reading strategies in the classroom. However, there was a sense of frustration expressed by the teachers in the study. Most observed that the district offered professional development that often represented a top-down approach to mandated change. Teachers had a clear sense that the district’s professional development provided them with a clear reminder that changes had to be implemented into social studies instruction. In this context, however, teachers stated that they did not feel their voices or experiences mattered in most cases, and the
professional development was a tool the district used primarily to stress the importance of mandated compliance rather than to fully address the teachers’ concerns.

   Indeed, teachers related that they felt the professional development offered by the district was a means of “policing their reading activity in the classroom.” This study found evidence that links directly to the literature review: professional developments are successful when the teachers are offered practices that can be brought back to the classroom, in other words, “learning practices that can be added to the teachers’ repertoires of strategies.” All participants in the study said they felt prepared to offer instruction after attending a professional development that offered reading strategies that specifically addressed the application of reading within the social studies curriculum.

   However, the teachers in the study expressed concern when professional development trainings were offered that did not apply to the teachers’ specific content area. This study showed that teachers felt professional development can be a viewed as “problematic when trainings are combined to include all staff.” Often times, the teachers considered that type of training “a waste of time because teachers could not identify with the content of the training and often disregarded the entire experience.”

   Combining professional development opportunities that included new instruction for ELL was another component of this study that aligned with the literature review. According to Hamann and Reeves (2013) study, combining ELL instruction should be done with all students in mind. This was concluded based on ELL students being mainstreamed into comprehensive classrooms. Like the teachers in this study, Hamann and Reeves (2013) found that teachers valued trainings that embraced all students and did not offer prescriptive teaching to ELLs. In this context, this study revealed that all of the teachers interviewed felt separate ELL training
was counterproductive to classroom equity. “All students need instruction. When we address the concerns of ELLs in a classroom setting, it becomes a clear sense of division.” Therefore, this study found that inclusive PD trainings were more desired by participants.

**Implications of the Findings for Practice**

This study has implications for mandated curriculum changes and the inclusion of teacher input during educational transitions. The research offered insight into the need for advocacy for teacher feedback on implementation, trainings, and future changes. The findings provided the opportunity for researchers, educators, and administrators to understand and potentially influence high school teachers during the implementation of school reform. Students will directly benefit from the study in large part because it was driven from the teachers’ perspectives.

By hearing social studies teachers’ voices through the interview process, the researcher was able to record clear messages directed towards program examination and professional development, which were heeded. In this sense, this study provided an opportunity to see how teacher input can positively impact educational changes. Results from this study can be used to assess and evaluate mandated change in many circumstances, while emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and incorporating the experiences of teachers during educational transitions.

To guide inquiry, further assessments could include artifacts from past educational changes to provide comparisons. The school in this study could also use the themes and findings documented in this research to identify what programs and components of them are effectively promoting change, and to recognize how the district could better support teachers during transitions.

**Implications of Findings for Future Research**
There is a need for further research to build on the findings of this study. Areas for future research include:

- An exploration of how external decision making, beyond the classroom, impacts teachers’ ability to make professional decisions that positively affect student achievement.

- Studying the experience of teachers in other departments and other schools to acquire deeper insights. Replicating the approach used in this study could produce similar results, which would strengthen and further validate the study’s transferability (Creswell, 2007). Comparing data from other sites or subject areas could provide additional considerations for enhancing the experience of teachers during periods of educational change.

- Research that incorporates other sources of data such as student responses to educational changes would further enrich this study. Coupling the findings from the teachers’ interviews with student responses could inform future mandated changes to ensure teachers and students both have input into and benefit from the transition.

- Research focused on leadership during mandated change would be beneficial. In this context, hearing the voices of administrators during educational changes could provide a broader perspective of the position of leadership officials in charge of developing and addressing support structures for implementing change.

- Comparing teachers’ experience of educational mandated changes across grade-levels would also bring important insights to this study. By taking the data collected in this study and comparing other data across multiple grade levels could expose inconsistencies
in the data, or coincidence, and assist in developing programs that offer teachers a
positive experience with educational reform.

**Limitations to the Findings**

The uncontrolled variables that influenced the results of this study were minimal. There
were six participants in the study. The small sample size led to a limited amount of data to be
compared. And, the small sample size and qualitative nature of the study exposed different
personalities that contributed to the findings. Therefore, this study should not be generalized to
all high school social studies departments.

**Personal Thoughts and Beliefs**

As a high school teacher who has personally been met with the difficulty of changing
teaching styles to better match mandated change, I greatly identify with the social studies
teachers in this study. And, as a literacy coach, most of my duties lead me to assist with
pedagogical transformation. Hearing the voices of my peers, as they muddle through the CCSS
transitions, has been a great benefit to me as an educator and professional. Although I thought I
knew and deeply understood the struggles connected to curriculum changes, I usually focused
more on implementing change without regarding the larger picture of how these changes affect
my peers. I did not ask: Do these changes take away from teachers’ sense of professionalism?
Indeed, I believe I was at times quite frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm I saw the teachers
expressing regarding teaching literacy. I am not sure I realized how difficult it is to get youth
engaged not only in the reading process, but of reading subjects like history, which generally
bore them to no end. I have developed a great deal of empathy and compassion for the challenges
teachers face, particularly during times of change, and I have learned not to pre-judge, but to
delve carefully into the perspectives of others in order to fully understand a phenomenon.
Therefore, the study has made me a better listener and has convinced me of the importance of seeking a holistic approach to change.

**Concluding Remarks**

The goal of this research was to conduct an intrinsic case study that included social studies teachers and their experiences during a mandated educational change. The study was completed at a high school in a rural area of Central California, where most students live below the nation’s poverty line. The case study was designed to document the perceptions of six social studies teachers concerning transitioning from CSS to CCSS. The research and data analysis revealed themes around the teachers’ advocating for teaching reading within the content area. All participants agreed, coupling reading strategies with social studies content was the most effective method in delivering content to high school students. Another theme that consistently emerged was the concern with student engagement, and teachers expressed that they felt their district was asking them to use strategies that were not in line with contemporary student needs. Finally, another theme that arose suggested that teachers felt the district should support the transition with safeguards to shoulder some of the responsibilities that come along with educational change.

The result of the case study data analysis revealed key characteristic components that lead to successfully identifying the experiences of social studies teachers as they transitioned their curriculum to meet the needs of the CCSS literacy standards. Using this information allowed the researcher to fulfill the goal of sharing teachers’ perspectives to assist in the implementation of future pedagogical transitions.

Currently, the researcher is using this data to develop a new teacher support system, where new teachers will be invited to a team building and information gathering session at the
beginning of the school year. Each teacher will be provided a mentor and a follow up meeting to ensure constant collaboration. Creating this support network will be one component that will hopefully encourage teachers to feel they are part of the decision-making process.

Additionally, this research has provided information for district administrators to utilize for improving communication within districts. Although mandated changes are a constant in the field of education, providing safeguards for teacher input will make the facilitation of educational changes more palatable for the student, the parents, and the teaching staff. To ensure this development, the district will be using the data to assure a more efficient use of PLC time.

As an educator, a literacy coach and a scholar, the research, theories and data has benefited my practice and allowed me to be a more informed presence on campus. Listening to my peers has provided me with a source of information that can support quality discussions valuable to a productive change. Watching the interaction of my peers has provided me with more information about their struggles during mandated change. And, interpreting my peers’ actions has provided me with additional clarity and compassion towards a group of professionals who just seek to more effectively support student learning.
References


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Hamann, E., & Reeves, J. (2013). Interrupting the professional schism that allows less successful educational practices with ELLs to persist. *Theory Into Practice, 52*, 81-88.


Appendix A

Permission to Access Research Site

August 15, 2017

Re: Permission to Access Research Site
Tulare Joint Union High School
426 N Blackstone
Tulare, CA 93274

Dear Superintendent Rodriquez:

This is a request to elicit your support in allowing access for me, as a researcher, to conduct a qualitative study with teachers from Tulare Joint Union High School’ Social Studies Department. For this doctoral dissertation project, I have prepared an exploratory case study, developed in collaboration with my advisor, Dr. Karen Medwed, at Northeastern University, Boston, MA. This study will document social studies teacher’s as they transition into the use of reading strategies in addition to state mandated curriculum. The study will consider the support systems (i.e. professional development, coaching, and PLCs) we have provided to enhance the use of reading strategies in the social studies classrooms.

I am specifically requesting permission to make initial contact with the social studies teacher at the Tulare Union site through an informational meeting. It is my hope this can be conducted during a Friday Morning Meeting (approximately 20 minutes in duration) on (date). The intent of this meeting is to outline the study in broad terms and the implications for social studies teachers who may wish to participate. The study will require, at a minimum, six participants who teach social studies. Data collection will include one interview of each participating teacher (approximately 60 minutes in duration), one observation of the pedagogy in their classroom in terms of their incorporation of literacy instruction, one attendance at a weekly PLC meeting where they discuss literacy inclusion, and an examination of the documents...
generated for their training and PLCs.

It is my hope to contribute to understanding of the phenomenon of teachers’ transitioning to implementing reading strategies within the content area curriculum. To date, there is very little documentation available for districts, coaches, and teachers who are asked to transition their pedagogical approach to teaching literacy in addition to content curriculum. To learn how this change occurs can be useful in explaining necessary support for teachers during this transition.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me at lucio.t@husky.neu.edu or at home (559-280-2209). Alternatively, you may contact the chairperson of my committee, Karen Medwed, PhD at Northeastern University at k.reissmedwed@neu.edu. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Tabby Grabowski
As Superintendent of Tulare Joint Unified School District, I hereby give permission for Tabby Grabowski to access the research site for the purposes stated on the Permission to Access form, subject to any modification noted below:

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________ (Printed Name)

______________________________ Signature

______________________________ June 26, 2017
Appendix B

Permission to Access Research Site

June 24, 2017

Re: Permission to Access Research Site

Tulare Joint Union High School
426 N Blackstone
Tulare, CA 93274

Dear Dr. Michelle Nunley, Principal:

This is a request to elicit your support in allowing access for me, as a researcher, to conduct a qualitative study with teachers from Tulare Joint Union High School’s Social Studies Department. For this doctoral dissertation project, I have prepared an exploratory case study, developed in collaboration with my advisor, Dr. Karen Medwed, at Northeastern University, Boston, MA. This study will document social studies teacher’s as they transition into the use of reading strategies in addition to state mandated curriculum. The study will consider the support systems (i.e. professional development, coaching, and PLCs) we have provided to enhance the use of reading strategies in the social studies classrooms.

I am specifically requesting permission to make initial contact with the social studies teacher on your site through an informational meeting. It is my hope this can be conducted during a Friday Morning Meeting (approximately 20 minutes in duration) on (date). The intent of this meeting is to outline the study in broad terms and the implications for social studies teachers who may wish to participate. The study will require, at a minimum, six participants who teach social studies. Data collection will include one interview of each participating teacher.
(approximately 60 minutes in duration), one observation of the pedagogy in their classroom in terms of their incorporation of literacy instruction, one attendance at a weekly PLC meeting where they discuss literacy inclusion, and an examination of the documents generated for their training and PLCs.

It is my hope to contribute to understanding of the phenomenon of teachers’ transitioning to implementing reading strategies within the content area curriculum. To date, there is very little documentation available for districts, coaches, and teachers who are asked to transition their pedagogical approach to teaching literacy in addition to content curriculum. To learn how this change occurs can be useful in explaining necessary support for teachers during this transition.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me at lucio.t@husky.neu.edu or at home (559-280-2209). Alternatively, you may contact the chairperson of my committee, Karen Medwed, PhD, at Northeastern University at k.reissmedwed@neu.edu. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Tabby Grabowski
Tulare Union High School

As principal of Tulare Union High School, I hereby give permission for Tabby Grabowski to access the research site for the purposes stated on the Permission to Access form, subject to any modification noted below:

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________ (Printed Name)

______________________________ Signature

______________________________ June 26, 2017
Appendix C: Letter of Intent to Participants

Date

Dear Colleagues,

I am a student in Northeastern University’s Doctor of Education program and I am currently working on my dissertation study: *Reading Strategies in High School Social Studies* My goal is to make sense of high school teachers’ experiences with the newly implemented Common Core Literacy Standards and to add to the discussion of on how to prepare teachers to implement reading strategies into their curriculum.

I would like to use our school as my research site and invite you to participate in this study. Should you choose to participate, we will meet for approximately one hour to talk about your experiences with implementing reading strategies brought on by Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The interview will be audio-recorded and will take place toward the beginning of the school year at a time and place that is most convenient to you. Your confidentiality will be maintained at all times, as I will assign each participant a pseudonym and all interviews and documents will be referenced using only this pseudonym. I also would like to observe you in your classroom one time and then attend a PLC meeting with the six participants to listen to your discussion of this issue. If you are willing to participate, I will have you sign an informed consent form, and schedule a time for our interview. Of course, there would be no consequences to your employment whether you participate or not. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any questions or concerns regarding my study, please contact me at Lucio.t@husky.neu.edu.

Sincerely,

Tabby Grabowski, EdD Candidate
Northeastern University
559-280-2209
Lucio.t@husky.neu.edu
Appendix D: Informed Consent Document

Informed Consent

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Principal Investigator’s Name: Karen Medwed PhD
Investigator’s name: Tabby Grabowski
Title of Project: Reading Strategies in High School Social Studies

Date:

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

This consent process requires you to be fully informed about the conditions of this research project and your rights as a participant. Each of the questions and answers below seek to fulfill this need.

Will there be any compensation offered?
There will be a $10.00 visa gift card as compensation for your participation in this study after you complete one interview lasting about 60 minutes, a classroom observation, and attendance at an observed PLC meeting.

Is there any benefit for participation?
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, you may benefit from this project through discussion and reflection of transitioning pedagogical styles that include reading strategies. Additionally, an increased understanding of professional development practices could positively influence other content areas.

How will my identity be protected?
Your identity will be handled in a confidential manner. Only myself, as the researcher, will see the information about you. In any publications from this study, your name will not be identified, and a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one audio-recorded interview, a classroom observation and one PLC meeting with all 6 participants attending. Excerpts from the recordings will be used to document your beliefs about past professional developments and PLC support pertaining to literacy instruction. This interview will occur at a place of your choosing, at a mutually agreed upon time.

Will my performance be evaluated?
The project does not evaluate your performance, or understanding of reading strategies as it they apply to the social studies content. But this study intends to gain your perspective on the professional developments you have received and your PLC meetings as they pertain to this topic. Classroom observations will not be evaluative.
Is there any risk or harm to me through this study?
There are no foreseeable risks to you as part of this study. Any personal revelations or reflections that reveal challenges or tensions in your thinking will not be framed as individual failures. Should you choose to take part in the study, you have the right, at any time, to terminate your participation without any consequences to your teaching position.

What if I do not wish to participate in the study?
You do not have to take part in this study. Your participation is voluntary and,
If you have any questions or problems please contact Tabby Grabowski (Northeastern University) lucio.t@husky.neu.edu 605-828-5578 or Karen Medwed PhD., (Principal Investigator) k.reissmedwed@neu.edu.

If you have any questions or wish to learn further about your rights as a participant you can contact: Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University Boston, MA 02115 tel. 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu.

I agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this form for my information.

________________________________________________________________________ Research Participant (Printed Name)
________________________________________________________________________ Signature__________ Date
________________________________________________________________________ Investigator’s Signature__________ Date
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

**Topic: Reading Strategies in High School Social Studies**

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Tabby Grabowski
Interviewee #:
Ask permission to begin recording. (Turn on recorder)

**Introduction**
As you know, I am in my final phase of my doctoral program and your help today will aid me in completing this journey, so I want to thank you for your time. This research project explores how high school social studies educators describe their experience with implementing reading strategies in the classroom. The goal of this research is to help future teachers with the transition from California State Standards to Common Core State Literacy Standards.

First, I want to emphasize that all of my participants will remain anonymous, and that your participation is completely voluntary. If you don’t mind, I would like to review the consent form with you before we begin.

[Review and sign NEU Consent Forms]

Thank you. I have a few more administrative items to discuss before we begin. Since your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today so I can replay it after to analyze. Is that okay? Also, I will have a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews. The transcriptionist will receive the audio labeled by a pseudonym, meaning they will never know your name to maintain confidentiality. Once the audio recording is transcribed, I will email you a copy for your review within two weeks of receipt. How does that work for you?

I have planned for this interview to last no longer than 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. Therefore, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete the line of questioning. Additionally, there may be times where I may prompt you to go deeper in your explanations. Do you have any questions before we start? Awesome. Let’s begin.
Interview Questions

Interview Questions Focus Question: Now that you have experienced the transition from CST to CCSS how do you perceive the experiences of transitioning your curriculum to include reading instruction?

Background Information

1. What is your name?

2. How many years have you been teaching?

3. How many years have you taught social studies?

Transition

I am now going to ask you questions focused on exploring your perspectives on the transition to Common Core Literacy Standards.

4. How do you feel about your obligation to teach reading in your classes?

5. Explain the kinds of formal schooling/training in reading instruction that you have received?

6. Do you think the district has communicated, well enough, how to implement reading strategies? Do you think our PDs and communication was effective? What parts were or were not effective?

4. How do you feel about your skills and ability to include literacy instruction right now? What are your strengths? What techniques are you comfortable using? Weaknesses? What techniques are harder for you?

5. Explain how you assist your ELL and low SES students with reading instructional material. Is it different from your EO students?

6. What has been your experiences regarding teaching reading within the social studies content? Have you noticed a transformation to include reading when you are preparing to teach content or is it still foreign to you?

7. What are some of the barriers, if any, that obstruct the implementation of reading strategies for you?

8. Do you feel you are effectively implementing reading strategies that meet the Common Core Literacy Standards? Do you feel/think that you are reaching all of your students, like ELLs, low SES, and EO? Explain?

9. Have you explored multiple reading strategies? Is there a particular strategy that best fits your content?
10. Could you describe how your PLCs has or has not contributed to your implementation of reading strategies.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Just a reminder, your responses will be tied to a pseudonym and therefore your identity will be confidential.

If I come across a need to ask any follow-up questions, which would most likely only be the case if I felt clarification were needed in regard to one of your responses, would it be all right for me to contact you? Would you prefer I contact you via email or telephone?

Sometime over the next month, I will email you a word-for-word transcript. If you choose, you can review the information, and you will have two weeks to provide me with any feedback, alterations, or corrections. Can you please confirm the email address you would like for me to email the transcript to?

Finally, when this thesis study is complete, which will most likely be 3 months from now, would you like to receive an electronic copy of the document?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your participation in this study!
Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Tabby Lucio successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 11/14/2014.

Certification Number: 1618452.