EXPERIENCE AS KNOWLEDGE: TEACHER BELIEF AND PURPOSE AS PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

by

JEFFREY HAYES

AARON KUNTZ, COMMITTEE CHAIR
BECKY ATKINSON
LATRISE JOHNSON
CYNTHIA SUNAL
ELIZABETH K. WILSON

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2016
ABSTRACT

The literature reviewed in this study indicates that evaluating teacher belief and purpose as factors that can develop pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) may be useful in broadening the assessment of teacher knowledge. This broadening encompasses training through daily classroom teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to a larger, ongoing conversation about the possible factors that contribute to a teacher’s PCK.

Using phenomenology as a theoretical lens, this study explores how experience shapes and refines the PCK of five first year Secondary Education Language Arts teachers. Employing the qualitative measure of interviewing and transcription, followed by inductive analysis by marking passages and phrases of interest, this study illuminates the insight and questions that come from examining multiple individual experiences and how experience is important in evaluating teacher knowledge. The findings of this study suggest that continual research into expanding ideas about evaluating teacher knowledge and the methods for conducting teacher evaluations needs to be ongoing.
DEDICATION

For my parents, who never stopped believing in me.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to numerous people who supported me through my doctoral program. It is with heartfelt gratitude that I thank the following individuals.

First, I would like to thank the members of my committee. To Dr. Aaron Kuntz, thank you for helping me to see the possibilities of qualitative research and for shaping my understanding of methodology and theory; it has had a profound impact on my life. To Dr. Elizabeth Wilson, thank you for always keeping me positive and being incredibly generous with your time. To Dr. Latrise Johnson, thank you for having patience and helping me with reviews of this research and answering all of my content-area questions. To Dr. Becky Atkinson and Dr. Cynthia Sunal, you each have played such an important role in shaping me in my graduate studies and in helping me write my dissertation. It is with great sadness that I mention the passing of Dr. Carolyn Handa, who was originally a member of my committee and also was a mentor for me in the English department. Dr. Handa taught me a great deal about engaging with older students and to think about the problems of collegiate writing programs. Her guidance, knowledge, warmth, and charity are greatly missed.

Second, I would like to thank my primary participants. These young educators were under incredible pressure, and I am forever grateful that they took time out of their schedules and lives to grant me the opportunity to talk about experience and education. I wish them all continued success in their lives and careers.

I greatly appreciate all of the people in The University of Alabama’s College of Education, from my fellow graduate students to the staff to the instructors and professors. My
experience was beyond my expectations, and I will forever remember all those experiences with great fondness.

Finally, none of this would be possible without my family, especially my parents, who never wavered in supporting me in finishing this dream. To Ken and Sherry Hayes, Heather and Shane McDonald, Susan Hayes Vanderlinde, and my wife Jil Sea, I love you all so much. This is the beginning of the next stage.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................... ii
DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................... iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................... x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....................................................................................................1
  Background ..........................................................................................................................1
  Statement of Problem ...........................................................................................................4
  Purpose of Study ....................................................................................................................5
  Research Questions ..............................................................................................................5
  Significance ..........................................................................................................................6
  Definition of Terms ..............................................................................................................7
  Theoretical Framework .........................................................................................................9
  Methodology .......................................................................................................................11
  Limitations ..........................................................................................................................12
  Organization of Study ........................................................................................................12
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ...................................................................................14
  Overview ..............................................................................................................................14
  Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) .............................................................................14
  Shulman’s PCK ....................................................................................................................15
# LIST OF TABLES

1. Article Summary ..................................................................................................................35
2. Participant Information ........................................................................................................49
3. Interview Schedule ............................................................................................................51
4. Participant Information .....................................................................................................55
CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Background

In devoting my life to the educational field, both as a teacher and as a researcher, there has been significant time expended in training and practice towards questioning and thinking about what comprises teacher knowledge as well as what constitutes a teacher as knowledgeable. Based on my experiences inside and outside of the classroom, I want to grasp a better understanding of the complex nature of teacher knowledge. In undertaking this research, I set out to understand the various types of teacher knowledge, what constitutes valuable or applicable teacher knowledge for a classroom teacher, and the value of personal experience and its applications in the classroom. After reviewing the literature on teacher knowledge, I selected pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK, as the type of teacher knowledge to further explore in this study.

Specifically, this study contributes to research focusing on PCK as described by Lee S. Shulman (1986). According to Shulman (1986), PCK is defined as:

the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the
category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue. (p. 8)

In Shulman’s definition, PCK is a “blend” of content and pedagogy. Therefore, PCK is comprised of both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Shulman describes content knowledge as:

[T]he knowledge, understanding, skill, and disposition that are to be learned by school children. This knowledge rests on two foundations: the accumulated literature and studies in the content areas. (p. 8-9)

According to Shulman’s (1987) definition, content knowledge informs pedagogical knowledge, or PK, as a part of the teacher knowledge base. Based on the literature review for this study, PK can be defined as containing the following: a summation of knowledge and curriculum as well as knowledge of educational goals and purposes (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1991); the beliefs about the importance of representations, knowledge of general lesson types, knowledge of planning, and knowledge of classroom management (Hashweh, 2005); and, the knowledge of learners and learning, classroom management, instruction and curriculum, assessment, and educational goals (Park & Oliver, 2008).

So what is the distinction between PK and PCK? The major distinction is, as Mishra and Koehler (2006) point out, that PCK needs to be considered as “exist[ing] at the intersection of content and pedagogy” (p. 1021). PCK separates from PK because it is dependent on the teacher adapting or learning how to deal with the “amalgamation” of content and pedagogy in the classroom (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). For example, an English Language Arts educator must understand how to teach students to identify metaphors in Shakespearian sonnets and to comprehend essay writing rules. Both of these types of knowledge are distinctive and require
unique representation; however, in the context of PCK, an effective teacher is able to consistently teach both unique types of knowledge through strategic planning and adaptation to the specific classroom’s context. In other words, the teacher is able to combine content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach. PCK is distinct from PK, but it cannot exist without it.

In the subsequent years since Shulman’s PCK concept was introduced, educational research on the subject remains varied and active. PCK represents a common thread in some of the research literature on teacher knowledge due to factors such as The National Research Council (NRC) in 1996 identifying PCK as a knowledge base that all teachers should possess. PCK as a topic in educational research weaves through different areas of research on teacher knowledge, ranging from content specific (e.g., Hashweh, 2005) to constructivist paradigms (e.g., Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1991, 1993). Some researchers argue that the lack of a fixed definition for PCK that can be applicable in education hurts research about teacher knowledge (Settlage, 2013). However, PCK was originally proposed as a knowledge base that should not be static (Shulman, 1986, 1987).

The malleability of PCK begets larger questions about the composition of a teacher’s knowledge base, or, what knowledge components can be considered valid contributors to the PCK of a teacher. The flexibility of Shulman’s definition of PCK has led to research centering on identifying different categorizations of PCK components. Examples of various research studies embracing the pliability of PCK include examining knowledge that comes from emotional, social, and cultural contexts of trying to teach in the classroom (e.g., Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007).
Statement of the Problem

Assessing teacher knowledge in order to evaluate what a teacher knows presents difficulty for teacher education research (Kleickmann et al., 2012). The difficulty lies in not just the assessment of teacher knowledge, but in deciding upon what domains of knowledge should be assessed. Teacher knowledge in regards to teacher certification, a primary reason for teacher assessment, was originally measured with either content-area heavy or pedagogically heavy examinations that would extol a teacher as knowledgeable if they passed (Shulman, 1986). A greater balance has been struck between content and pedagogically heavy examinations in the last few decades through the use of tests such as the national Praxis exams. However, the measurable achievement by ways of fixed forms of teacher knowledge privileged in those exams as primary indicators of teacher knowledge holds influence in teacher education and teacher training (Ben-Peretz, 2011). This is problematic because alternative types of knowledge may be overlooked as what becomes standard for valuable teacher knowledge becomes increasingly fixed by exams (e.g., national Praxis exams). Questioning what various types of knowledge components validate teacher knowledge needs to be ongoing so that the future assessments of teaching and overall training and development of teachers does not become a static affair (Cochran et al., 1991, 1993; Shulman, 1986, 1987). For this reason, investigating a domain of teacher knowledge (i.e., PCK) that has been marked as “common currency” (Segall, 2004, p. 490) and as a necessary knowledge base (NRC, 1996) in the context of educational research is prudent.

Shulman’s definition of PCK, a definition based on his viewpoint that “[A] knowledge base for teaching is not fixed and final” (Shulman, 1987, p. 12), helped usher in a new era of educational research inquiries into the possibilities of what comprises teacher knowledge (e.g.,
Cochran et al., 1991; Park & Oliver, 2008). The literature reviewed for this study suggests that Shulman’s original proposed definition determining what comprises teacher PCK requires evaluation and revision of the components. Therefore, to move towards improving future assessment of teacher knowledge, “expansions” (Ben-Peretz, 2011) of what comprises teacher knowledge (i.e., PCK) must be continually presented, debated, and analyzed in educational research. In addition to analyzing PCK and expansions of knowledge components linked to PCK, much of the literature focuses upon the individual experience. While authors in the literature review focus on a specific aspect of teaching knowledge (e.g., Bullough (2001) discusses reflective practices; Zembylas (2007) focuses on finding emotional dimensions), those components of reflection and understanding can be tied back into the belief and purpose that an individual adopts and/or attempts to put into an overall teaching philosophy that may or may not develop knowledge that can be associated with PCK.

**Purpose of Study**

The literature reviewed in this study indicates that evaluating teacher belief and purpose as factors that can develop PCK has implications that possibly could help develop insight into broadening the assessment of teacher knowledge. This broadening encompasses training through daily classroom teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to a larger, ongoing conversation about what possible factors contribute to teachers PCK.

**Research Questions**

Based on the literature reviewed, the research questions for this study are as follows:

1. In what ways do teachers develop a practical belief and purpose for their teaching?
2. Under what conditions do teachers amend their practical belief and purpose for their teaching?
Significance

This study is significant for multiple reasons. First, this study contributes to contemporary research in teacher education using qualitative methodology rather than quantitative methodology. The qualitative methodology for this study, a phenomenological interview approach which will be discussed in more detail later, presents data that was retrieved through engaging in a reflective dialogue with participants about experiences related to teaching. The concept of educators engaging in a reflective dialogue with one another in order to learn from those experiences is not a novel idea, and has been suggested in works such as Maxine Greene’s *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988). However, the use of a phenomenological interview approach in research on teacher knowledge has significance in the context of Shulman (1986), who originally called for a “well-organized and codified case literature” (p. 13) that would inform future development of teacher examinations as well as providing a scholarly resource for educational researchers and teachers. The literature reviewed for this study has provided examples of the latter and indicates that scholarly resources based on teacher experiences can be significant in overall development of teachers as educators and in encouraging them to view their own experiences in the classroom as valuable teaching tools to improve their own teaching (Dewey, 1966).

Second, this research contributes to existing studies that concentrate on PCK within content-area specificity (Ball, Thames, & Phelps 2008; Kleickmann et al., 2012; Monte-Santo, 2011; Park & Oliver, 2008; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007). This study examines first year Secondary English Language Arts teachers, but in keeping with Shulman’s (1986) idea about the general nature of defining components of PCK, this research presents experiences that can be
analyzed and shared by all content-area groups as it relates to general teacher development more-so than content-area specific teacher development.

Third, this research contributes to exploration of theories that can help to develop an individual’s PCK. These include studies of the possible emotional dimensions of PCK (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007) and developing a constructivist perspective regrading PCK (Cochran et al., 1991, 1993). Exploring, debating, and even creating alternative theories and ideas about PCK are significant in promoting the idea that a knowledge base for teaching should always be kept open to interpretation and reexamination (Shulman, 1986, 1987).

Fourth, this study has significance in contributing to teacher practices that can help develop individual content oriented PCK. These practices include, but are not limited to, building memory-based content specific instruction (Hashweh, 2005) and understanding how student knowledge informs instruction (Monte-Sano, 2011).

**Definition of Terms**

Prior to presenting the research questions for this study it is necessary to define several key terms in order to help understand some of the language of this study.

*Collective case study* is a phenomenological approach that separates each of the participants into individual cases, but the researcher treats them in the final writing as a collective (Stake, 2003).

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* are a set of educational standards developed by The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

*Content areas* are educational classes in English/language arts, science, social science, foreign language, and mathematics.
Content knowledge (CK) is defined as “represent[ing] teachers’ understandings of the subject matter taught” (Kleickmann et al., 2012, p. 2).

Constructivist definition of PCK is defined by Cochran et al. (1991) as “using the understandings of subject matter concepts, learning processes, and strategies for teaching the specific content of a discipline in a way that enables students to construct their own knowledge effectively in an given context” (p. 11-12).

Educational reconstruction for teacher education (ERTE) is a model for research purposed to break down PCK and help add new elements to defining it in order to help teacher development (van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007).

Emotional knowledge is defined as “a teacher’s knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one’s self, others (e.g., students, colleagues), and the wider social and political context in which teaching and learning take place” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 356).

Emotional scaffolding is the “teachers’ pedagogical use of analogies, metaphors, and narratives to influence students’ emotional response to specific aspects of the subject matter in a way that promotes student learning” (Rosiek, 2003, p. 402).

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is defined by Shulman (1987) as “It [PCK] represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8).

PCKg is a refining of the constructivist definition of PCK by Cochran et al. (1991). PCKg is defined as “a teacher’s integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning” (Cochran et al., 1993, p. 266).
Phenomenology is a philosophical method that is “designed to study the essence and meaning of experience” (Cilesz, 2011, p. 492-493).

Phenomenological interviewing is an open method of interviewing. According to Seidman (1998), the phenomenological based approach is an “approach [in which] interviewers use, primarily, open-ended questions. Their [the researcher] major task is to build upon and explore their participants’ responses to these questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experiences within the topic of study” (p. 9).

Practical belief is a belief that can be applicable in relation to accomplishing an objective.

Reflective Dialogue can be defined as “each time [a teacher] is with others—in dialogue, in teaching-learning situations, in mutual pursuit of project—additional new perspectives open; language opens possibilities of seeing, hearing, understanding” (Greene, 1988, p. 21).

Secondary education signifies middle grade schools (6th grade – 8th grade) and high schools (9th grade – 12th grade).

Teacher Professional Constructions (TPC) are defined as “cases of repeated experiences of teaching a familiar topic” (Hashweh, 2005, p. 289).

Theoretical Framework

A further discussion on the theoretical framework and methodology for this study occurs in chapters two and three respectively; however, I now briefly discuss both to introduce them before unfolding them further in subsequent chapters. The theoretical framework for this study is phenomenology based. Applying a phenomenological lens in the context of a research study means examining the data collected a step further. That next step can be, for example, to find the reasons of how and why people develop attitudes relating to where they work, how they
communicate with others, or how their worldview become shaped by examining the experiences of the participants (Csordas, 1994; Desjarlais, 1997).

Is there a difference between a phenomenological methodology and phenomenology as a framework if they are used in the same study? Yes. In the context of this study, a phenomenological interview method was used, which I will discuss briefly in the next section of this chapter and in more detail in chapter three. For the abridged requirements of this section, I summarize the phenomenological interview method as research that studies the experiences (i.e., phenomena) of the participants which provide entry into the topic being researched and provides insight for the subject, researcher, and reader (Seidman, 1998). But do the experiences indicate more issues, or more insight, which might exist after the initial analysis? How do the experiences relate to the larger world? What other questions do the interviews present? Applying a phenomenological base is the attempt to address those types of questions. Utilizing this particular theoretical framework within a phenomenological based study for educational research means larger questions can be extrapolated from the documented experiences. For example, documented experiences can lead to further investigation into what a teacher’s personal experiences in the context of the study can tell us about certain political and social issues that may affect education in the United States (Melançon, 2014).

In the context of this study I take experiences extracted from the phenomenological interviews conducted and examine the experiences further. Drawing conclusions in the context of this study meant finding examples of how certain components of a teacher’s PCK begins, amends, and how the factors (e.g., personal experiences with schooling, experiences with cultural interactions) that the results suggest contribute to initial PCK development and future growth. Furthermore, examining the data of this study equated to finding commonalities that
could be concluded as having no relation between people through themes derived from analysis, and critiquing cultural norms, assumptions, and/or institutions that relate to the data (e.g., general assumptions about what comprises teacher knowledge) (Csordas, 1994; Desjarlais, 1997; Jackson, 1995; Velmans, 2009; Willen, 2007).

Methodology

The research conducted uses a phenomenological case study approach. This means that first I separated each of the participants into individual cases, but then synthesize them in the final writing as a collective case study (Stake, 2003). Each case constructed underwent a phenomenological approach to interviewing. The individual cases are built on interviews conducted using a phenomenological approach suggested by Irving Seidman (1998). According to Seidman (1998), the phenomenological based approach is an:

[A]pproach [in which] interviewers use, primarily, open-ended questions. Their [the researcher] major task is to build upon and explore their participants’ responses to these questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experiences within the topic of study. (p. 9)

The open-ended interview with participating teachers in this study models a three-step design by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982, as cited in Seidman, 1998). In this model, the researcher transcribes conducted interviews, converts them into profiles, and then cross-references the interview transcripts and profiles which provide a perspective on the subjects and the problems this study addresses.

The participants for this study are first year Secondary Education English Language Arts teachers. Interviews conducted took place in a number of ways, including e-mail, Skype, phone, or in-person. One in-person interview took place on school grounds after school hours with no
students present. Of the five participants, only one school system granted me access to observe a participant during school hours and class time (see appendix A).

**Limitations**

Time frame and accessibility presented a major limitation in this study. The time frame limitation transpired due to looking specifically at the teacher in the classroom in his/her first year. Classroom access in the context of this study was difficult due to school policies on visitors. Of the five participants, I was only granted access to one school for on-site visitation. This limited my ability to make observational comments for use during the interview process and in my analysis and findings.

In addition, using a specific, smaller sample size (i.e., first year Secondary Education English Language Arts teachers) problematizes possible general use of this research. The group of first year Secondary Education English Language Arts teachers was chosen because I had contact with them as an instructor, and the participants had all graduated from the same teacher education program and at the same time. This meant that I had a previously established familiarity with the participants through classroom instructional time. However, that rapport did not influence the direction or outcome of any of the data or of the findings.

Another major limitation accounted for is the use of e-mail as an interview method. Using e-mail as an interview tool involves the possibility of not getting more in-depth responses form participants that would occur when interviewing them either in person or using video conferencing via the Internet.

**Organization of Study**

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one presented the problem of the research, the significance of the research, a list of defined terms, and the research questions. The
theoretical framework, conceptual framework, methodology, and limitations for the study were also discussed in the first chapter. Chapter two presents a summary and analysis of PCK in selected papers beginning with Shulman (1986, 1987). My conclusions and research questions based on the literature review ends section one of the second the chapter.

In chapter three, I explain my methodology. Chapter three also includes a discussion of my theoretical framework, a discussion of the study’s participants, and an explanation concerning how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four presents a brief discussion of how a phenomenological framework impacts the interpretation of the data followed by a summary of how the phenomenological method in this study provides useful data to be analyzed. Following those recaps, an analysis of themes extracted from the interviews is presented. For each research question, I present my findings based on the analysis. Lastly, in chapter five, I provide a brief overall summary of the research. Following the summary, commentary and analysis drawn from the study are provided that reflect my research questions. In closing, implications for the field of teacher education are suggested through further inquiries into research, policy, and practic
CHAPTER II:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

In this chapter I divide the literature review into two sections. The first section of the literature review presents a summary and analysis of selected papers arranged chronologically that discuss pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK. I chose to examine PCK because of an interest in investigating ideas presented in educational research on the topic of teacher knowledge. Of all the various types of teacher knowledge discussed in the research literature, I chose PCK to further examine because it presents opportunities for educational researchers to explore “the nuances of teacher knowledge” (Settlage, 2013, p. 11) because PCK has no unanimously agreed upon definition (McNeill & Knight, 2013) and remains marked as “common currency in the literature in and on teacher education” (Segall, 2004, p. 490).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

The following research literature is in chronological order beginning with Shulman’s (1986, 1987) initial papers presenting PCK. Following a summary of Shulman’s PCK, I summarize and analyze selected papers that present interpretations of PCK since its initial conception in 1986. My understandings and my perceptions are the basis of the analysis. Following a summary of PCK in the research literature, I close section one of the literature review on PCK with a discussion in which I present my research questions.
Shulman’s PCK

In Shulman’s (1986) introduction of PCK in “Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching,” his concern centers on the evaluation of teacher knowledge and ability. He compares 19th and 20th century examinations of teacher knowledge—finding a focus on measuring content knowledge in the former and a focus on pedagogical knowledge in the latter. Based on an analysis of the literature concerning teacher knowledge, Shulman (1986) felt that, in the context of the educational research taking place in his era (i.e., the 20th century, the 1980s), there was a need to improve teacher education and assessment of teacher knowledge due to a perceived “absence of focus on subject matter among the various research paradigms for the study of teaching” (p. 6). Shulman’s problem with research paradigms having an absence of focus can also be inferred as a problem that exists due to a lack of balance in identifying and measuring teacher knowledge.

In Shulman’s paper the initial introduction of PCK comes as part of a large view of ideas addressing the gaps he believes exists in identifying and assessing teacher knowledge. In addressing the gaps, Shulman (1986) poses the question: “How might we think about the knowledge that grows in the minds of teachers, with special emphasis on content?”(p. 9). To break down this knowledge domain (i.e., teacher knowledge), the author believes three content knowledge categories should be addressed: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge (p. 9). Of the three categories, PCK stands out as an intriguing idea due to its composition not necessarily being determined or ostensibly concrete as when identifying the components of the other proposed knowledge categories (i.e., knowledge of subject matter or curricular knowledge). PCK is presented as a possible knowledge category that requires understanding content and context to decipher the “teachability” of content.
(Shulman, 1986, p. 9). Shulman (1986) further infers that since learning unlikely begins in the classroom *tabula rasa*, then including strategic teaching knowledge, which he believes would be a component of PCK, in addition to content knowledge, could be a great opportunity to broaden research on teaching and learning that would contribute to the knowledge growth of teachers and provide a valuable way to assess teacher knowledge.

In the closing implications, Shulman (1986) presents a call for change in evaluating teacher knowledge through professional examinations that, he states:

- reflect an understanding that both content and process are needed by teaching professionals, and within the content we must include knowledge of the structures of one’s subject, pedagogical knowledge of the general and specific topics of the domain, and specialized curricular knowledge. (p. 13)

A subtext in Shulman’s statement indicates a need for balance in evaluating teacher knowledge. Also, generalities occur in his statement (e.g., specialized curricular knowledge) which leaves room for interpretation. Shulman (1986) speculates that the concept of teacher knowledge could be organized and clarified by creating a “well-organized and codified case literature” (p. 13) that would inform future development of teacher examinations as well as provide a scholarly resource for educational researchers and teachers.

In his follow up paper “Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform,” Schulman (1987) notes prominent educational theorists of the 20th century whose works influence the continuing development of his theory of PCK. Those influences include “John Dewey (1904), Israel Scheffler (1965), T. F. Green (1971), Gary Fenstermacher (1978), B. O. Smith (1980), and Joseph Schwab (1983)” (Shulman, 1987, p. 4). In studying the work of these educational scholars, Shulman forms key questions about teacher knowledge, such as: “What are
the sources of the knowledge base for teaching? In what terms can these sources be conceptualized? What are the implications for teaching policy and educational reform?” (Shulman, 1987, p. 4). Shulman (1987) presents a general definition of PCK that functions as a part of his proposed knowledge base for teachers. He describes the knowledge base as:

1. **Content knowledge;**

2. **General pedagogical knowledge**, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter;

3. **Curriculum knowledge**, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers;

4. **Pedagogical content knowledge**, that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understating;

5. **Knowledge of learners and their characteristics;**

6. **Knowledge of educational contexts**, ranging from the workings of the group or the classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures; and,

7. **Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values**, and their philosophical and historical grounds (Schulman, 1987, p. 8).

The knowledge base feeds from four sources which I paraphrase as content knowledge, curriculum materials and their validity, understanding context, and experience both past and present (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). In his paper, Schulman (1987) puts a focus upon and elaborates further the idea of PCK stating: “It [PCK] represents the blending of content and pedagogy into
an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8). The six points surrounding PCK could be theoretically blended into the “special amalgam” of PCK that Shulman describes.

The definition and subsequent elaboration of PCK as a part of a knowledge base in “Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform” is generalized. This generalization leaves an opportunity to interpretation by educational researchers, teachers, and administrators to develop it further. Shulman (1987) acknowledges the malleability of any proposed knowledge base for teaching. He states:

A knowledge base for teaching is not fixed and final [...] We may be able to offer a compelling argument for the broad outlines and categories of the knowledge base for teaching. It will, however, become abundantly clear that much, if not most, of the proposed knowledge base remains to be discovered, invented, and refined. As more is learned about teaching, we will come to recognize new categories of performance and understanding that are characteristic of good teachers, and will have to consider and redefine other domains. (p. 12)

Shulman presents a persuasive stance against static classification with a proposed knowledge base that attempts to re-define teacher knowledge as something that grows, changes, and adapts. The author further challenges the idea of static teacher knowledge by supporting the development of identifying shared experience as a way of building and improving upon existing knowledge in the context of teaching (Shulman, 1987, p. 14).
Summary of Shulman’s PCK

In Shulman’s 1986 paper, he identifies what he perceives as a knowledge gap concerning classification and measurement of teacher knowledge through a comparison of 19th and 20th century teacher examinations that focused on content and pedagogy respectively. By identifying a schism in the evaluation of teacher knowledge (i.e., in that it privileges specific types of knowledge as primary to be assessed), Shulman constructs a reasonable argument for a need to re-evaluate the assessment of teacher knowledge and the categorizations of that knowledge. He proposes three knowledge categories. Of those three categories, PCK garners the greatest interest not only for educational researchers, but also by Shulman. To help assess and build categories of teacher knowledge (e.g., PCK), Shulman believed it was important to construct a strong case-based research literature that would eventually grow from a community of researchers and teachers; both informing one another to improve research in teacher education and overall teacher knowledge.

The definition of PCK presented in the 1987 paper by Shulman and the proposed knowledge base surrounding PCK carries the implication that teacher educators, teachers, and educational researchers should understand not only how a person teaches, but also why a person teaches. Shulman explains that teacher knowledge could be identified and classified by not only what a teacher knows (content), but also how a teacher delivers that content based on a number of contextual factors. The open ended nature of discovering what those factors are, the factors that contribute to PCK’s “special amalgam of content and pedagogy” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), and if those factors can help a teacher to develop useful knowledge to further develop professional practice, gives PCK an alluring quality for researcher who wish to build upon the current literature concerning teacher knowledge. The other factors that have been posited by educational
research conducted since 1986 and that contribute to the theoretical knowledge base of PCK will be discussed next.

**PCK in the Research Literature**

In a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association conference in 1991, Kathryn Cochran, James DeRuiter, and Richard King elaborated on how PCK exists as a unique knowledge developed by teachers. They argue that:

Pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge that is unique to teachers, and in fact is [author emphasis] what teaching is about. It concerns the manner in which teachers relate their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) to their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach), in the school context, for the teaching of specific students. It is the **integration** or the **synthesis** [author emphasis] of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge. (p. 4)

Cochran et al. (1991) believe that PCK can be developed by teachers as a process or transformation that they credit Shulman (1986) for implying. This transformation shares similarity to a journey a teacher undergoes when developing and presenting teaching materials through critical reflection, interpretation, representation, adaptation, and adjustment of the subject matter.

Based on review and analysis of PCK in the literature, Cochran et al. (1991) develop a working definition from a constructivist perspective:

Pedagogical content knowledge is an integrated understanding that is synthesized from teacher knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning. In other words, PCK is using the understandings of
subject matter concepts, learning processes, and strategies for teaching the specific content of a discipline in a way that enables students to construct their own knowledge effectively in a given context. (p. 11-12)

The author notes that “Our definition is somewhat, although not radically different from Shulman’s in that we have put relatively more emphasis on the environmental context of learning and the teacher’s knowledge of students” (Cochran et al., 1991, p. 11). The departure of this definition appears to be influenced by points five and six of Shulman’s knowledge base, which focuses upon the knowledge a student possesses, the context of that knowledge, and how best to develop that knowledge in the classroom (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). In addition to providing a definition, the authors also outline a four area guideline that they believe can help prepare and develop such teacher knowledge beginning with teacher preparation programs. The four areas include: content/subject area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of students, and knowledge of environmental context. These four areas could potentially blend and overlap with each other as a teacher develops.

Cochran et al. (1991) propose a set of working hypotheses for suggested future research to further develop and classify the kind of PCK outlined in the paper. Those eleven points are:

1. Providing pre-service teachers with a solid foundation of PCK requires strong preparation in liberal arts, pedagogy, and specific subject matter content.

2. PCK development requires conceptually integrated instruction across liberal arts, pedagogy, and subject area courses in order for these types of knowledge to develop concurrently.
3. Pre-service program faculty development is necessary to assist instructors of subject matter content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to be able to demonstrate and reflect upon uses of PCK in their own teaching.

4. Cooperation between subject area faculty and pedagogy faculty, and substantial and innovative course development and revision, will be required.

5. Program faculty must model the awareness of PCK by sharing teaching decisions and strategies with students. We must practice what we teach.

6. Due to its integrated nature, PCK development cannot only occur in a separate course, such as a capstone seminar.

7. How we develop PCK in teacher preparation programs may depend on the grade level focus of those programs.

8. The construction of pedagogical content knowledge results from multiple opportunities to teach, and to observe and to reflect on one’s own teaching and that of others in a content area.

9. Development of PCK requires early, continued, and authentic field experiences with opportunities for “real teaching” and follow up reflection and feedback.

10. Peer coaching, cooperative classroom activities, analysis of case studies, and team teaching will facilitate PCK development.

11. PCK development continues beyond initial licensure (or certification) and should be an integral part of in service professional development (Cochran et al., 1991, p. 14-17).

The preceding hypotheses represent possible ways to broaden and refine a definition of PCK beginning with teacher preparation programs. For example, point eleven suggests branching out
to studying the development, or deficiency, of individual PCK in the professional classroom. This broadening and refinement conceivably could be content or discipline specific.

Building on their previous work and constructivist definition of PCK, Cochran et al. (1993) find that defining teacher knowledge remains concrete and propose that in the context of teacher education and preparation for PCK to be referred to as PCKg. They propose that PCKg be defined as “a teacher’s integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning” (Cochran, et al., 1993, p. 266). These four components, which they introduced in their original 1991 work on PCK, are intended to blend and inform one another in demonstrating the development of teacher knowledge. The authors again propose hypotheses to promote discussion of PCKg, but these are built upon their previous suggested hypotheses. The expansion of the definition of PCK to PCKg is intriguing. What Cochran et al., (1993) are attempting in shaping and redefining PCK can be is true to Shulman’s notion that PCK is an amalgamation that grows and expands from the original base as new information becomes available.

In a qualitative study of university level instructor use of generic, or foundational PCK as originally proposed by Shulman (1986), Juan-Miguel Fernandez-Balboa and Jim Stiehl (1995) describe PCK as “something that all [author emphasis] those who communicate ideas to others must have” (p. 294). The authors acknowledge that this presents complications in boiling down PCK to individual components to be evaluated. A major complication, they argue, centers on the fact that PCK cannot be static since an individual can develop PCK further through work and subsequent reflection upon that work (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995). The results of their qualitative study present similar ideas of the sources of knowledge to explore in future research on the relationship between teacher knowledge and context presented by Cochran et al. (1991,
1993). The sources of knowledge proposed to consider with defining PCK are: “(a) the subject matter, (b) the students, (c) numerous instructional strategies, (d) the teaching context, and (e) one’s teaching purposes” (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995, p. 297).

The conclusions of this study draw on not only the previously mentioned components of PCK, but also discuss how what a teacher believes stands as just as important as what they teach. For example:

In this study, professors’ generic PCK appeared to be strongly affected by their own systems. To illustrate, it was obvious that these professors believed that the mere transmission of subject matter is not the main purpose of their teaching—the subject matter per se is not paramount. What is paramount is that the subject matter serves as a means for students to construct new knowledge and lived enhanced lives. (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995, p. 304)

Based on what Fernandez-Balboa and Stiehl (1995) discuss, speculation can be made that PCK could be enhanced in theory by illuminating the connection between the teaching of the content and the interaction (or context) in the classroom. The results presented by the authors indicate a relational aspect of developing teacher knowledge or PCK, i.e., teachers develop some type of empathy regarding the relationship between the students and the subject matter. According to Fernandez-Balboa and Stiehl’s (1995) paper, this group of professors share a belief system, and while the individual actions of each professor to deliver the material to students differs, the core idea the authors of the paper present stands as a singular vision of how and why a teacher should make a decision while keeping the needs of the student primary. This information presents a reasonable argument that the (or even an individual’s) shared belief system acts as an extension of the knowledge source that can be categorized as one’s teaching purposes. In returning to
Shulman’s (1987) viewpoint, teacher purpose could be an extension of his seventh point in his description of the knowledge base: “Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). Those knowledge points posited by Shulman, which included PCK, can arguably be seen as feeding into one another; therefore, it makes sense that teacher belief or purpose are components of teacher knowledge worth consideration when assessing a teacher’s overall PCK.

In another paper dissecting the ideas of Shulman and PCK, Robert V. Bullough Jr. (2001) examines turn of the 20th century problems surrounding teacher knowledge and compares them with Shulman’s concept of PCK. Bullough’s (2001) definition of PCK builds upon his agreement with the work of Fenstermacher (1994), which leads the author to two conclusions about PCK. First, a component of PCK occurs through reflection and then action for the in-service, or practicing, teacher. Bullough (2001) states that “teachers need help to think more complexly about their practice and the reasons behind their actions in the light of how particular pupils learn and in relationship to specific formal, academic knowledge” (p. 665).

In addition to reflection at the in-service level, the author believes that elements of PCK (e.g., teacher belief) can be seeded in the pre-service, or teacher education, portion of the development of a teacher. He states that “there is a need for a process approach to teacher education, one that attends carefully to teacher biography and beliefs about teaching and learning and assists beginning teachers to develop the means and disposition to become students of teaching” (p. 665). These concepts of reflection, context, and personal approaches to teaching build on pre-existing ideas of what comprises PCK. Reflection represents the eighth in the large eleven points of proposed study to further define PCK by Cochran et al. (1991). But does “good” reflection require empathy? In the theory of developing a broad PCK, it would seem that
reflection would require the ability for teachers to be empathetic based on what Bullough (2001) and Fernandez-Balboa and Stiehl (1995) posit. This position requires one to accept that process and empathy can not only co-exist, but that through reflection, a person can work through emotion and make an informed decision for later use in the context of the classroom.

Jerry Rosiek (2003) analyzes a number of studies conducted over ten years regarding teacher practical knowledge, i.e., classroom management, and finds one idea that could be an addendum to PCK. Rosiek’s (2003) idea, emotional scaffolding, is defined by the author as “teachers’ pedagogical use of analogies, metaphors, and narratives to influence students’ emotional response to specific aspects of the subject matter in a way that promotes student learning” (p. 402).

Rosiek (2003) defends the idea of emotional scaffolding by pointing out that within the general framework of PCK there exists an untapped emotional dimension for researcher and teacher education to consider. Based on empirical evidence gathered, Rosiek (2003) draws the conclusion that “pedagogical content knowledge has an emotional dimension and that this emotional dimension is shaped by considerations of culture and local context” (p. 406). The conclusion stands on the shoulders of Shulman’s (1987) general knowledge base points five and six, which state that a teacher must know and develop the possible knowledge of learners, their characteristics, and the educational context required to help develop that knowledge.

The findings and proposals in Rosiek’s (2003) paper indicate that the concept of emotional scaffolding could provide educational research and teacher education with new dimensions to consider when considering teacher knowledge, or PCK. Those new dimensions include acknowledging that teaching requires knowledge of subject matter and emotion and that teaching must find a way to use this knowledge in the context of the classroom. The argument
put forth by the author is that research and training need to acknowledge that subject matter and emotion intersect and are synchronous regarding the development and actions of classroom teachers (Rosiek, 2003, p. 411).

The argument by Rosiek (2003) of a need to consider the emotional dimension of teaching represents an elaboration on the constructivist perspective introduced by Cochran et al. (1991). As constructivism concerns active learning, or knowledge that the learner constructs from experience, the experience still needs to be contextual to the desired learning outcomes (e.g., demonstrating knowledge of the subject matter), of the classroom. What Rosiek (2003) proposes concerns considering a way to somehow either influence students to bring and share experience in the classroom, or to have a teacher emotionally prompt students by sharing stories of their own life, and to find a way to use it in everyday curriculum. This proposal could be difficult for teachers as it asks that a person explore emotions from the subject matter and make them relatable. If PCK could have a justifiable emotional dimension based on culture and local context that could be assessed, what would the benchmarks be? Can a teacher be trained to find the right anecdote to share that will prompt student discussion? Also, how do you assess a person on how they manage or stimulate discussion of material based on emotional response? There is also a question of if a teacher receives no categorization as adequately emotionally responsive to the culture and context of situations in the classroom, does that make them a less than adequate teacher?

Categorizing experience as a mark of teacher knowledge, or contributing to the PCK of a teacher, has been addressed by others in the research literature. Maher Z. Hashweh (2005) presents a brief history of PCK in order to clarify, in the opinion of the author, its generalizability as a crutch and proposes a definition:
Pedagogical content knowledge is the set or repertoire of private and personal content-specific general event-based as well as story-based pedagogical constructions that the experienced teacher has developed as a result of repeated planning and teaching of, and reflection on the teaching of, the most regularly taught topics. (p. 277)

This definition puts importance upon the idea of building “experience.” Hashweh (2005) argues that PCK can be comprised of a collection of teacher professional constructions, or TPC’s, which are “cases of repeated experiences of teaching a familiar topic” (p. 289). In the article there are seven assertions outlined that integrates in the definition:

1. PCK represents personal and private knowledge.
2. PCK is a collection of basic units called teacher pedagogical constructions.
3. Teacher pedagogical constructions result mainly from planning, but also from the interactive and post-active phases of teaching.
4. Pedagogical constructions result from an inventive process that is influenced by the interaction of knowledge and beliefs from different categories.
5. Pedagogical constructions constitute both a generalized event-based and a story-based kind of memory.
6. Pedagogical constructions are topic specific.
7. Pedagogical constructions are (or ideally should be) labeled in multiple interesting ways that connect them to other categories and subcategories of teacher knowledge and beliefs (Hashweh, 2005, p. 277).

Hashweh (2005) builds ideas of experience based on ideas of memory proposed by Roger Schank’s (2000) work on how memories become constructed through hearing the accounts people give of a situation. The author dismisses PCK not developed in pre-service training;
however, if “pedagogical constructions are influenced by the interaction of different knowledge and beliefs categories” (Hashweh, 2005, p. 279), how can pre-service teaching memories and experiences be considered less important as a pedagogical construction that contributes to development of PCK? Every step in learning to teach has value and to think that the majority of pre-service programs would not provide adequate repeated teaching of materials and scenarios for pre-service and in-service teachers to learn from could be viewed as myopic. Also, “belief” categories do not necessarily need to be constrained to only prevailing theories or philosophies of education. While Shulman (1987) does believe a good knowledge base includes “knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (p. 8), which Hashweh (2005) builds upon, the idea of what comprises a belief and how it influences someone could be substantially larger. I do not believe in dismissing the importance of experience in teaching in the classroom regularly as it relates to the concept and development of PCK. Rather, I believe that a continual expansion into clarifying areas of experience, and what those experiences contribute to PCK should be considered.

In a review of literature, van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) unravel PCK to not only understand it to study the development of science teachers, but also in order to introduce a model for research they call “educational reconstruction for teacher education (ERTE)” (p. 885). In attempting to break down PCK, the authors reveal some new elements to consider when defining PCK. First, they believe that PCK exists as a knowledge domain built from individual context, i.e., beliefs, experiences and knowledge (p.889). Second, van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) propose that PCK has reciprocity with other knowledge domains (i.e., content area knowledge, context, pedagogical ability). Due to this insight, the authors suggest PCK has a third element that they
call “‘subject matter knowledge for teaching’ [which] enables the teacher to react flexible in different and unanticipated situations” (p. 890).

The preceding points distill PCK down into something acquired through experience and practice. In keeping with Hashweh’s (2005) points about TPC’s that could possibly contribute to PCK, van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) feel experience and practice helps to inform and possibly develop how a teacher thinks and presents material. Van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) support research that examines attempts to train a teacher to anticipate situations, possibly through role playing scenarios, and through consistent time in a training classroom environment. These findings parallel to Shulman’s (1986) belief that case studies could help contribute to development of PCK.

The concept of emotional ecology is discussed as a possible component of broadening a definition of PCK in Michalinos Zembylas’s (2007) article “Emotional ecology: The intersection of emotional knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in teaching.” The author defines emotional knowledge in connection with PCK as “a teacher’s knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one’s self, others (e.g., students, colleagues), and the wider social and political context in which teaching and learning take place” (p. 356). Many types of emotional knowledge contribute to PCK. The types of emotional knowledge can be identified within three planes of emotional ecology. The planes, socio-political (e.g., emotional knowledge of political power relations), individual (e.g., beliefs and/or attitudes related to teaching and learning), and relational (e.g., empathy), are not static but rather are meant to overlap and even influence one another (Zembylas’s, 2007, p. 358-359).

Deborah Lowenberg Ball, Mark Hoover Thames, and Geoffrey Phelps (2008) create specific subdomains of Shulman’s (1986) PCK framework in the content-area of mathematics.
Ball et al. (2008) illustrate that PCK has always been generalized and lacking empirical grounding; raising a point that “researchers have used pedagogical content knowledge to refer to a wide range of aspects of subject matter and, indeed, have used it differently across—and even within—subject areas” (p. 389).

The generalizability of PCK regarding the mathematics content-area is what the authors attempt to clarify and improve upon through specificity. After analyses of the types of mathematical work that inform the teaching of mathematics, Ball et al. (2008) believe PCK can be broken down into two math related domains: knowledge of content and students, or KCS, and knowledge of content and teaching, or KCT (p. 401). Ball et al. (2008) attempt to simplify the expansive nature of PCK into information that is easier to digest in a discipline specific context.

In conducting two separate studies, Fives and Buehl (2008) acknowledge Shulman’s (1987) seven components of PCK, but cannot construct a definition due to a lack within the research literature of “an extensive taxonomy of the constructs identified under those various frameworks (PCK) and clarification in the definition of terms” (p. 137). Fives and Buehl (2008) instead posit that teaching knowledge can be defined as “In essence, anything the individual holds that helps him or her fulfill the role of teacher” (p. 137). This assertion about examining the individual leads the authors to suggest further research into the individual beliefs and emotions about teacher knowledge that teachers carry into the classroom and how, if at all, are those beliefs and emotions utilized, dismissed, or supported.

Soonhye Park and J. Steve Oliver’s (2008) study on PCK for science teachers acknowledges that the subject matter knowledge that a teacher holds can be molded, or transformed, for the purpose of teaching based on the context of a classroom. The working definition of PCK for their study is:
PCK is teachers’ understanding and enactment of how to help a group of students understand specific subject matter using multiple instructional strategies, representations, and assessment while working within the contextual, cultural, and social limitations in the learning environment. (Park & Oliver, 2008, p. 266)

From that definition, Park and Oliver (2008) also identified five components to help identify PCK:

1. Orientations to science teaching
2. Knowledge of students’ understanding in science
3. Knowledge of science curriculum
4. Knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching science
5. Knowledge of assessments of science learning (p. 266).

The authors streamline Shulman’s (1987) original knowledge base by taking points such as general pedagogical knowledge and makes them content specific (e.g., point four).

Using three comparative case studies of pre-service teachers in the field in the content-area of history, Chauncey Monte-Sano (2011) provides a background of PCK and discusses some specific aspects of it in the context of pre-service teacher knowledge. The author isolates two key points from the research literature on PCK in the context of teaching history. The two points are to recognize conceptions of what students’ believe history as a class stands for and to understand how a teacher should consider their students when building lessons (Monte-Sano, 2011, p. 261). The author flips the idea of Shulman’s (1986) general pedagogical and curricular knowledge by proposing that PCK is as much about learning from your students. The author continues to tap away at the idea of what could define the relational aspect of learning that occurs between teacher and student and how this contributes to a definition of PCK in a
discipline specific context (e.g., history, social studies). Similar to Park and Oliver (2008) and Ball et al. (2008), Monte-Sano considers how to make PCK tangible if it remains in the context of remaining discipline specific.

An analysis of nine qualitative interpretive studies over a twenty year time period on teacher knowledge published in *Teaching and Teacher Education* was conducted by Miriam Ben-Peretz (2011). The study focused on trying to get more insight into defining teacher knowledge using Shulman’s (1986) ideas about what constitutes teacher knowledge as one of the aspects of analysis. Ben-Peretz (2011) notes in the concluding discussion that “it seems that over time the term teacher knowledge was expanded and broadened significantly” (p. 8). This conclusion is influenced by the author analyzing Tamir (1991) and Connelly, Clandinin and Fang (1997), whose papers expand the idea of teacher knowledge to include personal, professional, and practical knowledge.

Kleickmann et al. (2012) present research on PCK and content knowledge, or CK. CK “represents teachers’ understandings of the subject matter taught” (p. 2). According to their review, “literature on PCK identified two core facets of that knowledge: knowledge of students’ subject-specific conceptions and misconceptions as well as knowledge of subject-specific teaching strategies and representations” (p. 2). Kleickmann et al. (2012) differentiate between PCK and CK, but do not treat them as mutually exclusive in the research that they conduct with groups of mathematics teachers. Similar to Park and Oliver (2008), the authors try to expand the definition of PCK by creating content specific attributes that may help identify teacher knowledge within a content specific context. This study indicates the possibility of finding the balance that Shulman (1986) originally found lacking in his original comparison of 19th and 20th century assessment of teacher knowledge.
Summary of PCK in the Research Literature

Cochran et al. (1991, 1993) propose that PCK could be represented as an amalgamation of knowledge that Shulman (1986, 1987) first presented in his work. They propose a constructivist definition and new classification of PCK (PCKg) which they define as “a teacher’s integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning” (Cochran, et al., 1993, p. 266). This proposition and new definition of PCK by Cochran et al. (1991, 1993) presents an argument that the makeup of the amalgamation of PCK originally described by Shulman exists in flux and is not static. This amalgamation could be problematic as what can be considered “new” in relation to knowledge continually expands even when attempting to place that new knowledge as contributing to the foundations of content and pedagogical knowledge. The literature reviewed in this section all attempt in some way to build on the idea of knowledge not being static and attempt to establish validity of new components of knowledge that they believe can ultimately help contribute to defining PCK either generally (Bullough, 2001; Cochran et al., 1993; Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Hashweh, 2005; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007) or with conten-area specificity (Ball et al., 2008; Kleickmann et al., 2012; Monte-Santo, 2011; Park & Oliver, 2008; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007). New knowledge categories, or essentially an expansion of the original concepts proposed by Shulman (1986, 1987) relating to PCK over the last few decades, have vacillated between exploring the possible relationship between teacher experience and actual classroom activity. These new areas, or expansions as Ben-Peretz (2011) believes them to be, center on teacher purpose and belief in relation to how a person teaches and why (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995); exploring the possible individual contexts that influence teacher belief and purpose (van Dijk & Kattmann,
2007); teachers as reflective practitioners (Bullough, 2001); teacher experience and knowledge growth predicated upon emotional dimensions (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007); and experience as a knowledge building block in the context of familiarity with practice within a content-area (Ball et al., 2008; Hashweh, 2005).

Many of the studies in this literature review share a commonality of attempting to expand the concept of PCK by employing qualitative case study as the methodology of their research (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003). These studies take Shulman’s (1986) original proposition that a strong case-based research literature should be developed that would eventually grow from a community of researcher and teacher informing one another to improve research in teacher education and overall teacher knowledge and attempt to apply the concept in order to validate their expansion of the concept of PCK (p. 14). Table 1 below presents a brief summary of PCK components from the articles reviewed.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>PCK components</th>
<th>Summary of component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shulman (1986, 1987)</td>
<td>A generalized amalgamation of defined and not yet defined components of knowledge</td>
<td>A part of seven categories of knowledge that integrate with each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochran et al. (1991, 1993)</td>
<td>Constructivist Perspective</td>
<td>A teacher’s integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and the environmental context of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fernandez-Balboa &amp; Stiehl (1995)</td>
<td>Knowledge of students, teaching purpose, teaching context</td>
<td>How a person teaches and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullough (2001)</td>
<td>The importance of learning how to reflect</td>
<td>Training teachers how to reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosiek (2003)</td>
<td>Emotional Scaffolding</td>
<td>Learning to use individual experience in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashweh (2005)</td>
<td>Teacher Professional Constructions (TPC’s)</td>
<td>Teaching experinece builds PCK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zembylas (2007)</td>
<td>Emotional Knowledge</td>
<td>A teacher’s knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one’s self, others (e.g., students, colleagues), and the wider social and political context in which teaching and learning take place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Based on the review of literature for this study addressing PCK, there are two factors of interest for research. First, PCK has had many theorized components, but a focus on examining the possible teacher knowledge that develops from inquiring about the aspects of the teacher as an individual has been presented as an ongoing area of interest in the research literature since Shulman first introduced his ideas about PCK. Second, to attempt to assess the knowledge of an individual outside of content area and pedagogical knowledge, different types of research methodology need to be considered and undertaken in educational research. What could be used
as a research methodology inquiring into the topic of teacher knowledge? As originally suggested by Shulman (1986), a case-based approach can be used (p. 14). Qualitative case based methodology has been used in studies on PCK (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003), but in keeping the original intent that Shulman proposed in developing research on teacher knowledge, new research should be ongoing.

In thinking about the literature reviewed in this section, it can be assumed that evaluating teacher belief and purpose as factors that can develop PCK has implications that possibly could help develop insight into broadening the assessment of teacher knowledge from training through daily classroom teaching. Of all the expansions of knowledge components linked to PCK, the focus upon the individual and the experiences they have comes up often in the literature. While authors in the literature review focus on particular aspects (e.g., Bullough (2001) discusses reflective practice; Zembylas (2007) discusses emotional dimensions), those components of reflection and understanding can be tied back into the belief and purpose that an individual adopts and/or attempts to put into an overall teaching philosophy that may or may not develop knowledge that can be associated with PCK. But what does belief have to do with knowledge in the context of teaching?

For her research implications on teacher belief, Dona M. Kagan (1992) broadly defines teacher belief as “[T]acit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (p. 65). The literature review for this study demonstrates those assumptions can come in many forms. One assumption is that teaching can be improved by learning about students as individuals in and outside of the classroom (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Monte-Sano, 2011). Another example, as van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) point out, is that the belief of a teacher manifests as “[t]he teacher tries to represent the subject matter to his
students in ways he thinks the students can relate to” (p. 893), i.e., the teacher tries to create context in order to better teach the content.

Taking the ideas by Kagan (1992), Fernandez-Balboa and Stiehl (1995), and van Dijk and Kattmann (2007) into account, these assumptions concerning knowledge about students, content, and classrooms can come from reflective practices on the part of the educator (e.g., Bullough, 2001). So what does belief have to do with knowledge in the context of teaching? Belief is a form of personal knowledge that teachers translate into the everyday classroom when they reflect upon what they want to know, when they reflect on what they want their students to know, and when they then develop how they are going to approach their teaching (Bullough, 2001; Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Kagan, 1992; Monte-Sano, 2011; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007). How does this translate possibly into knowledge that contributes to PCK? Returning to Shulman’s (1987) definition of PCK, it can be argued that belief as a form of personal knowledge contributes to the “blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8).

Based on the literature reviewed the research questions for this study are as follows:

1. In what ways do teachers develop a practical belief and purpose for their teaching?
2. Under what conditions do teachers amend their practical belief and purpose for their teaching?

Question one focuses on development. Practical belief and purpose could be informed by experience and training. The parameters of experiences are not necessarily restricted by training and could possibly predate a teacher even entering into a training program or full time classroom. Question two addresses the changes that occur with experience that happens once someone has started teaching.
To attempt to answer the questions, research was conducted using: a) a qualitative case-based approach in order to build upon Shulman’s concept of a strong case-based literature to illuminate issues and strengths surrounding the development of proposed knowledge that contribute to PCK; that, b) contributes to the existing body of literature on PCK and possible knowledge components of PCK. As I attempted to examine abstract ideas of belief and purpose in this study, I will attempted to construct my cases through phenomenological interviewing as a methodology, which I will discuss more in-depth in chapter three.

Using PCK as a primary base for teacher knowledge is not an attempt to concretely define teacher knowledge. Shulman (1986) hinted at the futility of concretely defining teacher knowledge stating “it will, however, become abundantly clear that much, if not most, of the proposed knowledge base remains to be discovered, invented, and refined “(p. 12). Based on the selected literature reviewed in this chapter, defining components of teacher knowledge, specifically components of PCK, should be treated as malleable. Continually evaluating PCK by attempting to contribute or critique it through educational research helps to continually redefine PCK. PCK has been, as demonstrated in the selected literature review for this study, consistently reevaluated for different educational eras and specific content areas. Those contributions to the ongoing defining of PCK have come through some qualitative studies that discuss the experiences of educators.

Examining experiences (phenomena) to uncover teacher belief and purpose to see if those ideas could comprise the amalgamation of PCK proposed in some of the research literature presented in chapter two could provide valuable information to an existing body of research literature on the open-ended defining of PCK. A study on PCK should not look to concretely define the knowledge base; rather, it should be a study to provide insight to help expand
conceptions of what is or is not useful in aiding a teacher to be knowledgeable about the job they perform on a daily basis.
CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In chapter three I present the methodology for this study. For this study, I sampled five first year teachers who share the same educational training background and conducted three separate interviews with each of them. Each interview was conducted with open-ended questions guided by three areas: life history, details of teaching experience, and reflection. The resulting fifteen interviews were transcribed, printed out, and analyzed in two ways. The analysis yielded eight themes.

In this chapter I provide a more detailed breakdown of the previously described overview. The first section describes the methodological implications of using phenomenology as a theoretical framework. Next, I present a discussion on the methodological approach. Third, I present a discussion on the participants and the data collection of the study will be described. Finally, I discuss the analysis and presentation of the data.

Theoretical Framework

Methodological Implications

This study examines the phenomena of belief and purpose as it relates to pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK, of teachers. As previous educational research studies on the emotional and ideological dimensions of PCK have discussed (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007; Zembylas, 2007), there is
groundwork for other studies to look at the same subject matter but through different types of theoretical lenses concerning evaluation and classification of PCK outside of mere content and pedagogical knowledge domains. What drove those studies was a need to re-define and expand the theoretical knowledge domain of PCK discussed by Shulman (1986, 1987).

There are two reasons for utilizing a phenomenological approach for this research. First, conducting interviews for research is about highlighting experiences or phenomena. In a traditional context, the study of phenomenology is the study of experiences in order to get to some core meaning of those experiences (Cilesz, 2011). The second part of applying this methodology is to attempt to critique cultural norms, assumptions, and institutions. This study attempts to illuminate the relationship between the participants and their beliefs or processes (Csordas, 1994; Desjarlais, 1997), and what those relational components contribute to PCK, teaching, institutional and cultural norms, and general assumptions surrounding the question of what make a teacher knowledgeable. Second, this study hopes to contribute insight for current and future teachers, educational researchers, and education professionals to what Shulman (1986, 1987) originally suggested would be helpful to the amalgamated definition of PCK from a case-based library of research literature.

**Methodological Approach**

This research was conducted using a phenomenological case study methodology. Each participant was initially treated as an individual case, but in the final writing included as a part of a collective, being synthesized into, as Robert Stake (2003) describes, a “collective case study”(p. 138). Classification of the research as a “case study” will not fall prey to generalization with a collective case study foundation; rather, a collective case study is malleable due to the choice of a phenomenological approach to the interviews. This approach was chosen because
“cases are opportunities to study the phenomena” (Stake, 2003, p. 152). Instead of just building individual cases, in a collective case study the researcher locates the common threads that can be extrapolated from the interviews and used to connect the participants together to build a larger picture. Instead of looking at the particular strength of one case, of one viewpoint, the collective cases are considered as a whole and provide the opportunity to think deeper, to find common themes, and to consider other possible problems or to highlight successes.

While the cases are examined with a lens as described in the methodological implications section, each case is constructed through a phenomenological approach to interviewing. The decision to take a phenomenological approach occurred through my reading of the work conducted by Irving Seidman (1998). According to Seidman (1998), the phenomenological based approach is an “approach [in which] interviewers use, primarily, open-ended questions. Their [the researcher] major task is to build upon and explore their participants’ responses to these questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experiences within the topic of study” (p. 9). The Seidman approach allows me to inquire first hand and openly with the participants. So how is Seidman’s approach useful for this type of study?

The methodological approach Seidman proposes begins by the researcher constructing and then presenting open-ended questions. To explore deeper than surface data, the researcher must move beyond the binary of a simple “yes/no” questions. While “yes/no” answers can be useful in research, they unfortunately do not leave a lot of room for moving interviews into other areas. The interviewer can structure questions around a primary answer such as a “yes/no”, but those questions should encourage the participants to answer with an immediate addendum, such as a “yes/no, but” or a “yes/no, and.”
Thus, the open-ended question needs to be one that promotes details about a person, about their life experiences, about their work experiences, about their thoughts, about their ideas, and about their opinions. The open-ended questions require a certain logic or sequence. Such a sequence is important for the interviewer and the participant to maintain clarity on the topics being discussed. The open-ended interview with participating teachers in this study models a three-step design by Dolbeare and Schuman, one that Seidman describes in his own book as useful (Schuman, 1982, as cited in Seidman, 1998):

Life history: Questions will be asked that help guide the participant to re-construct their personal lives inside and outside of the school, from the earliest they wish to discuss up till the present. See appendix (B) for examples of questions for these interviews.

Details of experience: How are the experiences they are having as a teacher in their own classroom affecting or shaping their outlook? See appendix (B) for examples of questions for these interviews.

Reflection on the meaning: Assessing through open-ended questioning to reflect about the experiences they are having. See appendix (B) for examples of questions for these interviews.

The three-step interview process is appropriate for this study for two reasons. First, it is important in helping to break up and sequence the open-ended question interviews. Multi-interviews with a linear build (i.e., Dolbeare and Schuman) give the interviews a baseline to always return to. This linear aspect can help activate prior knowledge with interview participants about previous discussions. At the outset of some of my interviews, I informed participants about what we had previously touched on and what I was hoping to talk about, which provided them with a general outline. For example, in the third and final interview with Neil, I began by saying:
I will get started tonight by asking you given what you have said about your life before your first year, and sort of given what you have said about your first year experience up until now, which is basically what we covered in our first two interviews together, my first question is this, how do you understand teaching, in general, or just your teaching specifically if you want, with using standards, or common core standards, what sense does it make to you if any?

The second reason the three-step interview process is important for this type of study is that it provided me with a format to engage with the participants on a personal level over an extended period of time. One isolated interview would provide me with good information, but in conducting more than one interview in a one to three week period with multiple participants, I was afforded the time to digest and build upon the experiences I was being exposed to with the interviews. Each interview, each transcription, helped me try to form a better picture of the themes and the participants.

The third reason the three-step interview process is important for this type of study is that it provided me with the opportunity to exam the possible connections between the teachers’ own beliefs and the possible power formations (i.e., parents, school systems, types of assessment) that may have shaped them.

**Participants**

Two criteria defined the choice of participants for this study. First, the participants must have been first year classroom teachers with a certification in Secondary Education English Language Arts. This specific criterion qualifies the participants as a homogenous sample group who share similar training experiences and academic study at the collegiate level. Second, the participants considered belonged to a convenience sample, or consisted of those readily available
to participate in the research based on the fact that I had previously taught them or had other contact with them while they were still in a teacher education program (Glesne, 2011; Weiss, 1994).

The criteria provided a binding context for the participants. For example, all of the participants underwent the same training and course work under the umbrella of the teacher education program’s mission statement:

Unite with the larger community to collaboratively nurture cultural competence, empathy, and a vision of equity and justice for all learners; Act to develop the full potential of all learners to be excellent professionals in their field; and, Lead through continuous research-based critical inquiry of policy and reflective practice to enable transformative change in our diverse local and global communities” (Appendix D).

This emphasis on unite, act, and lead indicates that the participants all have received training that prepared them to negotiate the balance that comes with teaching in the classroom; i.e., understanding that different types of knowledge (pedagogical, personal, curricular, etc.) all contribute to assisting in forming the type of teacher they can choose to become.

After narrowing down the list of possible participants based on the above criteria, proper permission creation occurred and approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University was granted (see Appendix C). I contacted participants via e-mail and asked them about participating fully in the study. In total, seven possible participants consented to take the time to join. Participants received consent forms (see Appendix C) both electronically and physically to explain the study and the rights of the participants during the research in full detail.
While seven participants initially agreed to be in the study and returned the physical consent forms signed, only five followed through with the full interview cycles. A brief description of each of the five participants follows. All names are pseudonyms.

Joyce

A twenty-eight year old, married, White female in her first year of teaching, Joyce teaches English Language Arts at a middle school in the southeast United States where she did her internship and taught in the summer program. She is active in the surrounding community of the school.

Ann

A twenty-three year old, married, White female in her first year of teaching and motherhood, Ann teaches English Language Arts at a middle school in the southwest United States. She had not previously lived in that area and the job meant a large relocation.

Neil

A twenty-three year old, White male in his first year of teaching, Neil teaches English Language Arts at a middle school in the Midwest United States. He had not previously lived in that area and the job meant a large relocation.

Cindy

A twenty-three year old, White female in her first year of teaching, Cindy teaches English Language Arts at a private religious K-8 school in a town she spent time in growing up. She teaches grades sixth through eighth. She is a part of the after school-tutoring program and is an active member in the community of the church.
Sandra

A twenty-two year old, White female in her first year of teaching, Sandra teaches English Language Arts at a high school in a major populated city in the southeast. She also is head coach of the girls Lacrosse team. I have provided below a reference table (Table 2) of the participants.

Table 2

Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender/ Race/ Age/Degree</th>
<th>Current Grade Level Employment</th>
<th>Other Relevant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>Female, White, 28, BA in English, MA in alternative certification</td>
<td>6th-8th Public Middle School</td>
<td>Has taught in the same school since college internship and is involved in the community. The school has been decreed a failing school due to poor test scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Female, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>6th-8th Public Middle School</td>
<td>Assesses students for citizenship on progress reports and uses a one to four rubric scale to assess formally and informally according to common core state standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Male, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>6th-8th Public Middle School</td>
<td>Uses various verbal assessment practices, does not use rubrics to evaluate writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Female, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>Pre K-8th Private School</td>
<td>Teaches creative writing using three sets of standards and a course in religion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Data collection for this study was completed using the three interview model described in the methodological approach section. Interviews conducted took place either via e-mail, Skype, phone, or in-person. One in-person interview took place on school grounds after school hours with no students present. Of the five participants, only one school system granted me access to observe a participant during school hours and class time (see Appendix A). Due to only one school system granting me access out of five, no observational data is utilized.

Interviews

Interviews for the study relied on multiple forms of communication. Each interview had a skeletal outline of questions (see Appendix B) to give the interview structure based on the methodology and to help the interviewer stay focused upon the primary agenda of the research. The baseline, or foundation, I used to structure the prepared questions focused on the topics of the participants’ training and knowledge about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and assessments concerning student learning. Topics that came up during the conversations due to digressions were pursued until I lead the conversation back to a prepared question or a previous comment made by the participant.

Content that was being taught or even reflected upon by the participants at the time of the interviews was varied. While I had prepared baseline questions based on the participants’ training, there was not a commonality of content being taught at the same time to make further common thread analysis (i.e., no one was teaching the exact same unit). For example, during
their second interview, I inquired of each participant to recount a recent day of their teaching.

Responses varied and included: journal writing and grammar exercises (Neil); a worksheet on
figurative language and summary (Ann); teaching students how to read and analyze an article
from a periodical (Sandra); reading and class discussion of a non-fiction text (Joyce); and,
compare and contrast essay writing and general literature reading (Cindy).

The schedule for interviews took place approximately one to three weeks apart beginning
in December 2013 and running through February 2014. Each interview was guided by the
following question structure: Life history, details of experience, and reflection on meaning.

Table 3 below presents the schedule for interviews and the guided topics.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Guided Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Life History: Questions will be asked that help guide the participant to re-construct their personal lives inside and outside of the school, from the earliest they wish to discuss up till the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Details of Experience: How are the experiences they are having as a teacher in their own classroom affecting or shaping their outlook?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview 3

Reflection on the Meaning: Assessing through open-ended questioning to reflect about the experiences they are having.

Data Analysis

All tape-recorded interviews via Skype, phone, or in-person were transcribed. All e-mail interviews were printed out and treated as a transcription. The transcriptions were created by me verbatim from the interviews. Each transcribed interview was created by me following an interview, and there were no overlapping transcription sessions. Those transcriptions once complete went through inductive analysis by marking passages and phrases of interest. Working from Seidman’s (1998) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Science*, the process I underwent of an inductive analysis followed a number of steps. First, an initial analysis through labeling passages of interest on the transcripts for each interview with each subject (i.e., classifying certain themes) was made. That analysis included working through the three interviews of each participant in chronological order (i.e., first interview to third interview). The themes were derived from my knowledge of the literature and the commonalities that emerged in the responses of the participants. There were themes extracted that were influenced by the pre-interview scripted questions. For example, in the second interview cycle, I asked participants about testing and assessment, and they all responded.

Next, I chronologically arranged the thematic passages I extracted from the first reading for each participant. This created a profile for each of the participants. Each profile was then analyzed again to see if any other common thematic threads could be identified. What Seidman (1998) discusses in analyzing these passages is in his own way a process of coding, or finding
words, thoughts, or ideas, shared by the participants in order for some meaning to be made on the part of the researcher. Are there changes that are made that bias or change the tone of the words of the participants?

No, and the goal of this process is to allow the words of the participants, their experiences, thoughts, ideas, and opinions to be the data. The only changes that occurred that actually changed the flow or makeup of a conversation during transcribing and editing the interviews were either my own interjections presented in brackets to indicate an edit I have chosen to make for reader clarification purposes (e.g., replacing pronouns), or privacy (e.g., the names of co-workers), or I have transposed material not in sequential order of the original three interviews. These edits and transpositions are not to distort or take anything communicated out of the original context; rather, they are made to try to provide a narrative flow that ultimately serves to keep the integrity, dignity, and point of view of the participant intact (Seidman, 1998).

My analysis of the profiles and interviews are presented in chapter four. After creating all of the participants’ profiles, the last step of analysis was my own reflecting, examining, questioning, and writing on my own process in conducting the research in order to theorize what meaning making occurred (Seidman, 1998), which is presented in chapter five.

Summary

Chapter three has served as a description of the phenomenological case study methodology utilized for this research. This study has worked within a specific time frame based on demographic requirements (i.e., first year teachers). The data collection undertaken modeled a three-interview process conducted via Skype, e-mail, telephone, or in person and was augmented by an observational opportunity and personal reflection. Data was analyzed through creating a profile of each participant based on the interview transcription.
CHAPTER IV:
CASE STUDY PROFILES

Introduction

This chapter presents the cases of Joyce, Ann, Neil, Cindy, and Sandra. In keeping with the methodology previously discussed in chapter three, each case will be in the words of the participant. Those words are taken from the transcribed interviews, with the only changes being either my own interjections presented in brackets to indicate an edit I have chosen to make for reader clarification purposes (e.g., replacing pronouns), or privacy (e.g., the names of co-workers), or I have transposed material not in sequential order of the original three interviews. These edits and transpositions are not to distort or take anything communicated out of the original context; rather, they are made to try to provide a narrative flow that ultimately serves to keep the integrity, dignity, and point of view of the participant intact (Seidman, 1998).

The chapter is organized in the following way: First, I provide a brief discussion on how the phenomenological framework impacts my interpretation of the data. Second, an informative summary of how the phenomenological method used in this study provides useful types of data is included. Third, a recap of the purpose of this study, research questions, and a list of the themes are provided. Following those summaries, each interview profile is presented. After each profile is presented, an analysis of the themes in relation to each profile is made. Finally, a summary of the chapter is offered. Provided below is a reference table (Table 4) of the participants.
Table 4

Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender/ Race/ Age/Degree</th>
<th>Current Grade Level Employment</th>
<th>Other Relevant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>Female, White, 28, BA in English, MA in alternative certification Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Public Middle School</td>
<td>Has taught in the same school since college internship and is involved in the community. The school has been decreed a failing school due to poor test scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Female, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>6th-8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Public Middle School</td>
<td>Works within a homogenous school population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Male, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>6th-8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Public Middle School</td>
<td>Works within a large mid-western immigrant school population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Female, White, 23, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>Pre K- 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Private School</td>
<td>Teaches creative writing and religion using three sets of standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Female, White, 22, BS in Secondary Education English Language Arts</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Public High School.</td>
<td>Works in a southeastern school with a large transient population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How the Phenomenological Framework Impacts My Interpretations

There are two ways in which the framework impacted my interpretations. First, the framework suggests shared experience exists between different people and can be presented from multiple viewpoints (Desjarlais, 1997; Velmans, 2009). For example, in the context of this study, people of different backgrounds and influences can share similar educational experiences at the same point in life. Second, the phenomenological framework holds influence on what situational or environmental factors have influenced the participants of the study (Hill, 2014). These factors can exist in the past and in the present.

How the Phenomenological Method of this Study Provides Useful Types of Data

The useful data this method produced are the personal accounts and experiences of the participants. Conducting multiple interviews with open-ended questioning with multiple participants (Seidman, 1998) provided useful data that contributes to what Shulman (1986) inferred as a valuable way to clarify and debate the categorization of any teacher knowledge; a “well-organized and codified case literature” (p. 13). Examples of studies on PCK that provide useful data stemming from a qualitative interview based methodology are discussed in chapter two (e.g., Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003).

Purpose of the study

The literature reviewed in this study indicates that evaluating teacher belief and purpose as factors that can develop PCK has implications that possibly could help develop insight into broadening the assessment of teacher knowledge. This broadening encompasses training through daily classroom teaching; therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to a larger, ongoing conversation about what possible factors contribute to teachers PCK.
Research Questions and Themes

The first research question seeks to understand the ways in which teachers develop a practical belief and purpose for their teaching. To address the question, the cycle of participant interviews included questions focused on past experiences and led up to the current time in the classroom. There are a number of themes that emerged in my analysis of the first set of interview questions. These themes are creativity and process; testing; transmission learning; passion, compassion, and empathy; validity regrading tests and standards; and the value of planning.

The second research question sought to examine under what conditions teachers amend their practical belief and purpose for their teaching. The second and third interviews of the three interview cycle reflect inquiring into how the participants, as full time classroom teachers, adapt to the day-to-day process of teaching. In analyzing the interviews and comparing them to the responses given in the first set of interviews, there are two factors that affected the participants to amend or affirm the practical beliefs and practices they brought into the classroom. These factors are demographics and community.

Description of Themes

Prior to presenting the profiles and analysis of the participants, it is necessary to provide a brief, yet informative description of what each of the themes used in this chapter mean. Creativity and process is a theme drawn from inquiring with the participants about the types of activities or assessments that the participant favored or they believed helped them to learn material during middle school and/or high school. These include such activities as group and peer interaction, drawing, and writing exercises.
Testing is a theme based on inquiring with the participants about taking standardized tests in English classes in secondary education, and if they perceived themselves as a good standardized test taker.

Transmission learning is a theme reflected from the participant experiences in the interview process where inquiry was made if specific English teachers helped participants recognize how they learn, and if that learning was primarily the direct transmission of subject matter to be learned, i.e., rote learning and memorization (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995).

Passion, compassion, and empathy is a theme related to the personal and emotional aspects of teaching. This theme was built based on inquiring with the participants about how they decided, or what experiences led them, to enter the field of English education, and the possible effects of emotional knowledge that affect the participants’ after entering the education field (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007).

Validity regrading tests and standards is a theme created from inquiring with participants concerning what feelings, beliefs, or opinions, did they develop in their teacher education program (TEP) about standardized tests and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS can be briefly defined as The National Governors Association’s (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) consensus standards for state adoption. At the time of this research, the CCSS gained approval in forty-three states, four territories, and the District of Columbia (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The CCSS developed by the NGA and CCSSO represent an attempted departure from the federal government influence of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), which encouraged individualized state-to-state standards focusing upon preparation for formative, summative assessments as primary benchmarks and
indicators of student and educator progress and learning (Sloane & Kelly, 2003; Vecellio, 2013). How the participants felt about transferring from student test takers to educators learning about administering and evaluating the tests is also encompassed in this theme.

*Value of planning* is a theme taken from inquiring with the participants about designing lessons and assessment to teach during placement as student teachers in their respective TEP, and if they placed a high level of value upon those experiences.

*Demographics* is a theme derived from analysis of the interviews in the context of the second research question which illuminated that the demographics of the area where the participant’s teach has contributed to a change in some of the original beliefs and purpose that they brought into the classroom.

*Community* is a theme derived from analysis of the interviews in the context of the second research question which illuminated that the community of the area where the participant’s teach has contributed to a change in some of the beliefs and purpose that they brought into the classroom.

**Joyce**

English was always one of my favorite classes, my favorite subject, [although] my mastery came from personal interest and initiative more than presentation [as the curriculum] was adapt or sink. I always took advanced classes, [but] I consider myself an average test taker in secondary school. I was never taught to dissect standardized tests as I later learned when taking post-graduate tests. However, I always scored above-average on the English sections. My teachers were pretty set in how they taught. While they were experts in their content, it was often lecture and note-taking. However, I did succeed as I enjoyed the content being presented.
As a student I enjoyed the writing process. I gradually learned to incorporate grammar rules into my writing. One of my favorite activities was the writer’s bowl—a yearly writing competition where teams were given prompts and timed writing assignments. I also enjoyed reading outside of class and having in class discussions.

English was always my favorite subject. I have always had a calling to work with young people. I truly enjoy advocating for the middle school age. I enjoy teaching the content, but I also enjoy the other side as well. For example, I like being able to get kids winter coats. I decided to pursue English based on a love for reading and writing incorporated with a desire to help young children recognize the value of English. I always tell my students that English is a real-world skill. I stress that even if they don’t go on to discuss Shakespeare in coffee shops they can better themselves by learning the format of a business letter.

I felt especially prepared for the common core. I learned common core from day one in my TEP program. Whereas current teachers had to familiarize themselves with common core, I already knew what was expected to be covered. Although what we learned [in TEP what] was ineffective as far as assessment, I feel I could have learned more about making an effective assessment. For example, it would have been practical to practice making vocabulary tests. When I got into my career, I found that I knew more what was not acceptable---and luckily I could avoid common pitfalls---but I still didn’t have a cohesive picture of what an effective assessment looked like.

The common core helps to establish more unified standards for the country. Standardized testing is a problematic part of education. However, due to practicality, standardized testing is likely not going away. Standardized testing uses language that favors students who come form privileged backgrounds.
I taught a ten-day stretch where I designed the lessons and assessments that took place during that time. I worked with my mentor teacher prior to ensure that we were on track with the established pacing guide for the district. My mentor teacher put the grades in her grade book the same as if she would have taught the lesson herself—so I feel the lessons were valued.

About the community we have several mentoring programs here. We have 100 black men, and 100 young black men, and one of them is for the 6th graders and one of them is for the 7th and the 8th [grade]. And those [mentors] are [university] students, people from the community, like the churches, and they come in and they give mentoring programs for our young men. Actually I can say that several of the churches here are very present for us, they are in the hallways helping, bringing the food in, you know, being present.

My relationship to the faculty is I am closest to my team members, because we work with the same group of kids, and they are with us all day, so I work closest with them. My relationship with them is really strong; we really take that teamwork seriously. We have a lot of faculty meetings and we do some team building. We meet at least once a month [but overall] we have a lot of meetings. Our whole faculty meets once a month on Mondays, but we also are meeting with our data team, we are looking at performing goals, making the same assessments. I work with the English teacher across the hall as well. So we are meeting with other faculty members sometimes six times a month.

[We have] a ton [of professional development]. I have already exceeded my certification requirements for five years in one semester. There [is a] curriculum specialist [who] is actually housed here she is city board but she is over all ELA teachers and she just did a PD for us a week ago about purposeful grouping. She was like ok, let me teach you about how you need to do your student group, and then she will come into the classroom and be administrative.
I think I have a solid relationship with [students]. 98% of our kids are on free and reduced lunches. I had tons of brothers and sisters, and then teaching here during summer school we actually talked earlier about being on an expert-ship because I was still a new teacher then too, but it was a half day, so it was a great way to get my feet wet, and of the kids I had in summer school I probably have twenty of them now, so even when I came here in August day one I already knew those kids and had relationships with those kids from that opportunity.

The way I got to know my students the most [is] through writing exercises. I mean they, the Friday free write, that is a thing in my classroom that they know I do every Friday and they love them, but that has really helped me to know them the most, and it also is assessment for me because I can go and look at how they structure their sentences [and] I can compare things, I can get around and now I can give them something with quotations on it, I don’t get it out of a book, they can free write and by that they can write anything they want and that has really, students take it really serious. I have had kids who talk about dads who aren’t really present how they want their dads in their lives, I have kids who talk about what they are going to do on the weekends, but either way I have got to know them through that, and I have also been able to help them grow as writers.

I read each one, I usually read every single one, because they are just one to two paragraphs so I go through each one and give them credit for doing it and I will still give feedback and I don’t mark it up with scores or whatever. They really appreciated it within that first couple of months it did not take them long. They come to school and I think they, that was some sort of thing among students they talk about teachers who don’t stay, and they knew from the get go that I was committed to being there and to being their teacher and I think of that still so they were candid with me from the get go.
We have a really large [teacher] turnover rate [at the school], so I think there is trust issues [between students and teachers]. We have on this hallway we have a teacher that left in October, and I think we have had I think another teacher leave as well on the other side, actually my head of my department over there, but [students] want to know that you are here for them, whenever the other teacher left they came back in and said you’re not going anywhere right? So I think they are very, they want to make sure you are here for them and here for the right reasons, and I think I have made it abundantly clear to my students that I am not going anywhere, I am not going to give up, and you may make me mad everyday but I am still going to review everyday and so we have a good relationship, I think my kids, I think pretty confidently that they will do well.

I definitely think [test results] has probably contributed to our turnover rate just because you tired of the stuff that comes your way with testing and at our school we have more professional development than at other schools and more data meetings and more project things. I think that definitely the burnout it feels like we are being asked to do something all the time and I think it probably creates a sense of urgency and you just keep getting stuff put on you and it is not our administrations fault because they are under the same load we are.

[In constructing] our lessons, we have a pacing guide. As far as thinking it through, I already know what I am going to cover. [For example] during August, we were to go over short stories, we were to start on argumentative writing, so I already knew that, so with that in mind I took the resources I had, and actually we did Edgar Allan Poe for the Tell-Tale Heart because it was what I had a classroom set of. When I was in graduate school it was so much fun to think of these lessons, you know, like, we are going to do short stories, and then I got in the classroom and figured out that I don’t always have access to the resources. So that was a bummer because I
can always do a lot cooler short stories, I mean the The Tell-Tale Heart is pretty good, but I would probably do some different short stories, but I have to go with the chapters in my textbook because that is what I have. So we design ours [pacing guide and lessons], we know what we are supposed to cover and when we are supposed to do it, [but] I can do it [instruct] however I wanted to.

[To help with assessment] we are captive, and I say captive, but we are captive to class works as well here. It is a city purchase program, and it is what they take their screener on at the beginning of the year it gives them a score and then as a computer program it formulates an individualized learning plan, it is called the ILP. Individualized learning plan. It is correlated to the common core. So as a teacher I can go hand it to them, I can go in and I can have time but, for instance, they have to do it for at least an hour every week, at least. If you are on an ITR plan and you are tier two, it is supposed to be 90 minutes, and if you are tier three, which most of our students are, it is supposed to be 120 minutes. So, what I can do is say create new assessment, this week I want to work on, I put the grade [level], grammar, do parts of speech, and you can collect everything, and the assessment is already there, and it is aligned with the common core. The kids like it, and it can make funding easier, because I can do really quick tests, and instead of making my own tests I can download the test online on this, and it will make it and I can export their grades and print it out.

But I do essays, a lot of essays as well. I look at their writing samples, things like that, and how could I have taught that differently, what do I need to go back and touch on, how can I say that differently for them to understand it, I definitely use the data to reflect. The first argument essay that they did, I spent the entire weekend and was a little like, oof, I mean sometimes their answers were great, and I ask them, and my smile factor was awesome,
fantastic, but I thought they really don’t understand argument yet, so we have gone back several
times since then and worked on that again. And then the nice thing about class works is that it is
instant results, and with it being aligned to the standards I can say ok we need to test standard
whatever, and they can take it, and I can know how they did before they leave, so that is kind of
helpful too, because it is like oh you missed that questions, how did you miss that question, let’s
go back and look at that.

I don’t love multiple-choice tests, however, I don’t teach to the test but I need them to do
well on the test. [I use writing rubrics based on] the writing section of the ACT [that] was given
to us by our curriculum specialist. I use what they are going to, because you know they have the
essay at the end of the year, and I always use the same essay, the rubric they are going to use to
de them, I use that rubric in everyday writing. Actually they have it memorized, because they
should know exactly what to expect. [Grading] still takes me a long time per essay. I still
comment. They love the comments. They want the comments. I read everything so they want the
comments and it takes me a bout ten minutes per essay.

[A problem with common core is] they are pretty vague when you read them, I mean cite
textual evidence to support our claim, I mean you could be doing something totally cool, you
could be doing something meaningful out in your community, lets talk about this know
something that matters, you really could do a whole lot with it, but because we are having that
multiple choice test, here are your exemplar items and they are the exact as those you see there
you don’t find really a whole heck of a lot of deviation from it. Maybe not this way.

I definitely think that the biggest challenge with common core, making my own [lessons
and assessment] is this kind of; it is the kind of thing that seems kind of vague without knowing
which. I think that is a good thing because it can give teachers a lot of flexibility in what they
want to teach, but for first year teachers like me I would like something really structured, I still use my before-during-after [lesson plan structure] and I tend to stick to that I actually use that in class, so I feel the biggest challenge is when I read through the standards I sometimes feel like that is the direction I would maybe want in later years but I think that takes forever, I could do so much with that, and I tend to flounder a little bit because you can do so much with that, so I think the biggest thing is that will be I need that direction, you know with the course of study which I never really used I know there is a lot more to it, you have some skills you needed to teach, and with common core there will be more resources out there, but with it being early and everybody is starting to use it, there is not direct instructions like you should do this, this, and this, and I kind of like that, I kind of like all the lesson plans on ALEX, here is what you can do with this and I think it is a good thing and a bad thing.

But you know also I think the biggest challenge for me early and I think this is exacerbated by the point I am at a failing school is that you don’t know the results yet so what I am doing is that I feel like, or I worry at least that it is a shot in the dark, that oh while I am teaching it this way and I think this sounds good I really hopes this is working and I hope it works for ACT Aspire but nobody has taken that test yet and so we talked a lot about the pressure that I have, I mean I use pressure as a demarcation mark, so we talk about the pressure, being at a failing school, and wanting the kids to do their test work, and you have this template but you are not sure how your lesson plan is going to tail into that, how are they going to be able to be led to the demand of the tests.

I don’t think that the way we do testing [is] the way we should measure our students, however it is probably the most easy way to do that given that you have to do so many students per year, but I think we will probably have portfolios and probably have standards based
assessment like once you accomplish one thing you move on to the next one, and it will be more individualized where it will be here is this blanket test we all take on May 28\textsuperscript{th}.

I think the biggest thing about teaching though I realized was that they tell you if so and so are have a bad day or they have something going on home they may not do their best in school that day, and you hear those words when you are in a teacher education program and you don’t really realize how true they are until you get into a classroom because I know I have played the role of mom, I have played the role of dad, counselor, and who is breaking up with who, ad the take that stuff really seriously and I think that it all comes back to who they are as individuals, and the assessments help me to help them academically, but I don’t think you can necessarily take students like that and truly understand them as individuals if you just look at numbers and academics.

I don’t want to be labeled that I teach to the test, but I probably have that attitude a little more than others who are not at a failing school but I think just because we are so scrutinized at [school] it really helps the fire to get these upbeat test scores so we are trying to do it in a way that is best for our kids you know we don’t want to be, we don’t want that just regurgitated material that you know this doesn’t mean anything and you have to answer a, b, c, d, but at the same time I think that I am going to have more of that in terms of assessment than I would if I were at a school where tests weren’t ridiculous. I try to be pretty reflective so there will be many days where I think about what did we write today what was wrong what can we improve upon, and think about how important an issue it is for you, and I don’t think you really sometimes think that through. When you are in your internship you have your creative unit and it is all on paper and it is not executed necessarily and this is what the lesson would look like if I did it. And when you are actually teaching you are doing the lessons, and so you have to really think about ok,
what does it mean to say to the kids and go in prepared and teach class and teach better. Are they
going to enjoy that, how can I make them get engaged in this, how can I sell it to them in a way
they will want to do the assignment?

I think the worst moments are just the ones like I have the class of thirty-one students and
just feeling like I am not getting anything accomplished. When we went to professional
development earlier in the year I want to say they said a statistic that is really, that thirty percent
of the time is spent truly instructing and the other seventy percent is just managing and working
or whatever, I don’t know how true that is, but there are times with my C block class, which is
my seventh grade one, when I have felt like they did not learn a thing today, I am like I don’t
know that they learned one thing. So that frustrating, so that is disheartening and frustrating and
you throw everything at them and you keep improvising and reflecting and keep trying new
things but it is the challenge of I want you to learn and not always being met with the attitude
that I want to learn.

Yeah, it makes you wonder oh well I must not be doing a very good job. But I do have to
give them credit that class, I just gave them their weekly quiz and you know, it is for me to gauge
that you understand at least what we went over with bell ringers this week, and it is a quick grade
for them, and I had pretty good results, if they are making seventy percent or better than I am
thinking that is pretty good because there have been times where I think it would have been like
a thirty or it felt like a twenty and so for them to actually get eighties a couple even got nineties I
had a couple get a hundred I am like ok this is good this is ok.

Analysis of Joyce

Creativity and process. Joyce found learning about writing and then applying that
knowledge to be beneficial and enjoyable. She describes the experience:
As a student I enjoyed the writing process. I gradually learned to incorporate grammar rules into my own personal writing. One of my favorite activities was the Writer’s Bowl—a yearly writing competition where teams were given prompts and timed writing assignments.

Joyce describes a component of enjoyment with writing as learning to “incorporate grammar rules into my own personal writing.” Joyce’s satisfaction at learning “rules” to expand her own writing equates a comfort with understanding how a system works, i.e., if you understand the rules of something (e.g., learning how to write a compelling resume), you have a greater opportunity at succeeding by achieving a desired end result (e.g., getting a job) and that could conceivably provide enjoyment for an individual. This enjoyment of learning writing rules and then applying them further solidifies Joyce’s “favorite” activity of engaging in a formal writing process with academic competition (i.e., the Writer’s Bowl).

**Testing.** Joyce describes herself as average in the area of taking tests:

I consider myself an average test taker in secondary school. I was never taught to dissect standardized tests as I later learned when taking post-graduate tests. However, I always scored above-average on the English sections.

Joyce felt “average” overall but “above-average” in the English portions of a standardized test. Joyce mentions that no teacher ever “taught” her to “dissect” how to take a standardized test until much later in her academic life. From her statement, Joyce is bothered by having this knowledge later in life. I make this deduction based on her experiences with writing, i.e., a need to understand how the rules work for a system in order to have the opportunity to achieve a favorable desired result.
Transmission learning. Joyce shares an emphatic anecdote about her experience with teacher assistance in regard to learning styles of students:

My teachers were pretty set in how they taught. As a student, it was adapt or sink. While they were experts in their content, it was often lecture and note-taking. However, I did succeed as I enjoyed the content being presented.

Joyce’s response indicates that she often encountered a teacher centered instructional philosophy. The “sink or swim” aspect ties into a strict instructional philosophy that is probably more at home in a school that has a strong focus upon succeeding on standardized testing then investigating various instructional practices. The type of school with such a focus could be an already successful school or a “failing” school. This is of interest because Joyce ends up teaching at a “failing” school.

Passion, compassion, and empathy. Joyce’s comments revolve around “loving” English as a subject. She states:

English was always my favorite subject. I have always had a calling to work with young people. I truly enjoy advocating for the middle school age. I enjoy teaching the content, but I also enjoy the other side as well. For example, I like being able to get kids winter coats. I decided to pursue English based on a love for reading and writing incorporated with a desire to help young children recognize the value of English. I always tell my students that English is a real-world skill. I stress that even if they don’t go on to discuss Shakespeare in coffee shops, they can better themselves by learning the format of a business letter.

Joyce presents some interesting statements about compassion and empathy for “the middle school age.” Early, she describes the decision to teach English as a “calling,” or providing a
purpose that would allow her to not only to teach “young children [to] recognize the value of English,” but to pursue what she described as the other side of teaching. This “other side” Joyce communicates is a side that demonstrates compassionate charity; a side enabled to “get kids winter coats,” while also having empathy to help them towards their future endeavors where “they can better themselves by learning the format of a business letter.”

Validity regarding tests and standards. Joyce’s main issue with standardized testing comes from her belief that, as a tool, testing attempts to stratify rather than enable:

Standardized testing is a problematic part of education. However, due to practicality, standardized testing is likely not going away. Standardized testing uses language that favors students who come from privileged backgrounds.

Joyce verbalizes a belief that “standardized testing uses language that favors students who come from privileged backgrounds.” Joyce communicates in her statement that stratification functions as an intended byproduct of standardized testing. Her statement indicates this stems from her experience that “I was never taught to dissect standardized tests as I later learned when taking post-graduate tests,” which points towards a problem that she has with no one taught her the rules, or a system of test taking. Perhaps her feelings about and experiences with standardized tests, and then her subsequent teacher training, contributes to her decision accepting a position at a “failing” school.

Joyce’s belief about the CCSS is positive. She states that “The common core helps to establish more unified standards for the country.” This positive outlook can be attributed to Joyce acquiring more knowledge about the CCSS in her training and then applying it in her activities such as lesson planning.
Value of planning. Joyce developed a positive outlook about planning during her time in the teacher education program:

I taught a ten-day stretch where I designed the lessons and assessments that took place during that time. I worked with my mentor teacher prior to ensure that we were on track with the established pacing guide for the district. My mentor teacher put the grades in her grade book the same as if she would have taught the lesson herself—so I feel the lessons were valued.

Joyce learns in her final teaching placement before graduating of the importance of designing lessons and assessments that reflected the “established pacing guide for the district.” This is an important step in developing and applying teacher knowledge that will help further her belief that she mentioned previously of “help[ing] young children recognize the value of English.”

Demographics. Joyce has a unique situation among the participants as she accepted a job at the very school where she completed her internship while still a student in her teacher education program. At the time of the interviews with Joyce, the poor tests scores of students had forced the state to classify the school as “failing.” The pressure to turn a failing school around has enormous stress on faculty, and Joyce confirms this having witnessed through her internship a large turnover rate, expressing that “We have a really large [teacher] turnover rate [at the school], so I think there is trust issues [between students and teachers].” Joyce describes that with a high teacher turnover rate, this particular population could be discouraged about school and the future:

We have on this hallway we have a teacher that left in October, and I think we have had I think another teacher leave as well on the other side, actually my head of my department over there, but they [the students] want to know that you are here for them, whenever the
other teacher left they came back in and said you’re not going anywhere right? So I think they are very, they want to make sure you are here for them and here for the right reasons, and I think I have made it abundantly clear to my students that I am not going anywhere, I am not going to give up, and you may make me mad everyday but I am still going to review every day and so we have a good relationship, I think my kids, I think pretty confidently that they will do well.

Her experience with students in a “failing” school with a high staff turnover rate provides professional stress and for Joyce an added personal pressure to reassure the students that “I [Joyce] am not going anywhere.” This pressure to be present, to be “here for them,” somehow motivates Joyce to amend her feelings of compassion, caring, and empathy to develop the “other side” of teaching she believes in, a side where she exists in a position to not only “get kids winter coats,” but also helping them towards their future endeavors where “they can better themselves” in her classroom with her assistance. Joyce feels that she can help the student to “better themselves” by receiving what she never had at that age; someone to show them how to take the test. Recall Joyce’s strong feelings about “standardized testing,” which she remarks “uses language that favors students who come from privileged backgrounds.” With this teaching position, within this “failing” school, she now has the opportunity to disseminate how to break down and understand that testing “language” and help this demographic break out of “failure” status through learning the rules of test taking.

Community. Joyce’s community experience where she teaches stands as an exception to that of other participants since she previously taught at the school as an intern. The community supports the school Joyce works at in two different ways. First she discusses:
About the community we have several mentoring programs here. We have 100 black men, and 100 young black men, and one of them is for the 6th graders and one of them is for the 7th and the 8th [grade]. And those [mentors] are [university] students, people from the community, like the churches, and they come in and they give mentoring programs for our young men.

Joyce’s use of “we” stands as key in the statement. The use of the pronoun “we” has power in her description as the use of “we” demonstrates someone who wants ownership and inclusivity; indicating someone who does not wish to isolate themselves. Even with a limited amount of time at the school, factoring in her first year plus a multi-month internship that preceded her full-time status, Joyce’s comments suggest that she feels comfortable in the school and that this could be the place that helps her balance the “other side of teaching” that she believes remains foundational in her deciding to be a teacher.

The second way the community supports the school Joyce works in she describes:

Actually I can say that several of the churches here are very present for us, they are in the hallways helping, bringing the food in, you know, being present.

In looking over Joyce’s statements about community strength, she describes volunteers as “people from the community,” but adds “like the churches.” The phrase “the churches” pops up again in the second comment. Joyce correlates community support with the churches, but without explicitly tying it to a specific religious institution (e.g., Catholicism, Baptist). With this proactive community, Joyce has opportunities to continually amend her ideas of compassion and empathy in her pre-professional status, i.e., “a desire to help young children… better themselves,” and “being able to get kids winter coats.”
Ann

English was my favorite and best subject, hands down. Wow that [being in school] feels like it was a long time ago! I think I enjoyed assessments and activities that involved writing—ones that allowed me to fully express the knowledge and ideas in my head. Yep, I’m a great test taker. It’s probably an unfair advantage, actually. I kind of enjoyed the mental sprints that were test days. I did well on AP tests and the SAT and ACT, too. I never had to battle much anxiety, though they usually made me a little nervous—enough to make me study and have a little adrenaline buzz. I think I appreciated when teachers recognized my learning style—I’m very visual, and it’s hard for me to remember auditory things—but I would have gotten by without that without much trouble. Perhaps one of the things that helped me is that I would do what I needed to learn. If I needed to have something repeated, I would ask. I learned to enjoy taking notes.

I think I would have loved [English] no matter what because I loved reading and writing. [I did not decide to be a teacher] till the end of my freshman year in college. I’d always been great at English, and I’d always wanted to do something that would make a difference, but I think my good grades and test scores pushed me toward career paths that had more prestige associated with them. Then I got to college and realized I didn’t know how to use a microscope and didn’t like spending time in a lab. I was wasting my time doing something I wasn’t as passionate about. The realization of how prestige and money and skewed perspectives affected my choices, along with the realization of how incredibly demanding and important teaching is has helped solidify my opinion of how teaching should be regarded more highly as a profession.
I designed and taught a complete unit to teach to my students. I placed a lot of value on them, if others didn’t. I wanted my instruction to be meaningful, and my assessments to relate directly with that instruction. It was based on standards. I think I had, and still have, a pretty positive opinion about Common Core. I analyzed it myself—perhaps not to a great extent, but I saw how it was based on research and sound practice. I saw how it was attempting to give students skills rather than information. I saw how it was trying to establish a broad standard while not being overly prescriptive—and perhaps being less prescriptive than some previous standards. I am still a little bit surprised and confused when I hear how passionately some people hate the Common Core. Why? Have they read it and evaluated it, or is it just political?

Standardized tests I am less congenial toward, though I’m not prepared to dismiss them completely. The thing is, numbers are powerful. Most things can be quantified in some way, and thanks to math and computers, you can do incredible things with the analysis of that data. But just because you have numbers doesn’t mean they’re good numbers. I guess that’s the issue. I don’t see standardized tests going away anytime soon. Perhaps there may be a softening of our need to quantify learning (standards-based grading may be a step toward that). But I do see room to improve the tests that we do have, and to improve how we use the numbers that result from them.

I have two different teams that I work with. I work with my grade level department for seventh grade English and I work with another math, not a math, but another science and social studies teacher. So what we do in those meetings is we plan things together, we talk about student concerns, those are our two major certain things that we do.

I really enjoy my students; I think they are great kids out here. It’s not necessarily the place that makes the difference, but I really enjoy them, they are a lot of fun. I think its really
hard to remind you that you kind of need to be as strict as I need to be, and kind of structured as I need to be because that is not my natural mode of operations, so I try to do a little more of that, but I think that means to me [in regards to students] we like you because you understand us, you let us get away with more stuff, I don’t know as much as the experienced teachers do so I do kind of, things slip by me, but I think they enjoy me and I enjoy them and we have a good time together and classroom management I am probably afraid of a little, but at the moment it is not crazy, its not horrible, I don’t know, its fun, but I like my students.

The parents here are for the most part very supportive and very involved. I do phone calls, and I am not very good at making phone calls and I want to be better at them because they are really intimidating for me, I have always kind of been that way, maybe it is my generation but phone calls freak me out, and I haven’t made very many of them but every time I do I am like alright step forward! I do a lot of e-mail correspond with the parents and for the most part they are very supportive. We have a few led conferences, that is what we call them, we don’t call them parent teacher conferences, students bring their parents in, we are trying to put more responsibility on the students, and we also have had an open house, and I met a lot of the parents and for the most part they just want to know what they can do to help make their students successful, and if we e-mail them with concerns typically, sometimes they don’t respond, but sometimes, most of the time, they are very open to what we have to say.

I would probably say [this area is] middle class, but I would have to look into that to actually know for sure but that would be my guess. The area, this area is quickly growing, and if you look around you see a lot of housing developments, like cookie cutter houses in the area, and, so that is probably the main demographic there, people who would live in the kind of suburban houses like the other around it. It’s not super diverse here. There are a lot of white
people, white Americans, a lot of several I guess I would say, people of Latino decent, Hispanic, different countries. I have seen a few black kids, lot of them are probably mixed race, all of them are probably aren’t culturally black than we are used to in [state], it is different, not diverse, but I guess there are diversity in other ways. You know it is weird to have so many LDS people here, Mormon, I am Mormon, but it is weird for it to be a part of everyday life to have kids mention things that would normally only make sense to a few people […] what the culture of the LDS religion here says, and that I think a lot of people there is an embracing of a lot of different cultures here, because people in this church they go on missions to various parts of the world and they end up loving the people in a part of the world that they serve and they come back they bring a part of that culture with them and so I think sometimes they do have a kind of a more global understanding but sometimes they have even less of that because maybe that, I don’t know, having lived in [various places] I feel like I have a gotten a fair perspective about how people are and the different world views there are around us then a lot of these kids have.

What they do is they have adopted the common core in the state, and everything we do is closely, closely tied to the common core. It is all based on how do we teach this standard and actually in our team we are trying to go to standards based grading. It is where we assess them based on standards only. It really doesn’t work very well with letter grades and stuff, but what you are teaching is, you score them on a scale of four, four is like perfect mastery, three is you get it, two is almost there, one is not there and I can do with some assistance. So that is how we create and score all of our assessment for the most part on a four point scale, thinking, mastery, and then kind of adapted that because our grading system for the district is still a one hundred point scale with everything, so we had to adapt that to reflect what our scores mean in the letter
grade scale, anyway every assessment we do is based on a single standard and then we will score them on how well they do on that standard and put that in the grade book.

So for example we were teaching grammar and it kind of stinks because of the way we do it, because we are totally doing grammar in isolation with [daily oral language] and yeah, so I don’t know, but it is really good to be with a team and to work together and I think it is really beneficial for the students to, but that is why I am still doing it that way, but I am going to try to do things a little more differently next year if I can, its just, anyway, so we are doing that, and then we do the quiz, and it has three standards it assess on it so for that one quiz that they take we will give them three grades, and then we will assess them again later on the same standard and then that will be averaged with the grade they already have for that standard.

I think there are systems I think being created based on mastery grading, I think one of the is called mastery connect, so they are out there but we haven’t used one yet, so I think we are still trying to implement it. I keep track of everything in spreadsheets I have it do a lot of the Math for me. That has been helpful. You can calculate some averages and see how well they are doing with that standard and if when they need more or they need intervention.

Another thing that is nice at my school is a program called Isight. It is thirty minutes on Tuesday, Wednesday, and often on Thursdays, where we can work with students who need additional support. So we can give them what is called an “I”, and that will show up as their grade, and then they will get a little grade of that, and if they have an “I” they need to show up for that class. We have that time to work on whatever standard they need help with.

We create rubrics for most things. If it is just a scantron quiz it is what it is. But in writing the assessments it gets a little interesting when you have a short answer kind of assessment. Another thing they are trying to do is show different levels of knowledge and so it is kind of like
a Bloom’s taxonomy thing, but a little bit different. So an assessment will maybe have, ok these questions will tell you are at level one, if you can answer all these questions, and it has to do with type of questions in it and what does that mean, and that is where the Bloom’s taxonomy, I think, comes in. And then a level two will be a little more in depth, a little more challenging, level three, level four, so you will have an assessment that has four different levels of questions and then you have to figure out their mastery based on that.

I can never get use to how long it takes [students] to do stuff. And part of that is helping them to stay on task because they would just sit there and talk the whole period if they could, but also it is they need the time to really think and it is hard to think about how much time they will need, because we always think oh this will take them thirty minutes and then usually it will take them twice that or it will take twice as much time to do something.

I start off the day [with] a starter, and I have that written on the board, and they are supposed to come in and start on that, not so good with that one, they like to come in and talk instead, but you know, hey, so I have to remind them to get going on their starter which is usually their grammar practice and then I will kind of transition to what we are going to be doing for today. [Today] we were working with theme and with figurative language and summary and I created a kind of worksheet thing that walks them through writing a summary so the thinking is kind of separated from the writing where I will ask them questions about what happens in the story and then they take the answers and put them in a summary. I tried this earlier in the year and was like ok, now write a summary, obviously that was horrible [laughs]. So I scaffolded that a little bit more and created a worksheet, and I hate the word worksheet but if you do it well, and I hate them turning it in on computer, it is so much messier, I would rather have it. Anyway, so they went through that, and then there was a little simile and metaphor part where they take page
numbers from the book they have been reading and they look on that page and see if they can
find an example of a simile or a metaphor and then they write that down and then they write
what it really says so I was kind of having them work at their own pace on these different
assignments and then I was walking around and helping them and just worked on that till the bell
rang honestly, and most of them were able to get one done.

I think that [common core] is trying to be more focused on the skills that you need to
learn, and really thinking ok, what can, how do we use language in our lives and what do these
students need to be prepared going into whatever comes next, what skills do they need to learn,
and I feel like the common core is trying to do that. I think it is kind of mediating two
perspectives of ok teachers know about what their students need to learn and so basically the
ones that decided and also the perspective of we can’t let everyone go teach whatever they want
we need some sort of ideal, the ideal is just really trying to mediate that because it kind of gave
you some flexibility in what you can teach and how you can teach it as long as your students are
able to do these things.

I feel like the goal [of common core] is to improve student education and that is my goal
too, you know, I want to teach, prepare them for life, and I kind of hate that phrase because it is
not like you are living life right now. I want to give them tools they need to succeed in the future
and I feel that is the goal of the common core too and I think it can be use to create construction
and I think I guess there is a logic behind standards, guess they are logical in that sense, it
defines why they are there and I think these are pretty good ones the ones we are working with.

The role of assessment in teaching is that we assess standards so it makes a lot of sense,
that is where logic really applies in that situation because teaching is focused on those standards
and assessment is focused on those standards. In the most specific sense here we can figure out
which standards our students are struggling with because our assessments are focused on our standards, and so we have intervention, I think I told you a little about that intervention program here, ok, so we give this assessment this week so at our next time for intervention I can tell by this assessment that they are struggling with Because we are able to spend time with specific students on what they need help with. And it is more narrowed down and I think it is more effective. So how do I understand student need, as long as I am able to better identify what my students need are, I think, by assessing the standards.

I think that I need to be a little more confident in myself, I think that has been a struggle this year, feeling like I am a good teacher, you know, I keep mediating that with reminders that yeah, it is your first year. Ok. But I guess that is where I am at right now, not feeling super confident about my abilities but also not feeling like I am bad at it, just sort of feel new, I guess. We have programs here that are designed to help new teachers. Like there is a group of new teachers in the school and we meet weekly and we have things in place to help us along, and I feel like I have a lot of support,

I hope I get better at [teaching] as I keep going, so I would like teach for as long as I can. I also want to have more kids. I don’t know exactly what is in my future, I don’t know what my husband is going to end up doing he is still kind of in limbo and I don’t know how stuff is going to work, I will plan it as it goes, but I would like to teach for as long as I can I really feel that this is where I want to be and honestly the fact that I am so where I do not want to be right now, like with teaching, and my ability, it makes me, it sparks that challenge in me, challenge accepted, I want to get better at it, I want to incorporate all the things I want to do in my classroom, I want to gain all the skills I feel like I am missing, I want to put it all together, and it will probably take me a lifetime to do that so I am here for the long haul.
Analysis of Ann

Creativity and process. Ann’s experience with learning writing as a generalized process provided a beneficial way of learning. Ann remembers:

Wow that feels like it was a long time ago! I think I enjoyed assessments and activities that involved writing---ones that allowed me to fully express the knowledge and ideas in my head.

Ann communicates a general enjoyment associated with any “assessments and activities that involved writing.” She does not elaborate on the writing activities, or “ones,” but her generalization may mask other insecurities associated with remembering past experiences in the context of writing activities encountered as a student.

Testing. Testing during her formal education did not make Ann feel uneasy or cause her to consider other options (i.e., writing/essay) as alternatives to testing. Ann assuredly responds:

Yep, I’m a great test taker. It’s probably an unfair advantage, actually. I kind of enjoyed the mental sprints that were test days. I did well on AP tests and the SAT and ACT, too. I never had to battle much anxiety, though they usually made me a little nervous—enough to make me study and have a little adrenaline buzz.

Ann found tests and the testing process enjoyable; even indicating a thrill from an “adrenaline buzz,” but a small bit of anxiety makes her response seem realistic in light of the other participant responses which indicate an uneasy relationship with testing.

Transmission learning. Ann’s responses indicated a type of obedience in regards to learning from teachers the majority of the time in school. Ann’s experience describes her type of obedience:
I think I appreciated when teachers recognized my learning style—I’m very visual, and it’s hard for me to remember auditory things—but I would have gotten by without that without much trouble. Perhaps one of the things that helped me is that I would do what I needed to learn. If I needed to have something repeated, I would ask. I learned to enjoy taking notes.

Looking at the last sentence, “I learned to enjoy taking notes,” Ann spent a lot of time in teacher centered English classes concerning presentation and discussion of materials. She was “obedient” in her own way when it came to learning. Ann was not going to challenge or request other ways for the materials to be presented. Instead, she passively would ask for something to be repeated if she did not understand a concept or set of directions. From her response, it can be assumed that she did not necessarily want to be a note taker, but because she found enjoyment in the materials and wanted to succeed, she “would do what I needed to learn.”

Passion, compassion, and empathy. Ann describes her commitment to teach English as:

This is a decision I didn’t make till the end of my freshman year in college. I’d always been great at English, and I’d always wanted to do something that would “make a difference”, but I think my good grades and test scores pushed me toward career paths that had more prestige associated with them. Then I got to college and realized I didn’t know how to use a microscope and didn’t like spending time in a lab. I was wasting my time doing something I wasn’t passionate as about. The realization of how prestige and money and skewed perspectives affected my choices, along with the realization of how incredible demanding and important teaching is, has helped solidify my opinion of how teaching should be regraded more highly as a profession.
Ann chose to leave the sciences so that she could be “passionate” in her career. Ann chose English education ultimately as a combination of wanting to “make a difference” through demonstrating a “passionate” outlook concerning the job. Ann does not mention people or students and feels that the overall profession of teaching “should be regarded more highly as a profession.”

*Validity regarding tests and standards.* Keeping in mind that Ann had no overtly described problem with tests or with being a test taker, these comments reflect an acceptance of the need for tests as common assessments in the system to help build better curriculum and instruction. Ann states:

> Standardized tests I am less congenial toward, though I’m not prepared to dismiss them completely. The thing is, numbers are powerful. Most things can be quantified in some way, and thanks to math and computers, you can do incredible things with the analysis of that data. But just because you have numbers doesn’t mean they’re good numbers. I guess that’s the issue. I don’t see standardized tests going away anytime soon. Perhaps there may be a softening of our need to quantify learning (standards-based grading may be a step toward that). But I do see room to improve the tests that we do have, and to improve how we use the numbers that result from them.

Ann’s previous background in science before committing to English education gives her perspective on the power of numbers and how “you can do incredible things with the analysis of that data.” It is interesting to consider if and how Ann gathers such quantitative data and how the data are applied in her own classroom over an extended period of time.

Ann’s disposition towards the CCSS is positive. She elaborates:
I think I had, and still have, a pretty positive opinion about Common Core. I analyzed it myself—perhaps not to a great extent, but I saw how it was based on research and sound practice. I saw how it was attempting to give students skills rather than information. I saw how it was trying to establish a broad standard while not being overly prescriptive than some previous standards. I am still a bit surprised and confused when I hear how passionately some people hate the Common Core. Why? Have they read it and evaluated it, or is it just political?

Ann’s “pretty positive opinion” is her reading into the merits of the CCSS. For example, Ann states that “a broad standard” that may not be “overly prescriptive than some previous standards.” Ann’s outlooks about CCSS, testing, and how to build better tests can be attributed to knowledge she gained while in her TEP.

*Value of planning.* During her time in the TEP, Ann learned how to plan lessons and learned to accept the process of lesson planning as a necessity. She explains:

I designed and taught a complete unit to teach to my students. I placed a lot of value on them, if others didn’t. I wanted my instruction to be meaningful, and my assessments to relate directly with that instruction. It was based on standards.

In learning how to plan a unit of lesson plans, Ann became adept at using the standards to undergird her idea of “meaningful” instruction. These standards were also reflected in the assessments she chose to give to students within the context of the lessons and the unit. Her responses suggest that she has learned how to build a unit and a set of lessons based in the knowledge she has of the CCSS and instructional approaches.
**Demographics.** Ann chose to teach in an area that is homogenous to her personal religious upbringing. For Ann, this means teaching seventh grade classes in a Mormon community. The demographics she describes are:

It’s not super diverse here. There are a lot of white people, white Americans, a lot of several I guess I would say, people of Latino decent, Hispanic, different countries. I have seen a few black kids, lot of them are probably mixed race, all of them are probably aren’t culturally black than we are used to in [state], it is different, not diverse, but I guess there are diversity in other ways. You know it is weird to have so many LDS people here, Mormon, I am Mormon, but it is weird for it to be a part of everyday life to have kids mention things that would normally only make sense to a few people.

Even lacking a “super diverse” demographic, the area around the school is classified by Ann as middle class:

I would probably say [this area is] middle class, but I would have to look into that to actually know for sure but that would be my guess. The area, this area is quickly growing, and if you look around you see a lot of housing developments, like cookie cutter houses in the area, and, so that is probably the main demographic there, people who would live in the kind of suburban houses like the other around it.

Taking into account the “cookie cutter” demographic and solidifying her assumption about the economic status of the region, Ann adds “There is a mine really close to my school, so that may be a source of employment, a copper mine.” Even in the context of having “so many LDS people here,” Ann recognizes other homogenous elements, such as the “cookie cutter houses,” but adds that “there are diversity in other ways.” The “other ways” of diversity comes personally for Ann in her classroom and through her interactions with students:
I really enjoy my students, I think that are great kids out here. It’s not necessarily the place that makes the difference, but I really enjoy them, they are a lot of fun. They I think it is really hard to remind you that you kind of need to be as strict as I need to be, and kind of structured as I need to be because that is not my natural mode of operations, so I try to do a little more of that, but I think that means to me [in regards to students], we like you because you understand us, you let us get away with more stuff, I don’t know as much as the experienced teachers do so I do kind of, thinks slip by me, but I think they enjoy me and I enjoy them and we have a good time together and classroom management I am probably afraid of a little, but at the moment it is not crazy, it’s not horrible, I don’t know, it’s fun, but I like my students.

Similarly with Cindy, who faces redefining how to find “strength” and “challenges” in teaching in her homogenous environment, Ann believes she works against her “natural mode of operations” by presenting a “strict” and “structured” classroom. However, her attempt at strictly maintaining classroom procedure and policy remains in line with some of Ann’s beliefs about learning she brought into this teaching position. Even though she “enjoyed assessments and activities that involved writing—ones that allowed me to fully express the ideas and knowledge in my head,” she also “didn’t mind more structured assessments, either.” As previously discussed, the adherence to classroom obedience existed in Ann’s (as well as Sandra’s) schooling. For Ann, this value placed on obedience in the classroom transfers to thinking that working from her “natural mode of operations” would not be productive in motivating students or in having students learn and behave. Ann struggles with understanding how to navigate her “natural mode of operations” and the value she places on classroom obedience because she is wary of her class devolving into something “crazy” or “horrible.”
Community. For Ann, the Mormon religion provides a set of values that influences and shapes her perceptions of the world. Ann’s teaching position allows Ann to be surrounded by a community that supports her perceptions of the world. For example, Ann mentioned at one point:

[…] what the culture of the LDS religion here says, and that I think a lot of people there is an embracing of a lot of different cultures here, because people in this church they go on missions to various parts of the world and they end up loving the people in a part of the world that they serve and they come back they bring a part of that culture with them and so I think sometimes they do have a kind of a more global understanding but sometimes they have even less of that because maybe that, I don’t know, having lived in [various places] I feel like I have a gotten a fair perspective about how people are and the different world views there are around us then a lot of these kids have.

Ann mentions the word “love” and “serve” in her response in discussing “what the culture of the LDS religion here says.” Ann’s comments reflect that love and service are somewhat intertwined in the student population’s culture since the students also follow the LDS faith. Sharing the same faith and world view creates a common language that it is adaptable and relatable between Ann and her students. Ann has been exposed to ideas of sharing, love, and service by engaging with her religion, and this engagement has helped her to develop a “fair perspective” regarding “different world views”; even going through a geographical transition to take the job. Even when transplanted, and facing the problem of working “outside of her natural mode of operations,” the value of sharing, love, and service remains intact for Ann because these values are adaptable and relatable concepts that the LDS community will support.
Neil

I always enjoyed group activities because I liked working with my friends. My teachers always let us pick our groups, and my friends and I shared similar senses of humor so we were usually put more effort into make our projects stand out and because of that they stuck in my mind better.

Yes, I excelled [in English classes] and was usually one of only two or three A’s in my classes. [M]y tenth grade English teacher was great at addressing all types of learners, but he seemed to favor visual learners because that was how he learned best, and that helped immensely.

I am absolutely against standardized tests. I hated them when I was in school and I hate them now. I don’t get test anxiety like some people, but I certainly tend to overthink questions instead of going with my gut which is often correct I much preferred essay tests because I felt like I was much stronger at writing than memorization and application. I was a bad student but it was never difficult to get me to read. English was always my favorite subject and I have always enjoyed working with younger kids, so English education seemed like the perfect fit for me!

[When I took my position] there were four other new teachers hired in the same time I did, so we had new teacher in-service. So I got to know them fairly well. We bonded over being new teachers. Then when I met the other staff it was no time at all, we just immediately clicked. The faculty there is much more like a family than any other place I have done internships or any kind of work in schools. We hang out on weekends and other than a few outliers the average age of the teachers there is in the mid-thirties so it is a pretty young staff so we all have a lot in common and we hang out all the time.
The way I like to run my classroom is pretty calm. I don’t like to stress students out. I would say that I get to know my students on a much more personal level than most teachers would. At least on one or two instances we got on the subject of life and since we have an hour and a half in the classroom we spent half of that class time talking about life situations like divorce and family members being killed and stuff like that because a lot of the kids have grown up around gangs and they have had brothers and sisters and parents that have been killed so we just talk about it so I would say that I know them more personally than most other teachers would. I do a quote of the day every day and it was a discussion that stemmed from that. It did not necessarily have anything to do with English but it was a discussion that a lot of them needed to have.

I try to talk to them on that personal level and I know where they are coming from and I will talk to them like they are a real person, because of that they see me. I don’t talk down to them just because they are younger, I talk to them like a real person, and I guess because of that they see me on a personal level. I like seeing my kids and I like saying hey to them and I like talking to them and they will come up to me and talk to me about a video game or a movie they watched and want to have a conversation because I enjoy talking to them. [As a teacher] you need to be vulnerable and you need to be open so they need to know that they can come to you with a problem and you are not going to blow them off that you are going to sit and listen and talk to them, that you are going to have a real conversation with them and you do [care] because a lot of kids think that teachers hate them.

[I have a relationship with parents but] parents are really a student-by-student case. Most of them are willing to help, especially with behavior issues. [A] lot of the parents are immigrants and even though the students were born here the parents they obviously came here for more
opportunities for their children. [Many of them] are from Mexico, but then some [are] from Vietnam. There is a plant right outside of town, and most of the students’ parents work there, the school system is 75% Hispanic, and I don’t know how many of those, but I will say the vast majority of those students parents work at [corporation]. There is a whole spectrum. You have got really poor kids whose families are in gangs on one side and then you have got a lot of rich kids on the other side and everyone in between and they all go to the same school. It’s interesting to see the whole spectrum. I would say [this city] is…I grew up in [city] which was outside of [city]. Where I grew up is a couple of people thousand smaller than where I am, but at least in [city next to city where I came from] there were still things to do. [City I am in] doesn’t have that. It’s just there is not a whole lot to do. So I would say not necessarily not getting involved because there is not a whole lot to do although pretty often they do have parades and there is a park right near my apartment so they have events there pretty often especially when it was warmer, I would go to that but I wasn’t approached to be a part of something.

Because [my students] parents are [primarily] Hispanic, and the grew up speaking Spanish, a lot of their grammatical, like they are not great with grammar [in] English, when they speak they are fine, they do not have accents or anything, but when they write you can definitely tell. They do this [standardized writing assessment] two times a year which basically what it is they give students a passage and thy will have choices between three different words with one correct word within the sentence. The first time they take it the goal is to get twenty-two words correct. The second time which we do right before the semester break, it is twenty-five. The problem is that [the school board] have this expectation that kids are supposed to meet this goal every time. But some students are only getting twelve the first time. And any student who is getting only twelve the first time isn’t going to get twenty-five the second time, and then you
have to do a whole other test and it is just overwhelming because first of all it takes time in our classroom, but I don’t see how they can expect teachers who have [students] that are so low because they haven’t had this [English instruction] their entire life to go from getting thirteen to increasing to twenty-five or more the second time.

I feel like lessons plans are an important part of teaching, but I think the depth of which we were made to plan was a little unnecessary. I don’t think there was too much value placed on them, but they were not an accurate representation of what it is like to plan in a real teaching position.

[My department] have a general lesson plan more or less, and the lesson plans are super in teaching. [In my training] I learned how to create lesson plans and assessments that would reflect specific standards. [The seventh grade English teachers] all plan together and so all the seventh grade students are on the same page, so we will go in and say let’s do it and we will come up with a plan together about how to teach it and then we will do it and that will take us an hour and a half and we will have two months of planning. [The lesson plans] are not for ten minutes we are going to do this, for twenty minutes we do this, we know what we are going to do so it is up to the teacher about how they want to do it or how I want to assess [learning]. Whereas one teacher may do a quiz, I don’t think it is necessary to do a quiz, so [for example] I will draw Popsicle sticks and ask whoever’s name is on it the question and if they get it right then I will know what the students know. [One example was for a grammar lesson on action verbs] where I had them take notes and I had them do examples as a class and when I ask questions I have their names on Popsicle sticks and I pull them out but a lot of them don’t even know what action verbs are. So I have them shout out examples of actions and then I will do it, for example, a kid says
run, and I will run laps around the class, and they will say jump and I will jump up on the table, and it is stupid but that kid is never going to forget what an action verb is.

I like being able to just talk with [students] instead of like we are going to do this information, do this information, and then we are going to test on it, every day. I just can’t stand that. I can tell pretty well when they understand [material]. I am absolutely against standardized tests. I hated them when I was in school and I hate them now. So if I do informal evaluations, just questioning to see what they know, I can get a good gauge of what they know and what they don’t know and what needs to be covered. I still [assess] with see what you know before, what you now during, what you know after, and if you still have questions after something, especially with things that we read, and all of those things they may or may not have heard about. [If I do] testing I like them to know how to apply rather than memorization, so I do have some of the cover memorization questions, multiple choice and stuff like that to start out, but [mostly] I like to have them apply and answer discussion questions more or less.

[In regards to reading] they like young adult fiction. [However], because some of the students are much younger readers than the others, [and] it is 79% Hispanic, that language barrier is difficult for them. [The] English teachers agree upon them reading four fiction books every nine weeks, every quarter, and then one non-fiction book, but it is not complete books. Every one hundred pages count as one of their books so if they read a three hundred-page book it counts as three out of the four books, but then a non-fiction book doesn’t matter how long it is. [I give them in class reading time and] giving them that time is about completing their required reading but I am also hoping that, probably it is unrealistic that all of them will do this, but those that are on the fence already will say reading is not that bad and they will go home, and eventually more and more kids see that and especially I talk about how much I like reading all
the time and hopefully they see, and they know that I like reading and they will want to do that too, so yeah, if I can get more and more kids to go home and read on their own I could cut back on that reading time and only have ten to fifteen minutes instead of fifteen to twenty everyday so I can focus on other things.

With the English standards of reading, writing, and speaking, I have noticed that I tend to lean more towards the writing. I am more reflective, I enjoy writing, and to me as far as things you learn in school other than learning how to deal with social situations, writing is one of the most important things you can learn.

I guess a lot of what [students] have before they had my class they were not writing about things they thought they were just writing about facts really. Actually the next writing we are going to have is a thesis, a thesis and three topic sentences, just kind of the basics, so they are going to have to give, well I guess they are going to have to have more, well they are giving their opinion really is what it is they are giving the reasons why, so those would be concrete facts based on whatever they are writing about. But they are definitely putting their opinions into their writing more than before. [Also] writing [generally] is going to help them in pretty much any job you could want, [employers] are going to be able to know how to write, and the better you can write the more seriously they are going to take you, and so I feel that learning how to write at school isn’t a waste of time.

I feel like common core is a step up from NCLB, but it is still not ideal. I feel like education should take a much less formulated approach and be replaced with a much more personal approach. [This educational model] is trying to make every kid go down the same path, and that is not who kids are, you can’t make every single student go down the exact same path because they are not the exact same at all. I feel like a bunch of the laws and things that are
passed as afar as education goes is made by people that are so far out of touch with kids today they just absolutely have no idea. I guess personally I, maybe I am not the best English teacher ever maybe which is fine but I will be there for the kids, I love the kids.

Analysis of Neil

*Creativity and process.* During his formal education Neil’s teachers provided opportunities for group work that were often predicated on the student choosing a group:

I always enjoyed group activities because I liked working with my friends. My teachers always let us pick our groups, and my friends and I shared similar senses of humor so we were usually put more effort into make our projects stand out and because of that they stuck in my mind better.

Neil correlates meaningful productivity with creative group or peer interaction in working on or moving through the process of completing assignments. Neil’s choice of describing the process as one of enjoyment that has a goal of creating projects that “stand out” indicates his creativity finds support when working in a peer group activity. Also, Neil’s statement holds interest because he not only mentions collaborating with classmates, but his friends. Would he have been just as outgoing if he had not been given the freedom to create with his friends? Possibly, but during analysis of the interviews with Neil, there was no further evidence of his secondary schooling experiences pertaining to creativity, process, and group work.

*Testing.* Neil recalls “I have never been a good test taker.” However, he elaborates more explaining:
I don’t get test anxiety like some people, but I certainly tend to overthink questions instead of going with my gut which is often correct. I much preferred essay tests because I felt like I was much stronger at writing than memorization and application.

Neil’s preference for “essay tests” over the multiple choice format of standardized tests that rely on what he perceives as “memorization and application” differs from his enjoyment of working with others in activities. Neil’s statement suggests that he code switches academically between large scale assignments (i.e., working with others) and also has the ability to work alone within the context of a “writing” assignment or assessment.

*Transmission learning.* Neil pinpointed one of his high school English teachers as influential. He describes:

> [M]y tenth grade English teacher was great at addressing all types of learners, but he seemed to favor visual learners because that was how he learned best, and that helped immensely.

This response demonstrates neither a laudatory nor negative connotation. Neil explains that his teacher likely taught in a way that reflected the teacher’s own preferred learning style (i.e., “he seemed to favor visual learners because that was how he learned best”). This is a sink or swim experience because his teacher was imposing a way of learning (i.e., visual learning) as dominant.

*Passion, compassion, and empathy.* Neil’s response was very straightforward and enthusiastic:

> English was always my favorite subject and I have always enjoyed working with younger kids, so English education seemed like a perfect fit for me!
This response also echoes his earlier statements about group work within the theme of creativity and process. Neil’s comments provide an insight into how important having context with the subject matter and the people you work with have on him. For instance, his use of the phrase “working with” indicates group work, team work, and a general sense of sharing.

*Validity regarding tests and standards.* Neil expresses a strong opinion in regards to testing, stating that “I am absolutely against standardized tests. I hated them when I was in school and I hate them now.” While Neil shares an antipathy towards testing, he presents no elaboration upon that viewpoint. It is possible that he justifies his antipathy towards tests because he believes they are about “memorization and application,” and that he places more value on writing responses of some type. Neil’s views on the CCSS, however, are more optimistic, which is evident in statements like: “I feel like common core is a step up from NCLB.” Neil’s viewpoint on the CCSS can be assumed as having come from his knowledge gained about the CCSS and NCLB during his training.

*Value of planning.* Neil’s viewpoint falls on the opposite end of placing value upon long-term planning:

I feel like lessons plans are an important part of teaching, but I think the depth of which we were made to plan was a little unnecessary. I don’t think there was too much value placed on them, but they were not an accurate representation of what it is like to plan in a real teaching position.

Neil’s is the only participant to express a dissenting viewpoint regarding lesson planning. Neil made no indications of a negative experience which led him to his viewpoint on planning, but it can be assumed that at some point he perhaps felt burdened by the situation he was in concerning
writing lesson plans in his TEP. This possibly occurred in a class or even in a teaching placement.

**Demographics.** Neil’s teaching post exposes him to a diverse demographic. Neil teaches in a middle school in the American heartland that he describes as an amalgamation of the urban and the rural both culturally and socially:

There is a whole spectrum. You have got really poor kids whose families are in gangs on one side and then you have got a lot of rich kids on the other side and everyone in between and they all go to the same school. It’s interesting to see the whole spectrum. This spectrum Neil describes initially seems to be more slanted towards what could be defined as working middle class based on demographic information he goes on to discuss over the course of our interviews. Neil further elaborates on the population by saying that “a lot of the parents are immigrants.” He further explains that these “immigrants” are from “Mexico. And so, but then some from Vietnam.” He also provides detail on the population in the context of employment:

There is a plant right outside of town, and most of the students’ parents work there, the school system is 75% Hispanic, and I don’t know how many of those, but I will say the vast majority of those students parents work at [corporation].

Does possessing this knowledge of the demographics of his school and surrounding area affect Neil’s thinking about his teaching approaches or his teaching process?

Yes. Because [my students] parents are [primarily] Hispanic, and they grew up speaking Spanish, a lot of their grammatical, like they are not great with grammar [in] English, when they speak they are fine, they don’t have accents or anything, but when they write you can definitely tell, so I have to take it a lot more slowly for those students just because they don’t know.
Neil chooses to focus on what he previously described as a majority population (i.e., 75%) of Hispanic families rather than Vietnamese or any other cultural population. He also pinpoints writing as a problem for these students. One of Neil’s approaches to teaching coming into this classroom focuses on that he feels he “should take a much less formulated approach and be replaced with a much more personal approach,” as opposed to the “memorization and application” associated with taking standardized tests which as an educational tool he has problems with. He states in our first interview that he is “absolutely against standardized tests. I hated them when I was in school and I hate them now.” But when faced with a large population that struggles with getting writing skills in English to a passable level, Neil sets his desire to teach on a personal level aside and thinks more about developing a series of consistent writing activities that will systematically get his students up to a writing level that the state he teaches in deems acceptable.

Neil’s concession for adjusting his belief about writing comes up when he talks about teaching his students the value of learning to write as a life skill that will help them someday gain employment. I ask him about the various types of writing he discusses with his students, and even though they are in the demographic of young adult, it can be assumed that he is developing a belief that this population needs to understand the correlation between good writing and the opportunity for employment. Neil believes it is his responsibility to help students learn to write through discussion and application. Neil describes his thoughts as:

[Also] writing [generally] is going to help them in pretty much any job you could want, [employers] are going to be able to know how to write, and the better you can write the more seriously they are going to take you, and so I feel that learning how to write at school isn’t a waste of time.
Based on his comments and our conversations, it can be assumed that Neil tries to apply a developed knowledge based on figuring out the balance between creativity, societal application, and curricular need when it comes to his students writing in his classroom. His amending of a personalized approach to teaching occurs through recognizing that the “spectrum” of culture consists of thinking about how to help them have better “employment” opportunity in adult life.

*Community.* Teaching in a smaller town in the middle of America, somewhere “between thirty-five and forty thousand,” Neil has found himself struggling to become more involved in the community. He describes his situation as

I would say [this city] is…I grew up in [city] which was outside of [city]. Where I grew up is a couple of people thousand smaller than where I am, but at least in [city next to city where I came from] there were still things to do. [City I am in] doesn’t have that. It’s just there is not a whole lot to do. So I would say not necessarily not getting involved because there is not a whole lot to do although pretty often they do have parades and there is a park right near my apartment so they have events there pretty often especially when it was warmer, I would go to that but I wasn’t approached to be a part of something.

Neil’s comments indicate he is waiting to react to this community in that he wants to be “approached to be a part of something.” Culturally not engaging proactively may have developed into a norm for Neil, who grew up in a smaller town just outside of a larger city. However, these reactive feelings seem odd for someone who has an “enjoy[ment] for group activities” and has expressed a desire in utilize group work in the classroom. Furthermore, Neil’s reactive nature in this community may stem from him trying to find proactive ways to amend his personal approach to teaching that he brought into the classroom as he figures out ways to educate the
children of this community of “immigrants” who he believes are a “vast majority” of workers at the “plant right outside of town.”

Cindy

I wouldn’t say that I excelled in my English classes, but I also wouldn’t say that I was the dunce. I have always been an A/B student in English classes. However, I have always been passionate about reading and writing. I remember when I was a junior in high school that my English teacher gave us the option to complete three papers and then three projects on the six books we read that year. I loved the freedom to choose. I also remember my ninth grade English teacher from [school] in [state] asked us to write a sensory based expository paper just a month or two after moving to [state]. I wrote about the night before moving to [state] and how I felt, down to the tears burning my face. That paper was powerful for me to write, and I really enjoyed that assignment because it was the first time I had ever written something that intense about my feelings.

I wouldn’t say that my grades reflected the assessments, per say, because my grades varied. I always tried hard in my classes and tried to excel to the best of my abilities. I had to learn how to take tests. I would put a great deal of pressure on myself and would “freeze up” during the test. The end result was far from pleasing. I do not feel that there was any kind of differentiated instruction provided to me. As the same time, I didn’t expect there to be. There were some students who needed more attention than me. I have always been an independent student as well as an individual. I knew that when I went home my parents would help me, but not everyone had that luxury. Maybe my teachers’ excess time went towards those students.
Writing, though a challenge, was more my speed because I was able to choose what I wanted to write about and demonstrate my knowledge. I have always been an independent student as well as [an] individual.

I initially declared myself an advertising major, but changed my major when I was a sophomore in college. I have always loved to read and write, so [choosing to teach] English was an easy choice. While I love and appreciate “the little ones,” I felt a stronger calling to secondary because I felt that I would be able to challenge my students more. Being the big sister to a three-year younger little brother, I have always been the helper and the teacher. The thought process was natural for me. While I found advertising interesting, I wasn’t passionate about my major as I learned I should be. I made the grand decision to change my major while drying my hair before going to a party with my sorority sisters…I kid you not. While it is a casual way to make the biggest decision of my life up to that point, it was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

I [have] learned that standards can be a pain in the behind if you don’t know what you’re doing. I also think that the education system is in a mess right now because of the change in standards. One of the perks about teaching at a private school is that, while we have diocesan standards, we have the flexibility to modify our standards based on [state]. I do not like the Common Core Standards because they are so generic to me. While being in the TEP, I learned how important it is to follow the standards and meet the objects set. I thought it was a pain when I had to make my lesson plans so thorough, but it was extremely helpful for me now. Designing lessons at first was a challenge because my plans were so detailed. I wanted to make sure that I did not miss a single thing. As for assessment, I thought that [college class in assessment] was the most pointless class while I was in college. Now, I am extremely thankful for it. I have to
create new assessments for my students because I am a new teacher. That class has helped me tremendously to create an assessment that is fair and balanced.

I have never liked standardized tests. For many years I have thought that many educators teach the test rather than truly educate their students. I think that some people in our education system have become enablers. It is one thing to recognize and practice differentiated instruction, but it is a whole other concept to over exaggerate students’ needs so that suspect and compromising decisions are made in hopes of a better standardized test score. I learned in the TEP that it was difficult for some educators and school systems to do their jobs and teach students how to appreciate and work through their difficulties. Instead, some find it appropriate to sweep the students’ true abilities under the rug and focus on a characteristic that will, in some way, contribute to a monetary gain.

I find the Common Core Standards to be a cheap Band-Aid on a gashing, bleeding wound. I do not think that they will help our education system, as it should be. While I understand that the Common Core Standards are intended to help our nation’s education systems, I found the standards to be vague and leave a large amount of room for error. While standards do not need to be overly specific and suffocate a teacher’s creative mind, they should be specific enough so that a teacher has the proper guidelines to accurately teach the respective materials.

[As far as] my relationships with the faculty let me [first] tell you about the administration. I have a great relationship with both [principals]. They are both very creative minds that create a different way. [One principal] is very straight forward, you either did your homework or you didn’t do your homework, where [the other principal] is very creative and while things are black and white she can see things objectively so it creates a great balance. But with them I have a great relationship, they are supportive of me as a first year teacher they, when
I make mistakes it is not a matter of you did this wrong you should know better it is very much it is ok, lets try this a different way next time, you came up with the best you could, but now you know, so lets just move on its not that big of a deal the sun will rise in the morning.

[My relationships] with my coworkers, the other teachers, there are only two male teachers at this [middle] school, one is the P.E. teacher and then one is [name] who is the Brit lit, I am sorry the British American history teacher, so it is very, a very much estrogen pool, and we have to be careful because we want to be professional and be straightforward with one another but at the same time, most women have very strong personalities. [Name of co-worker] is the other English teacher, so we consider ourselves the department, she is great to work with. I teach eight different sections. I teach two sections of American lit, so all of the sixth grade, five different sections of creative writing, all of sixth grade all of seventh grade, half of eighth grade and then I also teach the eighth grade religion class

The vast majority [of parents] have been awesome, very supportive, very welcoming, not necessarily in my face, but a lot of the have wanted to meet me. It’s flattering at first, it’s like oh they want to meet me that is so nice, but it’s not flattery from the standpoint that I am popular it’s from the standpoint of I am paying for an education who am I paying for? And that is, I think that can be complicating sometimes, and that it is difficult with parents sometimes to explain objectivity when they are financially involved. So for the most part parents have been great, a lot of them have come to me saying how can we improve grades? And it does help being in the homework room, I thought that would be a great way for me to meet not just more students in the community [but also] to say to parents I am in the homework room two out of five days in the week, and some parents have been responsive with that and some haven’t.
[In regards to my relationship with my students] I mesh very well with the sixth grade. We just blend, we get each other, I don’t know if it is their weird and I am weird or it is just an awkward first year for both of us? I think that is part of it, I remember on the first day of school telling them I am just as nervous as you are this is my first day with sixth grade and this is your first day of sixth grade ever, so we will make it through together and we will be fine. I think they are a great group. I have a lot of lower level learners in the sixth grade, so it has been very educational for me to learn how to meet the needs of a lower level learner, especially those that have ADD who are medicated. So having to, those with crazy home lives, and I am really trying to foster a strong bond with them and I think I have.

[Teachers] have a course of study, going through what we want each [student] to do according to standards. We deal with state standards as well as national standards and diocesan standards. So I have a great big umbrella and a very small microscope when with dealing with it. Then we have plans from 2013-2016 that we are drafting in order to better our technology department. We all have smart boards, which are great and very helpful, but we want to do more than that. We just got the program my big campus, which is kind of like edmodo but a little different. My big campus is our way of using social media in the classroom in teaching students that you can use social media in an educational way.

[For] our units, we have twelve units a year and are units are broken into three weeks. So I teach a novel, twenty vocabulary words as well as writing skills in three weeks. The writers workshop and the creative writing curriculum are written so I don’t have to create that because we are in the process of re-writing the curriculum and so I have been asked to re-write the religious education curriculum for sixth, seventh and eighth grade and I have to research that and
make sure that in the sixth grade they learn about the old testament, seventh grade is about the gospels, eighth grade is about the new testament prior to confirmation.

The teacher that had this job before me, well she left me old tests and handouts and whatever; I still had to create my own. So I have saved my lesson books so I can refer to it next year to see if I have done this and that. Will I accomplish everything I want to this year? No. Hands down I already know I am not going to make it and I am ok with that because I feel that I have done a lot and there are some years you are not going to get everything, as unfortunate as that is, but I was left with my things, but it was my understanding that the teacher who had this position before me had all of that done, she had the lessons pre-written, she had the pacing guide set up, and took that with her. I don’t know why, it would have been really helpful to have a copy of it, and I have met her, I have seen her in person and nothing was said about it so I don’t know.

[The other English teacher] she teaches well, I teach more creative writing she teaches more English. She teaches seventh and eighth grade English and one section of eighth grade creative writing and she taught each class and she has her plate full in a way that is different from mine. So we work very closely, but in working with the curriculum like I am and developing like we want to we already have all the tools, we know what we want to do, we have to put it in motion and write it all down in a big excel spreadsheet, and go back in and plug in the books and the vocabulary words and the objectives and the standard and all of that, but [the principal] wants us thinking and more so to work, not just horizontally but vertically as well, so she is wanting to match up with history, she wants science and math to line up, not only that but she wants creative writing to go along with all of the other subjects so that it is all cross curricular it’s all one after the other.
[I had a] great start to the year. We [studied a novel], which I just laid down the hammer with everything, and my test scores were very low, very low. And I gave them four possible test questions that were short answer that they had to answer in eight to ten sentences and I said you can choose two. I gave them the questions two days prior to the test and many of them did not take the opportunity to look at them, it’s a process. So when I am reading their short answer questions I thought my eyeballs were going to bleed. It was atrocious. I can’t do this again. They are not ready for this. So with the next test it was chunked better. They had five short answer questions, four to six sentences, and none of them finished in time. So I am like ok, that is too long. Granted that the writing was shorter, because they said that they liked it broken up more, so that that they wrote less about more. I mean I can see that, it makes sense. So I went along with that. So then we read our next book, and it was still a problem. So I was like, great, two back to back tests where I just feel like I have egg on my face, and I talked to [administrator name] my vice principal and I said so what do I do? She said well the failure is teacher construction, so you need to go back and you need to figure out a way, you give them extra time, you did all that you could, you fixed it, you got to perform now with the next test and say what can I do to make it better? I decided that in order for me to include factual information about the novel, grammar, vocabulary, and writing on the test I need to give some flexibility. So there are factual questions on the test, there are vocabulary and then there is grammar, but I will give them five short answer questions, four of which they make, and I pick the best and make one, and I tell them on the test to pick three and to answer three and then four is just extra credit. So that has worked out a lot better because they are able to pick the question that they think is easiest, but in all actuality that is easy for them is actually hard, and they like knowing that they helped make my test. And what it does for me is that in recent times they have come up with great questions and I am much more
comfortable knowing now that I am creating a test that one, they are comfortable with it and two, I am not throwing material at them that they are blindsided by. So it makes for one a better relationship between us, or among us, but also knowing that they are not, there is anxiety taking a test, and while that is not the way it is going to be every year, at least now they are practicing knowing that I don’t have to be afraid of the test.

[I do require students] read at home. Typically we have them do the vocabulary, and because my units are so short I have to mix so that my questions on my assessments are factual but also require some analyzing and some inference skills, and we have a graded literary discussion, I got them from [another faculty member], and so we have to do a quiz or both, and it is internal, so if you need to have this read by this time, and sometimes I will give them a quiz, it is all I see how they respond to the book, and if I can tell that they are reading it during our discussions I don’t worry about it. The great crutch is that it is a class work grade at some point and there is a rubric and I show them they need to take notes and you need to be able to ask questions and answer questions, and don’t just ask the question why is the cover red? But be able to answer it is red because of irony and symbolism to kind of dig deeper to help them develop their analyzing skills because for them it is easier to say it than to write it, and I have learned with them so far this year that if they can say it and be comfortable with saying it, and know that there is a confidence there, then they will be confident when they write it. And they won’t say well this could be or this may be because when they are speaking I can quickly say there is no, it either happened or it didn’t, you either liked it or didn’t, you read, what did you read, did the characters say it or didn’t they? And that has worked out well.

I don’t think we are heavy test oriented, we are heavily writing oriented, I am not sure of the core way to say it, but we write a lot at this school, it is, the writing process is ever lasting.
You start with something, and you end, and you start and you end and at the end you start with something else. Within the week or the next week you are constantly putting your thoughts onto paper. So I wouldn’t say it is more so focus on testing, but we have our students really think about what they are reading what they are learning about and put it onto paper so when it comes time for a straightforward test they think it is a breeze, because they are not having to create an answer, the answer is already right there, they just pick it.

I think that going into my first year I imagined that everything would be cut and dried. And that it would be very easy to say ok, I need to make the standard of analyzing two works of literature and that it would be very natural, because it is natural for me I have made the assumption of such a rookie mistake, as I have gone along this year, such a rookie mistake of assuming that it is natural for everyone’s kid in comparing two works of literature is very unnatural for many people especially at eleven years old, it is having to realize that I have to take the standards that I read as an adult then create them and develop them and present them in a way that is understood by an eleven year old mind, and at the same time not compromising high expectations and high standards for different students. So it has been a process to realize that, to figure that out, it is not impossible, it is not anywhere close to being impossible, but it is very challenging, especially with lower level learners because they all, and I hate to classify them as lower level learners, but they are lower level, they are all different levels and they are all different, but very much a strategy is trying to figure out how to best work my materials for them in a way that they can understand.

I actually set down with [the principal and another teacher] the other day, and we were talking about how often we are going to re-evaluate certain curriculum so we have everything here now on a four year rotation. So, like English, English is their thing, with revising grammar,
reading, and just so English was the thing that got organized multiple years ago. So I think that will help, keeping things fresh and keeping a fair rotation, but I don’t know I would hope that after four years I would have a better grasp on what is needed and what is necessary I think it will take a while.

I have found that assessments are an art in and of themselves. They are very tricky not because again that they are impossible, and not because they are necessarily difficult, they are an art because they need to be done correctly in order to be understood. It is difficult to find the line for subjectivity and objectivity, because so often things have a grey area where I so badly want them to just be black and white, and I expect everything to be black and white, and so much of what I do has grey area, not because I am in a private school and not because I am a first year teacher, it is because I need to find what is best for each of my students and sometimes I have to either find or create a grey area in order to meet their needs and do what is best for them academically.

I try to do different kinds of assessments. [In] creative writing I just did a compare and contrast essay with my sixth graders that was the first one they had done that actually was very well and I was very happy, but then for eighth grade they did a world history and wrote a history that can take place anywhere in the world at any time period. Seventh grade at one point has done a captain’s log, so they wrote it as if they were a captain on a ship in ancient times and they make a discovery. So I have them with logs, but the seventh grade is working on right now is I have broke them into groups and they created a settlement and they have to draw maps of the settlement and place things, place certain things in a certain place, then I wrote them all a business letter one day saying I was coming in to build a resort and I can be so close to a power plant yet so close to the water facility so they have been practicing writing a business letter and
then they are going to write a really long paper about the history of the settlement to why the
settlement was created the way that it was so experience is structured in that they are certain
skills that need to be met, writing a mystery, knowing about creating suspense in the mystery
piece, creating a tone of understanding that with history, and with science things are a certain
specific way, compare and contrast is a basic skill we all have to use.

They read King Arthur, the abridged version of King Arthur in the fall, and I had them
write a newspaper article based on King Arthur’s kingdom, and it could have been a report on a
battle King Arthur fought, or an executive decision made at the round table or it could have been
a gossip piece about Guinevere and King Arthur and her affair and teaching them how to use
different resources with the Microsoft Word and using pictures and how to put that together so it
looks like a newspaper or a newspaper article.

I have found that I am more than a grammar Nazi. I am more than a bookworm, I am
more than a nerd, I have felt that I have been defined by so many labels by so many stereotypes
and categories throughout my life but fortunately I have literature and writing and then I finally
have the freedom to share that and it is not so much that it still doesn’t define me but it, in a
funny way, if I want to define someone else just to share that commonality and a communal
expression for a love of novels and writing and in an environment where it is ok to not be the
best at reading comprehension or the best at writing a paper but to know that we all aren’t going
to be right at some point and that is ok, it is not the end of the world, the sun will rise tomorrow,
but it is nice to know I don’t feel as if down to a certain title anymore, but at this point I am
responsible for carrying out and, I will go so far as to say executing certain standards and
expectations that also has a weight to it and not that that is unbearable, but to know that my
passions and my drive and my motivations for learning and literature and writing have carried
me so far to know that it is almost like I have been carried in by a wave and now I am on the shore so where am I going to go? And just figuring out, ok, is it going to work is it not going to work? So, yeah, there are things that I have really learned that I am not necessarily bound by titles but I am more so bound to responsibilities as an adult as a teacher to share what I love and show others how to share what they love in English, in English class.

With [teaching] religion I try to answer any questions that they have but I also like for them to find the answers for themselves because I found that with the experiences that I had that it was very uncomfortable, and it was very discouraging when someone would tell me what I had to believe, and even for me it is difficult and it is uncomfortable for me to say you have to believe this, and I am not saying that I do, but I would never want someone to feel like they had to believe something just because they go to a Catholic school.

He [the priest] is great about making sure that the school is a part of the church, that the church is a part of the school, I think on Sundays the eighth grade Sunday school class volunteers. So we make sure the needs of the school are met but also the needs of the parish are met as well and that we coexist and we do that quite harmoniously. Father [name] likes to make sure that the parishioners understand the needs of the school because so many of the parishioners go to this school. For the population that I teach, some of them may do well in a different school, but I think that [school name] meets their needs. I think it meets the family I think, I think that for them to be there K-8 that is a mentality and a fundamental family in that they would have some…my personal outlook on it is two reasons that a child would stay in a Catholic school K-8. One, they have special needs and need that strong diverse attention and differentiated instruction and just that true one-on-one small class. The second reason being that the parent is a strong Catholic, they come from a strong Catholic family, and that is just, anything outside of that
would be abnormal, like at a public school. I want my child to have a strong Catholic faith, I want them to have a stronger education, and I think that would be two of the main reason you have got parents who strongly look for a K-8 school.

Ultimately at the end of the day we will all learn the same things, and we all leave with the same ideas fresh in our minds, but the way we talk about things is different because I can communicate differently, it is really great for me but it is different because I am able to challenge them in different ways as well as myself so that we can have different impressions, I can move at a faster pace, where I have to move at a slower pace with the other. So it works real well and it is a lot of fun and I really wish more of them would be as enthusiastic as I am but I am in my first year, I think some of them like a process, I think some of them like the routine and then the consistent, I am going to do this for ten minutes and then I am going to do this for ten and then this, but that is not how I am and I think that as long as I am upbeat and optimistic and honest and human with my students when it comes to English and writing and they are able to respond to me in the same way and as long as I am consistent with that, because if I am not consistent with that then they will probably just turn their heads because they need consistency and they don’t mind me changing things up with the class, they are fine with that, but they have become accustomed to my way of doing things and talking about stuff.

Analysis of Cindy

*Creativity and process.* Cindy’s responses indicate choice as important in the context of this theme. Cindy explains:

I remember when I was a junior in high school that my English teacher gave us the option to complete three papers and then three projects on the six books we read that year. I loved the freedom to choose.
Her response indicates a “love” of being presented with opportunity of choosing different modes of communicating (i.e., multimodal) what she knows or what she has learned. Another of Cindy’s favorite activities centers on a structured writing activity. Cindy remembers a singular writing assignment that had a positive effect upon her:

I also remember my ninth grade English teacher from [school] in [state] asked us to write a sensory based expository paper just a month or two after moving to [state]. I wrote about the night before moving to [state] and how I felt, down to the tears burning my face. That paper was powerful for me to write, and I really enjoyed that assignment because it was the first time I had ever written something that intense about my feelings.

The words “powerful” and “intense” describe the effect of this particular activity on Cindy. I also interpret her description of the assignment as a type of process writing, i.e., an “expository paper” which can be used as a five-paragraph essay assignment. The expository essay carries rules but can be amended to fit an educational objective. This was a “powerful” and “intense” experience for Cindy for two reasons. First, Cindy has a positive experience using a process format with the opportunity to write about something personal and creative within the parameters of predetermined essay guidelines. Second, this assignment comes at an important time for her as she uses it to describe her transition from one state to another, which can be difficult for anyone. These two reasons may also be factors that contribute towards Cindy’s beliefs about teaching and the possibilities of teaching.

Testing. Cindy expressed issues with test anxiety. She admits to suffering through a type of test anxiety:

I had to learn how to take tests. I would put a great deal of pressure on myself and would “freeze up” during the test. The end result was far from pleasing.
Much like Joyce, Cindy mentions “learn[ing] to take tests,” although from Cindy’s statement it seems that this education happened earlier in her academic career than Joyce. Even in learning the rules of taking a test, Cindy still felt enough anxiety that she would “freeze up.” This pressure comes from what Neil alludes to as the multiple choice format tests. That format and her inability to achieve her desired outcome led Cindy to gravitate toward feeling more comfortable with writing as an assessment of her knowledge. She states:

Writing, though a challenge, was more my speed because I was able to choose what I wanted to write about and demonstrate my knowledge.

Both Neil and Cindy describe writing as a personal strength, or as could be interpreted from their responses that it became a strength they developed, in the context of test taking.

*Transmission learning.* Cindy shares a negative memory of her experience with teachers in the context of recognizing individual learning styles, or differentiated instruction:

I do not feel that there was any kind of differentiated instruction provided to me. As the same time, I didn’t expect there to be. There were some students who needed more attention than me. I have always been an independent student as well as an individual. I knew that when I went home my parents would help me, but not everyone had that luxury. Maybe my teachers’ excess time went towards those students.

Every participant in addressing this question communicated some level of teacher centered dominance. The various English teachers that the participants recounted imposed a way of learning, and somehow the participants not only accepted it, but justified it. Take the end of Cindy’s experience as an example. She feels that her entire middle school English experience did not provide her with varied learning opportunities and that those teachers “were far from the kind of teacher I continuously aspire to be.” Immediately following that statement, she justifies her
teachers’ approach as if she feels shame for ever wanting to have (or even in the present having) learning opportunities presented to her in multiple ways. What can be assumed is that Cindy learned about various types of instruction, or differentiated instructional methods, in her TEP and that knowledge has helped her to think more about how to become “the kind of teacher I continuously aspire to be.”

*Passion, compassion, and empathy.* In the context of what brought Cindy to her current profession, Cindy recounts her reason as:

I initially declared myself an advertising major, but changed my major when I was a sophomore in college. I have always loved to read and write, so English was an easy choice. While I love and appreciate “the little ones”, I felt a stronger calling to secondary because I felt that I would be able to challenge my students more. Being the big sister to a three year younger brother, I have always been the helper and the teacher. The thought process was natural for me. While I found advertising interesting, I wasn’t passionate about my major as I learned I should be. I made the grand decision to change my major while drying my hair before going to a party with my sorority sisters…I kid you not. While it is a casual way to make the biggest decision of my life up to that point, it was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Cindy came to English education from a different academic background (i.e., science). Cindy did make an “easy choice” with secondary education as she openly admits that she did not want to work with elementary grade level students or “the little ones.” However, much like Ann’s recollection of her choice, Cindy uses the word “passionate” to demonstrate making a vocational choice. A lack of passion for vocational choices before English education for Ann and Cindy helped to influence the decision making process even if by Cindy’s admission the choice came
about in a “casual way.” Cindy “aspires” to be a “helper” and a “teacher” to older students so that she could “challenge” them and in turn perhaps challenge herself.

Validity regarding tests and standards. Cindy has a negative viewpoint about standardized testing:

I have never liked standardized tests. For many years I have thought that many educators teach the test rather than truly educate their students. I think that some people in our education system have become enablers. It is one thing to recognize and practice differentiated instruction, but it is a whole other concept to over exaggerate students’ needs so that suspect and compromising decisions are made in hopes of a better standardized test score. I learned in TEP that it was difficult for some educators and school systems to do their jobs and teach students how to appreciate and work through their difficulties. Instead, some find it appropriate to sweep the students’ true abilities under the rug and focus on a characteristic that will, in some way, contribute to a monetary gain.

Cindy’s viewpoint lacks the degree of optimism found in Ann’s response. Phrases such as “teach the test” and the statement “I think that some people in our education system have become enablers” indicate that Cindy’s belief holds that standardized testing functions in some way as a coddling mechanism for not developing students abilities while simultaneously promoting education that demonstrates “difficult[y] for some educators and school systems to do their jobs and teach students how to appreciate and work through their difficulties.” This negative feeling may also stem from the fact that she herself had to “learn how to take tests,” and that the tests would cause anxiety in her to the point that she would “freeze up.” The baseline of Cindy’s viewpoint, of not liking standardized testing, shares similarity with Neil’s belief of being
“absolutely against standardized tests. I hated them when I was in school and I hate them now.”

While Neil shares an antipathy towards testing, like Cindy he presents no elaboration upon that viewpoint, and it can be assumed that he justifies his viewpoint based on his antipathy towards tests that are about “memorization and application” rather than a written response of some type.

In the context of feelings and opinions about the CCSS, Cindy sees a problem with the current standards suffering from a lack of specificity. She states that the standards that are “vague and leave a large amount of room for error.” Cindy’s statements seem to pose an impossible task of creating standards that are not “overly specific” but also “specific enough.” Her knowledge of standards and testing present a dilemma for Cindy in that she may well struggle with finding a balance as she tries to develop whatever her classroom beliefs are further in her teaching.

Value of planning. Cindy shares a positive outlook in regards to the value of learning how to best create and implement lesson plans in the classroom. For her, “Designing lessons at first was a challenge because my plans were so detailed. I wanted to make sure that I did not miss a single thing.”

For Cindy, it is better to be over-prepared then underprepared, and that could be a positive credit towards her alma mater’s TEP. In returning to her thoughts on the CCSS and testing, being over-prepared in her planning could be difficult in the face of her disagreements about the generalized standards structure and the way testing is undertaken. This is where acquiring knowledge about the students and the schools would be of great importance for Cindy in making her beliefs about what she wants for herself and her students to accomplish in the classroom.
**Demographics.** Cindy chose a school that was homogenous to her personal religious upbringing; a familiar private Catholic middle school in an area not far from where she spent some years growing up. Cindy teaches 120 students across a grade level and age spectrum:

I teach eight different sections. I teach two sections of American lit, so all of the sixth grade, five different sections of creative writing, all of sixth grade all of seventh grade, half of eighth grade and then I also teach the eighth grade religion class.

Cindy expresses strong feelings she for the dominant group (i.e., sixth grade):

With the sixth grade, I mesh very well with the sixth grade. We just blend, we get each other, I don’t know if it is their weird and I am weird or it is just an awkward first year for both of us? […] I think they are a great group. I have a lot of lower level learners in the sixth grade, so it has been very educational for me to learn how to meet the needs of a lower level learner, especially those that have ADD who are medicated. So having to, those with crazy home lives, and I am really trying to foster a strong bond with them and I think I have.

Recalling Cindy’s own middle school experiences with teacher centered instruction she communicated that her entire middle school English experience she, “[did] not feel that there was any kind of differentiated instruction provided to me.” Based on those experiences, it seems she chose what she believed would be a school and demographic that would allow her to be the educator she aspires to be professionally. However, while the demographics are homogenous in her current teaching post and reflect a similar religious belief, there are still aspects of the demographic that Cindy adjusts for in her teaching. For example, even though Cindy originally choose secondary education over elementary education to avoid “the little ones,” because “I [Cindy] felt a stronger calling to secondary because I felt that I would be able to challenge my
students more,” she has instead been challenged by an age group (predominantly sixth grade) with a differentiated learner instructional need (lower level learners). An assumption can be made that Cindy will amend her beliefs about “challenging her students” as she interacts more with this demographic that will challenge her in ways that she did not anticipate.

Community. Cindy accepted a teaching position that immerses her in a specific religious ideology, i.e. Catholicism. Cindy’s experience shares similarities to Ann’s experience with the exception that Cindy actually teaches at a specific religious private institution and Ann teaches at a public school in a predominantly Mormon community. Cindy describes a reciprocal relationship between the school and community. For her, the head of the school, a priest, provides reciprocity between the school and the population, and she finds this comforting:

He [the priest] is great about making sure that the school is a part of the church, that the church is a part of the school, I think on Sundays the eighth grade Sunday school class volunteers. So we make sure the needs of the school are met but also the needs of the parish are met as well and that we coexist and we do that quite harmoniously. Father [name] likes to make sure that the parishioners understand the needs of the school because so many of the parishioners go to this school.

These “needs” Cindy mentions she returns to later in our conversation:

For the population that I teach, some of them may do well in a different school, but I think that [school name] meets their needs. I think it meets the family I think, I think that for them to be there K-8 that is a mentality and a fundamental family in that they would have some…my personal outlook on it is two reasons that a child would stay in a Catholic school K-8. One, they have special needs and need that strong diverse attention and differentiated instruction and just that true one-on-one small class. The second reason
being that the parent is a strong Catholic, they come from a strong Catholic family, and that is just, anything outside of that would be abnormal, like at a public school. I want my child to have a strong Catholic faith, I want them to have a stronger education, and I think that would be two of the main reason you have got parents who strongly look for a K-8 school.

Cindy’s statements hinge on the word “strong” and tie into her feelings about religion and education. She discusses how religion and education seem to require reciprocity with each other in order to provide a “stronger education” for this population. In addition, it can be inferred that the intertwining of religion and education strengthens some of her beliefs about teaching and education generally. For example, her previous comments about how modern educational models “teach the test” and the statements “I think that some people in our education system have become enablers,” and “[It is] difficult for some educators and school systems to do their jobs and teach students how to appreciate and work through their difficulties” indicate her dissatisfaction with what she views as the general educational model. Reflecting on those statements in the context of the community where Cindy chooses to work, it can be assumed that she is amending her beliefs, even as she faces an unexpected age group and other instructionally related challenges, by surrounding herself in a familiar environment in which she can modify her teaching within an environment she believes creates “strength,” not only for her teaching belief and purpose but for the students she teaches.

**Sandra**

I always did well in English classes because I loved the subject. I was a good test taker and never had any issues taking tests in English. In middle school they made me a little more anxious and I didn’t love taking tests, but as I got older, they posed less of a threat. I did have
teachers who helped me more than others simply because they were good teachers. I was a very obedient student and never complained or made suggestions as to how I learned best. I did have teachers who chose not to recognize how anyone learned best and I feel as though I missed out on a lot that could have been taught.

I was always in advanced or AP English classes, but I don’t remember ever taking a test to determine whether I belonged in those classes. I think it was determined more by your previous grades in English classes.

I always knew I wanted to do something in education but went back and forth from Biology to English. The deciding factor was the amount of math I would have had to take to major in Biology. Helping friends or my sister with learning helped me realize I could be a good teacher. My experiences on mission trips in high school, teaching younger kids in Peru, also led me to choose English education.

I have never agreed with standardized tests because I feel as though they are arbitrary at times. There are also other factors that affect a student’s performance on standardized test; it’s not based just on factual knowledge. In the TEP [teacher education program] I was able to develop more of a half appreciation for them. I know that some type of common assessment is necessary for a lot of things, but I still believe there need to be adjustments to the way we do it now.

I don’t know if we talked a lot about the specific common core standards except for the fact that it was a way to keep education more even across states which I like. I learned much more about common core once I got a job and began planning lessons based on those standards. I learned [in TEP] that knowing the standards and effectively using assessments can be very beneficial but also difficult. It’s easier to just give a test to get a grade. Making the connection
between grades and mastery of the standards takes a little more time and work which discourages a lot of teachers from doing it consistently. I valued them [the lessons] because they kept me organized and gave me something to work towards instead of improvising day-to-day.

I haven’t really experienced problems with any other teachers, we have weekly meetings with our eleventh grade English team, so actually we are all pretty close, we have a chairing time at the beginning of each meeting, and I think we are the most forthcoming and open about kind of what is going on in our lives and in the classroom than when I talk to teachers in other grades, they are more so get to business testing.

So ok, with other teachers, its all been positive, with administrators it has been a little more difficult. We have a lot of administrators; I think we have maybe thirteen or fourteen assistant principals. I know. So we have assistant principals just for ninth grade attendance. So the assistant principal that hired me he became principal of a middle school about half way through the year, halfway through last semester, and we all really loved her, the rest of the administrators are hit or miss a lot of times. For example, the assistant principal that is over my grade I don’t think I have spoken to her more than twice and I don’t think she even knows my name, but, yeah, I haven’t even met every teacher that works there and I will see teachers and I am like I have never seen you in my life, so it is all kind of chaotic. So it is hard to have good relationships with the administrators, but I haven’t really had run-ins with anybody or real negative experiences, it’s just kind of been.

So [the community] is generally upper middle class, but in [city] it is a very transient population and we have seventy-ish percent Hispanic kids, twenty or so percent black, and the rest are Asian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and then a smattering of white kids. […] They told me it was a transient population and that there are a lot of minorities and it really isn’t…the kids aren’t
as foreign as you would expect them to be, but a lot of issues are with attendance because they are either working to support their families, a lot of kids come from single parent houses, their moving around with this here or this uncle or a parent, so that really is our biggest issue that they don’t come to school. I have kids who are first or second year out of the ESOL program, so they speak enough English to communicate and to read all right, but most of the kids that I have speak enough English so I can communicate with them in English.

I think there is something to be said for the kids who have been in kind of the American public school system for longer, where they are kind of, I would imagine they are more used to taking a standardized test and having to do all that versus a lot of kids coming into the country not having gone through kindergarten all the way up through sixth or seventh grade.

I love [my students] to death. They are all really interesting, and they all have weird stories, and a lot of them, come from single parent households, so they don’t have a lot of one-on-one attention, or they are taking care of their siblings, or they have their own kids they are taking caring of, so it really doesn’t, with some of the like harder kids it takes a little bit to kind of earn their trust, but they are pretty willing to if you show any interest in them and their lives and what they like to do they click pretty well. Like their, kind of more so their outward appearance, they come in and they look like they have been through a lot, or a lot of them have a lot of face piercings and tattoos and all this kind of stuff, and so they are very eagerly, like if they feel like somebody doesn’t respect them, they will just shut down, and once you do that it is hard to get it back. I kind of started at the beginning of the year, because there were certain classroom management I didn’t want to have, a lot of rules, don’t chew gum, don’t do this, don’t do this, so just a blanket statement that said the only rule in the classroom was to be respectful, So we kind of talked about what is respectful, what is not respectful. Leaving trash in my room is not
respectful, using racial slurs or saying something is gay or anything like that is not acceptable
[...] when I did my student teaching, kids were very openly, just slightly disrespectful to a lot of
people just constantly.

I think a lot of them in their houses are the ones who are in charge, they speak English
and they have to do a lot of the communicating, so in their personal life they have respect
because they run their houses. So that is what a lot of them have issues with, like, I think
honestly they probably talk to me a lot differently and a lot more respectfully now than they
probably do to their parents. And I have witnessed that like they come to parent teacher
conferences and sit there with their parents and talk to their parents like they are the parent, so it
is really kind of [indecipherable]. And then there are some that do come from houses where,
especially the Asian population, their very much respect family, and you do what your family
says and you support your family no matter what. So it is a very strange mix of kids who act
older than they are and kids who really don’t know how to act at all.

So most of my classes I can, I joke with, and so we have fun and they switched a lot of
the kids around this semester so a lot of the kids I had in my class have now moved out so they
still come by class and say I want to come back, I want to come back, so and then I also am
coaching the girls lacrosse team, so I have my lacrosse players come in, I usually have kids in
there eating during my lunch or during my planning period as well. So I would say I get along
with them I think, I think they have a way with me because I am so young, but I try not to be to
buddy buddy with them so that they don’t think they have to listen to me when it is time to work,
sometimes, but for the most part I haven’t had any kids ever cuss me out or got up and walked
out of class or anything like that.
I don’t know if surprising, but I have had to, like I said I am a very relational person and it is very easy for me to take on things, or care about things to a fault. And so I really have had to, like I can’t bring things home, so like today I have a lacrosse player who her mom just got out of jail I think during this past summer, so she has been hopping from hotel to hotel and apartments all last semester, so at practice today she told me coach I don’t think I will be at practice tomorrow and I was like ok, you know, what is going on and she goes well honestly I don’t even think I am going to be at school tomorrow because, the mom does give her a ride to school and the pack for our contests, yeah, she is getting sick of me so I don’t have any way to get to school. And so I said I think today was the first time today that I was mad, I was just overly distraught, and trying to figure out, should I have told her to get a taxi, is there some form can fill out where I can pick her up, and so it is having a weird balance of where I feel like having to cut that off and not caring much either makes me feel bad because I am not caring about them or it makes me feel bad because I am caring about them too much.

I think there are a lot of the teachers at the school who have either been teaching for a long time or they are older and they don’t necessarily, they treat the kids exactly like students, you should come in and you should sit down and you should do your work, do what I say because I said so, versus at the beginning of the year I told them, look if you have an issue with something, tell me, if you think something is really stupid and you don’t understand why we are doing it, ask me about it and I will explain why we are doing something.

[The school system] realigned their standards with common core. So they have the [county] AKS, which is academic knowledge standard I think? So the AKS is pretty much common core. So most of the teachers haven’t, they have either been teaching in [state], or in [county] for most of their careers, so they are used to it. So it was a very, from what I can tell, a
smooth transition to having to do just common core, because the standards they were already using were common core basically.

[I] had parent teacher conferences last semester, out of my hundred and sixty-four kids, three parents showed up. One was a parent of a kid who was failing, so I have been talking to her throughout the semester about what we have to do to get him to focus and do his work. And then the other two students who came were two students I never had a problem with. I kind of call, I have had to call parents for kids that were either failing or never paying attention in class, and the parents that I could talk to, because I can speak Spanish limitedly, so a few parents are Spanish speakers and I could have a conversation with them to let them know what is going on. And I haven’t encountered any parents who are negative about education or me calling them or anything like that, most of the time it is very apologetic— I am so sorry we will fix it, I will talk to him, it will be better, and it doesn’t change. So from talking with other teachers that seems to be the norm there. So obviously a lot of the parents work, so it is hard to get in touch with them during the day, or they have night shift jobs so the kids are really responsible for getting themselves up, getting themselves to school, so it is very, very limited parent involvement. The more of the business communities is involved, like the school has a lot of partnerships with [chain restaurants], and businesses, but yeah, a community of parents is not very strong. For years apparently the parent teacher conferences have been very sparsely attended and they just don’t get involved, they either don’t have the time or they just don’t want to, or they are busy because they have five kids and they are laid up all by themselves, but yeah, there is not a strong family community at the school.

We have, I think, between thirty-one and thirty-two hundred kids. The school [is transitioning to an academy model]. [The school will be] made up of five or six different path
ways, so there is like a hospitality path, an engineering path, audio and visual arts, technology path, so the students would choose a path and then the teachers teach in those school, so I would still teach 11th grade American lit, but if I was in the engineering academy I would try for to incorporate articles about engineering, or have study work that talks about engineering kind of thing. So what they are doing to make the transition easier as far as planning lessons is called the literacy design module. It is basically a really strict way of backwards mapping a unit. So you start with a product. So the kids, after reading this article, this article, this article, the kids are going to write an essay or an editorial for a newspaper and they are going to argue this or they are going to explain this and you kind of work backwards from there and find the activities that speak to the skill that they need to do that. So the teachers that are getting the training now, will then teach the rest of the teachers next year, so right now we are talking about the scene of literacy, so a lot of the teachers, at least in language arts, are trying to focus lessons and units around themes and particular issues.

We have standards, so we plan each kind of section based on the standards that we have to teach. So we all agree at the beginning of the day if we are going to try to cover this set of standards, these are the texts that the county suggests that we use but you can really do your own thing. There are not any required texts. There are no you have to teach this at this time, because they are using, they want to focus on the skills and the standards, so it is really the book we call. The literacy teacher is helping me plan ahead, and at the end of last semester and the start of this semester I felt a little more secure in what I am doing, just because somebody else is helping me with this that this is ok to teach that this is an ok way to teach it.

Our common assessments, our pre-test and post-test that we have been using, have focused on the standards, so it is read this passage and answer this question about what the main
point is, so it is hard to, I don’t see how it is uniform teacher to teacher, but, because we are a Title I school and we just got a state grant and we have a lot of requirements that we have to meet and it is a lot more easier for these teachers, on a day to day basis, it is easier for us to teach whatever we want, have these very standard pre-test post-test EOCT prep kind of stuff to show that we are teaching the same thing when it comes to standards but not when it comes to content.

A kid being able to read a passage and answer a question about which sentence identifies the main point, I don’t think says a lot about what they really can do, so I on my own have never created any multiple choice test, I don’t do anything like that. They read The Crucible last semester and at the end of that I had them write about one character and two qualities that they have and then like a short essay about what the witch trials and the red scare have in common? What was different about them? That to me teaches them more and helping more of do they really comprehend the play, do they read a novel and get the viewpoint, do they get the article and figure out what the author is trying to ask them to do versus, you know, read this paragraph about the ocean and answer the question what fish were they talking about?

[I] use rubrics. [For example] I have them write a short story after we did Edgar Allan Poe, they wrote their own scary short story or whatever, and I had a rubric for that that they saw from the very beginning that I gave it to them at the very start so they knew kind of what I was looking for.

Well for the year right now I have everything planned out for probably the next three weeks, so I haven’t been getting to the school earlier to be prepared for the day, so I get to school, set everything up, there is the daily announcements. And then the beginning of each class is a vocabulary assignment they have to do with our vocabulary words for the week, they get that, and then they do the conflict, today we read an article about the Koala, I can’t pronounce
her last name, the girl in Pakistan that was shot a few years ago, so I read the introduction for
them and then we did popcorn reading, so it wasn’t a very long article, maybe two or three
pages, and they read slow so it takes us awhile to read two or three pages. So we read the story
and after each section or paragraph I ask them to recap, ok, what did she do before? What is she
doing now? These are kind of like vague comment, non-specific, they all just kind of answer if
they knew it, and then after we are done with reading the article they have a REAP chart, which
has some boxes, and the first box is read the article, what is the name of it? The second box is
summarize the article, the main points of it. The annotation box is they have to pull out five key
details or key stats they felt were important in the story and write those down and say where they
got them from and include a quote, and then the last box is the conclusions, then they have an
open ended question and then about four questions, what do you think she would have to do, and
then just kind of general response to that, so some kids were working by themselves, and some
kids were working in groups of two or three. So the last six minutes, some classes work faster
than others so the ones that got done sooner we had a class discussion on what they say and what
each group and what their conclusions were and that was the end of the fifty minutes or
whatever.

Then first period, second period, third, fourth, and then lunch. The eleventh grade has
seventh period planning so we have our weekly department meetings and we talked about what
we learn from the modules and then we talked about the pre and post test we have to do as a
department and learned that our principal wants a schedule of all the dates we are giving the pre
and post test and copies of the pre and post test for the next week.
I get that there needs to be some kind of standard for teaching and making sure that people are on
kind of a level playing field, I don’t necessarily enjoy having to teach starting from standards,
because I feel like, it is not as limiting as having to teach for EOCT or teach for this test or that kind of thing, so it can be limiting but it is also necessary.

I understand how to use assessments like if I created it and I think I talked about this last time, kind of a more I am going to assess that these kids know how to compare two ideas and find the differences by making them write a paragraph before and after they try. But a lot of the assessment that we have to do like the pre-test and the post-test and all that kind of stuff, I don’t, I can’t find a relevant or a remotely interesting way to incorporate that into the classroom, where I would be teaching kids you know this is the kind of answer to this kind of question on this kind of standardized test and still have them think it is important. I feel if it was more a combination of like me creating it and collaborating with other teachers, if it was kind of a more organic way of pre-testing them and post-testing them to you know read the questions that you are going to be asking them in April and the questions you are going to be asking them the second week in April to see if they learned what they need to learn in those two weeks.

The hardest thing with that is I can assess [students] on the standards, and they know how to find evidence and they know how to support their claims, but they don’t know any of the basics to help them do that well. So it is not a lack of intelligence at all, they know, they can watch a movie and tell you what the main idea is, summarize it perfectly, but if you ask them to present that information in an intelligent way, they can’t figure out how to put their thought down on paper, they can’t figure out if they need this spelling of this word or that spelling.

Something I say especially on Fridays since they are going home for the weekend, I tell them, I love you guys, be safe, whatever, and the kids will say do you really love us? Well of course I do, I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t, and they say none of our teachers ever loved us before, or say I love you back, it is very platonic I don’t touch them weirdly or inappropriate, but I think
it is something that a lot of people do shy away from because they don’t want to get in trouble and they don’t want to, and I do think there are ways you have to be careful in that but, you know, tell them that you love them and it is a good thing and they want to come to the class where the teacher loves them.

**Analysis of Sandra**

*Creativity and process.* Sandra recalls that she “always liked the projects that included some kind of creative aspect (drawing, etc….)”. In the vein of Cindy and Neil, this indicates a draw towards working in multiple modes of response for an assignment.

*Testing.* Sandra, much like Ann, did not have an issue with testing. She described:

I was a good test taker and never had any issues taking tests in English. In middle school they made me a little more anxious and I didn’t love taking tests, but as I got older, they posed less of a threat.

Even though Sandra has little issue with tests, her feelings of “anxiety” related to test taking lessened as her experiences and familiarity with them as she got “older” grew. She no longer views tests as a “threat.”

*Transmission learning.* For Sandra, no English teacher, or any teacher, attempted differentiated instruction to help her:

I was a very obedient student and never complained or made suggestions as to how I learned best. I did have teachers who chose not to recognize how anyone learned best and I feel as though I missed out on a lot that could have been taught.

This idea of “obedience” presents a possible effect that an over reliance on a teacher centered instructional strategy can have on students. Also, through reflection, Sandra now recognizes
diverse instruction and understands how different types of instruction can benefit her students. She gained this insight through experience and through her pre-service training.

*Passion, compassion, and empathy.* Sandra comments that at first English education came second to another field:

I always knew I wanted to do something in education but went back and forth from Biology to English. The deciding factor was the amount of math I would have had to take to major in Biology.

She immediately built on that statement explaining:

Helping friends or my sister with learning helped me realize that could be a good teacher. My experiences on mission trips in high school, teaching younger kids in Peru, also led me to choose English education.

Even factoring in the decision to be in English education predicated in part on not wanting to pursue a more quantitative training in the sciences, it can be assumed that Sandra has empathy for people akin to Joyce. She equates good teaching with words like “helping.” That helping also comes from work on “mission trips” that helps to solidify for Sandra her decision to “choose English education.” Is this the same as what Joyce describes as a “calling”? Possibly, however, there are no further indications in this research.

*Validity regarding tests and standards.* Even though she recounts that tests eventually “posed less of a threat,” Sandra expresses a contextual issue in her response to my inquiry:

I have never agreed with standardized tests because I feel as though they are arbitrary at times. There are also other factors that affect a students’ performance on standardized test; it’s not based just on factual knowledge. In the TEP [teacher education program] I was able to develop more of a half appreciation for them. I know that some type of
common assessment is necessary for a lot of things, but I still believe there need to be adjustments to the way we do it now.

Sandra’s disagreement centers on what she perceives as a disconnect between the types of knowledge on standardized tests. She chooses to describe standardized testing as “arbitrary,” but not always. Furthermore, Sandra’s statement, “I know that some type of common assessment is necessary for a lot of things, but I still believe there need to be adjustments to the way we do it now,” leads to an assumption that Sandra has optimism in her outlook about testing generally.

Sandra’s opinion about standardized tests has developed in learning more about them. Her optimism concerning “adjustments to the way we do it now” has built since learning about testing from a different perspective (i.e., as a student). From a student’s perspective she had early opportunities to learn how to test; therefore, testing “posed less of a threat.”

CCSS did not play a large role in Sandra’s recollection of her training. She states:

I don’t know if we talked a lot about the specific common core standards except for the fact that it was a way to keep education more even across the states which I like. I learned much more about common core once I got a job and began planning lessons based on those standards.

Sandra’s viewpoint of equilibrium among states echoes optimism found in like-minded responses by Joyce and Neil with word choices to describe the CCSS, from “step up,” to “helps,” to keeping “education more even.”

Value of planning. Sandra found a value in using lessons she wrote that contributed to a larger unit of study. She describes her feelings as “I valued them [the lessons] because they kept me organized and gave me something to work towards instead of improvising day-to-day.”

During her training, Sandra may have had a lack of focus on the CCSS, but she did pick up the
importance of preparation through lesson planning. This type of knowledge allows her to plan the groundwork for the students in her classroom giving her at least a baseline to work and develop how to teach the lessons she attempts to develop.

Demographics. Sandra’s eleventh grade teaching job occurs in a Title I high school that she describes as having a student population that “We have, I think, between thirty-one and thirty-two hundred kids,” which requires “hav[ing] assistant principals just for ninth grade attendance.” Upon accepting the job Sandra’s administration informed her that the school had not only a numerically large population, but also a varied, transient student body:

So it is generally upper middle class, but in [city] it is a very transient population and we have seventy-ish percent Hispanic kids, twenty or so percent black, and the rest are Asian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and then a smattering of white kids. […] They told me it was a transient population and that there are a lot of minorities and it really isn’t…the kids aren’t as foreign as you would expect them to be, but a lot of issues are with attendance because they are either working to support their families, a lot of kids come from single parent houses, their moving around with this here or this uncle or a parent, so that really is our biggest issue that they don’t come to school.

The large student population, according to Sandra, has a generous amount of non-native English speakers who in late adolescence have been enrolled in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes in the school system. Sandra remarks that ESOL in her day-to-day classes are comprised of:

I have kids who are first or second year out of the ESOL program, so they speak enough English to communicate and to read all right, but most of the kids that I have speak enough English so I can communicate with them in English.
Sandra works with a large late teenage population comprised of ESOL students who are on the verge of adulthood and dealing with in some instances “working to support their families” and “moving around.” I interpret that Sandra has experience teaching in a diverse demographic population prior to this teaching post having commented on previously that she has “experiences on mission trips in high school, teaching younger kids in Peru,” but is there any change between someone teaching a varied cultural population in the context of missionary work versus a certified, trained educator? Sandra further describes the student population she teaches as “hard.” She further elaborates on this idea of “hard”:

Like their, kind of more so their outward appearance, they come in and they look like they have been through a lot, or a lot of them have a lot of face piercings and tattoos and all this kind of stuff, and so they are very eagerly, like if they feel like somebody doesn’t respect them, they will just shut down, and once you do that it is hard to get it back.

Sandra mentions showing “respect” as important to the student population. But in what ways is “respect” defined in relation to her classroom? She states that:

I kind of started at the beginning of the year, because there were certain classroom management I didn’t want to have, a lot of rules, don’t chew gum, don’t do this, don’t do this, so just a blanket statement that said the only rule in the classroom was to be respectful, So we kind of talked about what is respectful, what is not respectful. Leaving trash in my room is not respectful, using racial slurs or saying something is gay or anything like that is not acceptable […] when I did my student teaching, kids were very openly, just slightly disrespectful to a lot of people just constantly.
In Sandra’s responses, however, the definition of “respect” and how it is defined for her classroom has to move outside of traditional classroom management established rules such as “don’t do this, don’t do this.” Sandra describes more about students and respect:

I think a lot of them in their houses are the ones who are in charge, they speak English and they have to do a lot of the communicating, so in their personal life they have respect because they run their houses. So that is what a lot of them have issues with, like, I think honestly they probably talk to me a lot differently and a lot more respectfully now than they probably do to their parents. And I have witnessed that like they come to parent teacher conferences and sit there with their parents and talk to their parents like they are the parent, so it is really kind of [indecipherable]. And then there are some that do come from houses where, especially the Asian population, their very much respect family, and you do what your family says and you support your family no matter what. So it is a very strange mix of kids who act older than they are and kids who really don’t know how to act at all.

In this “strange mix of kids,” does respect in the context of trying to establish a teaching approach change for Sandra? She previously states that one of her reasons for going into teaching centered on waning to “help” others, so how does her experience help her understanding of what that will mean for her as a teacher at this school for this particular age group? Based on her following response, the change has been one of realizing the systemic ways of schooling; that school has a culture all to itself, and that some kids learn how to do school while others do not. Based on her response, Sandra has amended her original blanket belief about “helping” others in a new demographic context (e.g., a large immigrant population), and that has provided her with new information to think about:
I think there is something to be said for the kids who have been in kind of the American public school system for longer, where they are kind of, I would imagine they are more used to taking a standardized test and having to do all that versus a lot of kids coming into the country not having gone through kindergarten all the way up through sixth or seventh grade.

Sandra has worries about kids who learn how to do school (e.g., schedules, test taking) at an early age versus those that do not. Her concern is for kids that have “been in kind of the American public school longer” compared to “kids coming into the country not having gone through kindergarten all the way up through sixth or seventh grade,” but her own knowledge of teaching and how to interact with students causes some conflict:

I don’t know if surprising, but I have had to, like I said I am a very relational person and it is very easy for me to take on things, or care about things to a fault. And so I really have had to, like I can’t bring things home, so like today I have a lacrosse player who her mom just got out of jail I think during this past summer, so she has been hopping from hotel to hotel and apartments all last semester, so at practice today she told me coach I don’t think I will be at practice tomorrow and I was like ok, you know, what is going on and she goes well honestly I don’t even think I am going to be at school tomorrow because, the mom does give her a ride to school and the pack for our contests, yeah, she is getting sick of me so I don’t have any way to get to school. And so I said I think today was the first time today that I was mad, I was just overly distraught, and trying to figure out, should I have told her to get a taxi, is there some form can fill out where I can pick her up, and so it is having a weird balance of where I feel like having to cut that off and
not caring much either makes me feel bad because I am not caring about them or it makes me feel bad because I am caring about them too much.

Sandra’s last sentence states, “[…]and so it is having a weird balance of where I feel like having to cut that off and not caring much either makes me feel bad because I am not caring about them or it makes me feel bad because I am caring about them too much.” Sandra’s trouble to maintain a “helpful” attitude for someone who was “[…] a very obedient student and never complained or made suggestions as to how I learned best” casts a change in her. She wants to be “obedient” to both her student population but also to the school system by not becoming emotionally attached to students. Based on her responses, her attempts at reconciling obedience with the passion, compassion, and an empathetic nature that brought her to the classroom motivates her to continually reflect upon her daily choices in the context of education.

*Community.* In the previous section Sandra describes a majority of the demographic makeup of where she teaches as “transient,” “hard,” and “upper-middle class,” but she later describes her experiences with the parents of these “hard” students:

We had parent teacher conference last semester, out of my hundred and sixty-four kids, three parents showed up. One was a parent of a kid who was failing, so I have been talking to her throughout the semester about what we have to do to get him to focus and do his work. And then the other two students who came were two students I never had a problem with. I kind of call, I have had to call parents for kids that were either failing or never paying attention in class, and the parents I could talk to, because I can speak Spanish limitedly, so a few parents were Spanish speakers and I could have a conversation with them to let them know what is going on. And I haven’t encountered any parents who are negative about education or me calling them or anything like that,
most of the time it is very apologetic—I am so sorry we will fix it, I will talk to him, it will be better, and it doesn’t change. So from talking with other teachers that seems to be the norm there. So obviously a lot of the parents work, so it is hard to get in touch with them during the day, or they have night shift jobs so the kids are really responsible for getting themselves up, getting themselves to school, so it is very, very limited parent involvement.

The transient community Sandra describes consists of a non-English speaking population with little to no parental involvement. She further elaborates what she feels is a lack of community:

The more of the business communities is involved, like the school has a lot of partnerships with [chain restaurants], and businesses, but yeah, a community of parents is not very strong. For years apparently the parent teacher conferences have been very sparsely attended and they just don’t get involved, they either don’t have the time or they just don’t want to, or they are busy because they have five kids and they are laid up all by themselves, but yeah, there is not a strong family community at the school.

Sandra contributes to a lack of “community” as she describes she lives conservatively “twenty to twenty-five minutes away” from the school. Based on our conversation, the community situation Sandra works within is a social norm that this school and the surrounding area have adopted. The community accepts transience as a norm, or, that the school itself functions as just another place, no different than a business that employs workers who show up and go home with little thought to the idea of a school as a community. The effect of this transience has been amending Sandra’s belief about student’s learning. Remember as a student she had “teachers who chose not to recognize how anyone learned best,” which contributes to shaping her feelings about “helping” others that informed her decision to “realize I could be a good teacher.” Even with the
experiences that helped shape her, she faces the daily challenge of a “transient,” “hard,” and a less than “strong family community at the school.” Sandra knows the type of teacher she does not want to be, but the difficult situation she faces remains teaching daily in a transient community. Based on her comments and our conversation, Sandra has to somehow continually amend her belief about how student’s learning in her classroom occurs.

Summary

First, the analysis of the profiles helped me to address my research question; in what ways do teachers develop a practical belief and purpose for their teaching? Based on analysis, the participant experiences has impacted the participants to develop a practical belief that engaging in various activities (e.g., process writing, drawing activities) can be creative, positive, and personal in their own classroom; that taking standardized tests causes differing levels of anxiety; that value occurs in the process of reflecting on, planning, and creating lessons; that they can rely on teacher centered instruction for a majority of their own instructional time; that passion, compassion, and empathy are a part of the participants role in the classroom; and that the CCSS (or some type of educational standards) are needed. In breaking down the interviews, the experiences of the participants indicate that they built a model in their minds of the kind of teacher they have aspired to be.

The analysis suggests that the participants seeks to find a balance as educators between staying faithful to their beliefs about their roles of teaching and doing what it takes, as learned through experience, to meet state requirements and the everyday needs of the classroom teaching. For example, the participants’ experiences with teacher centered transmission learning have helped them to develop empathy towards students. This empathy seems to drive the participants towards thinking more about the type of teaching that they want to accomplish in
their own classrooms. Thus, the participants are attempting, or thinking about, achieving some sort of balance in regards to how they instruct and interact with students within their classroom. This is the formation of a teaching knowledge brought about by attempting to merge belief and experience. This is knowledge that can contribute to teachers’ PCK.

Another example the analysis suggests is the history that participants have with testing. Growing up and taking part in standardized testing in schools, the participants understand what it is like to take the tests and are thus motivated to improve the way testing is conducted. For example, Joyce points out that standardized tests use privileged language; a belief that may be attributed to her self-described feelings of being an average performer on standardized tests. By making this statement, it can be assumed that Joyce will strive to balance out her instruction and interactions in the classroom to help students perform better on exams in her first year of teaching. 149

As the experiences described in this section coalesce to form a picture of the participants’ beliefs concerning education, it is important to next consider how future experiences will continue to shape the beliefs of the participants. In the next section, I discuss this question in addressing my other primary research questions regarding practical belief and purpose.

Second, the analysis of the profiles helped me to address my research question; under what conditions do teachers amend their practical belief and purpose for their teaching? Based on analysis, the experiences of the participants with diverse or homogenous demographics in their own classroom and the surrounding community have affected them to amend some of the practical beliefs and purposes for teaching that they brought into the classroom. For example, Sandra’s exposure to an ESOL population that she describes as “hard” and looking for “respect” has caused her to adjust her thoughts and teaching to align with her belief that a component of
teaching is about “helping,” which is an extension of her compassion and empathy. This adjustment moves Sandra towards being a balanced teacher. Her responses demonstrate her attempt to compromise and reconcile her desire to uphold classroom obedience with her original desire to bring passion, compassion, and empathy into the classroom. This act of compromise is not negative. Sandra does not appear to realize that her experiences in the classroom are helping her to achieve this balance. By drawing on these new experiences with students in this population, Sandra’s amending of her own beliefs is itself a demonstration of not being a static teacher, but rather a dynamic teacher that will change and adapt to new situations.

Also, the participants have different amendments to their beliefs based on the level of their community involvement. This involvement is based on a proactive interaction with the community (Joyce), a reactive interaction with the community (Neil), a transient interaction with a transient community (Sandra), or being immersed in a homogenous religious community (Ann, Cindy). For example, Ann’s teaching the middle school age group has caused her to make small concessions in the classroom to her “natural mode of operations” when it comes to classroom management. Ann’s “natural mode” is aligned with a belief of sharing, love, and service; a belief that is reinforced with the LDS faith and her surrounding LDS community. If Ann was not surrounded by this community, she would have a greater difficulty adjusting to working outside her “natural mode of operations.” Being surrounded by a community that will be empathetic to her classroom decisions helps Ann to feel comfortable amending her educational beliefs and purpose for teaching.

The participants’ demographic and community experiences they have encountered has helped them further refine their own practical belief and purpose; or in other words, refine what can be assumed is a balance to their everyday teaching and interactions. Professional and
personal growth does not exist in isolation, and these experiences all feed into each participant’s development as a teacher. For example, all of the participants indicated some sort of compassion and empathy for the subject they teach and a core reason for going into the field of teaching. That is why it is not surprising in analyzing the interviews to find that the participants have been willing to make adjustments and to amend what they knew coming into the classroom in an attempt to improve their pedagogy. The themes of demographics and community are a part of the continuum of the experiences the participants described in response to the first research question, of what are extensions, or continuations, of the teacher that they eventually see themselves as being. These participants, based on their responses and our conversations, want to be teachers that find a balance by combining all of their skills and all of their experiences to further their own teacher knowledge. While the participants do not always demonstrate the realization of this goal in their own words, with reflection over time, and perhaps more conversation with other educators, the participants will see the changes they have made, and also become more aware of the changes they need to and want to make. In chapter five, I will provide commentary and analysis on conclusions drawn from this study. Also, I will discuss the implications for research and suggest further inquiries into research, policy, and practice.
CHAPTER V:
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a larger, ongoing conversation about what factors contribute to teachers’ PCK. This study provides useful data that contributes to an existing body of work that began more than twenty-five years ago when Lee Shulman (1986, 1987) wrote about PCK. To help solidify the use of this research in current and future writings, conclusions and implications in chapter five are presented that will be beneficial to others. First in this chapter is a brief summary of the research. Next, commentary and analysis on conclusions drawn from the study that reflect the research questions are presented. In closing, implications in the field of teacher education are suggested, including further inquiries into research, policy, and practice.

Summary

Identifying and defining the components of PCK, or investigating what comprises PCK’s proposed “special amalgam” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), can contribute to continual refinement of defining and assessing PCK from pre-service training through daily classroom teaching. Therefore, my research made inquiry into finding the shades of PCK that could be refined. Based on the literature review, there were indications that the subtle components of teacher belief and purpose could be explored further. Thus, a series of one-on-one interviews with five participants was conducted and then analyzed. Based on that analysis, the overarching findings from chapter...
four found that the participant experiences and knowledge acquired in and out of a teacher education training program, as well as in the participants’ own classrooms, helped build their belief about what it is to be a teacher. This belief is predicated upon a number of factors.

The participants all held assumptions about the kind of teacher they wanted to be. The secondary school and community experiences of the participants played roles in inspiring them to enter a TEP; however, those experiences were enhanced once enrolled in the TEP. The knowledge gained about pedagogy, content, and experience are evident in their responses and summarized by the following themes: that engaging in various activities (e.g., process writing, drawing activities) can be creative, positive, and personal in their own classroom; that taking standardized tests cause differing levels of anxiety; that value occurs in the process of reflecting on, planning, and creating lessons; that they can rely on teacher centered instruction a majority of their own instructional time; that passion, compassion, and empathy are a part of the participants’ role in the classroom; and that need exists for the CCSS (or some type of educational standards). These themes reflect that the participants utilize both pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. It is also indicated in their responses that participants undergo a continual process of merging the two by finding the intersection of pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge that ultimately becomes PCK (Mishra & Kohler, 2006). This knowledge is then applied to develop some type of teacher belief about what the participants wanted to accomplish as educators.

Upon successfully completing the TEP, participants carried knowledge gained from the TEP into their own classrooms. In that application, their beliefs about teaching amended as they interacted with the demographics and the community in which they taught. Ultimately, all of the participants in some form further developed their teacher belief as a form of personal knowledge.
This is a knowledge that teachers translate into the everyday classroom when they reflect upon what they want to know, what they want their students to know, and then develop how they are going to approach their teaching (Bullough, 2001; Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Kagan, 1992; Monte-Sano, 2011; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007). How does teacher belief translate into knowledge that contributes to PCK? Returning to Shulman’s (1987) definition of PCK, it can be argued that belief as a form of personal knowledge contributes to the “blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8). The results suggest that older and newer experiences, and the knowledge that participants gain from these experiences, represent “expansions” (Ben-Peretz, 2011) of types of teacher knowledge. This knowledge is a merger of personal, pedagogical, and content knowledge that can comprise the amalgamation of the participant’s own continually developing PCK.

Conclusions

The following conclusions gathered represent my attempt to answer the two primary research questions for this study. First, in what ways do teachers develop a practical belief and purpose for their teaching? Second, under what conditions do teachers amend their practical belief and purpose for their teaching?

Conclusions for the First Question

The results suggest that teachers develop a practical belief and purpose before and during their pre-service training. In this study, out of the six practical beliefs that the synthesis of interviews suggests, I found four of the beliefs to develop before pre-service training. Those four are: creativity and process; testing; transmission learning; and passion, compassion, and empathy. I place importance upon these experiences prior to pre-service training as contributing
to PCK as the literature reviewed for this study focuses upon PCK development happening in instances such as pre-service training (Bullough, 2001) or during formal teaching (Hashweh, 2005), but does not account for the possible importance of experience before formal teacher training. How can anything before pre-service training count as a component of not only a teacher’s belief and purpose, but also as a contributing factor to their PCK? Based on the literature review for this study, PCK can be defined as an amalgamation that contains a proposed knowledge base that is not static (Shulman, 1987). Therefore, that amalgamation of knowledge is not fixed, but a loose mixture that can be comprised of “anything the individual holds that helps him or her fulfill the role of teacher” (Fives & Buehl, 2008, p. 137). This loose mixture can come from experiences past and present derived from engaging in some type of reflective exercise (Bullough, 2001). The reflective exercises for the participants and me are the interviews and discussions presented in this study.

Creativity and Process. The results suggest that experiences with creativity and process affected the participants and that those experiences helped form their idea of being a balanced teacher. For example, Neil believes group work, especially with friends, equates to a higher level of productivity. Neil’s linking of group work to productivity has ties to Shulman’s original knowledge base. The original points of the knowledge base can blend into the amalgam that Shulman posits as comprising an individual’s PCK. What helps define Neil’s experience as a component of his PCK comes from Shulman’s (1987) points five and six:

5. Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
6. Knowledge of educational contexts, ranging from the workings of the group or the classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and culture (p. 8).
Furthermore, Neil’s experience with group work represents a process of learning to work with others and to creatively negotiate how to turn in an assignment that Neil himself described:

My teachers always let us pick our groups, and my friends and I shared similar senses of humor so we were usually put more effort into make our projects stand out and because of that they stuck in my mind better

The results suggest that Neil learned from positive group work experiences before his formal educational training to value group work. Based on his experiences, he learned that when a teacher understands how a learner ingests and processes information (Shulman’s fifth point), and understands the people they work best with in the classroom (Shulman’s sixth point), then the learning experience can not only be positive, but balanced due to learning how to achieve through a process (e.g., following directions to complete the project).

Another example the results suggest of an experience that was influential in the context of creativity and process is Cindy’s recollection of a process writing assignment (e.g., a five paragraph essay) about a personal, emotional experience:

I also remember my ninth grade English teacher from [school] in [state] asked us to write a sensory based expository paper just a month or two after moving to [state]. I wrote about the night before moving to [state] and how I felt, down to the tears burning my face. That paper was powerful for me to write, and I really enjoyed that assignment because it was the first time I had ever written something that intense about my feelings.

Like Neil, Cindy’s experience indicates developing PCK when looking back at Shulman’s (1987) original knowledge base; specifically point three, “Curriculum knowledge, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers” (p. 8). In Cindy’s case, analysis indicates she has learned that process writing can contain creative
elements that promote individual expression while still teaching writing skills needed to achieve academically.

Including points three, five, and six from Shulman (1987), Neil’s and Cindy’s experiences suggest that the results contribute to the participants’ PCK, but also indicate that these experiences are examples of constructed knowledge (Cochran et al., 1991) and emotionally based knowledge (Zembylas, 2007) which possibly contribute to PCK.

Testing. The results suggest that experiences with testing affected the participants and that those experiences helped form their idea of being a balanced teacher based on their beliefs. The experiences indicate anxiety played a large role in test taking even though some participants felt more confident than others (e.g., Ann, Sandra). Those anxious experiences suggest emotional aspects of PCK, i.e., emotional scaffolding and emotional knowledge (Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007). The emotional aspects of PCK suggested from the literature raises a question of if anxiety has taught the participants something, what was learned? One possible answer exists in the following example where Sandra suggests that she learned to control that nervousness and anxiety with practice:

I was a good test taker and never had any issues taking tests in English. In middle school they made me a little more anxious and I didn’t love taking tests, but as I got older, they posed less of a threat.

The practice comes from years of taking tests (i.e., getting older), and this recounted experience of Sandra’s suggests that she has assumed that finding how to teach students to take tests requires a balance between preparation and repetition, even if such balance takes a level of maturation. Sandra’s experience suggests that she has learned that with experience test taking becomes less stressful. Taking that experience, and what she knows about standards and testing
that she learned in her TEP, Sandra then has to adjust whatever her assumptions where about approaching testing in regards to her student population in her first year of teaching. Sandra teaches a large late teenage population comprised of ESOL students who are on the verge of adulthood and who deal with, in some instances, “working to support their families” and “moving around.” This requires her to develop methods that will help to prepare her diverse student population to learn how to take tests and succeed.

Another example is Joyce. Joyce in her first year is teaching at a “failing school,” and her ability to know how to “dissect” a standardized test that she learned as a post-graduate in the TEP will help her achieve her goals without becoming a “sink or swim” type of teacher. Her development does have a pattern, and it begins by looking at her emotional experiences with test taking. Joyce discussed that in her academic life she felt she was average in the area of test taking. That feeling carried over into her TEP program where she then received training about learning to dissect tests. With her prior emotional knowledge and the pedagogical and content knowledge she took from her TEP, she has transferred that into thinking about how to help others successfully take standardized tests. This form of emotional knowledge that stems from experience (Zembylas, 2007) and the types of knowledge from her TEP and teaching experience are important components of Joyce’s belief and possibly contribute to her overall PCK.

*Transmission Learning.* The experiences of the participants recount in some way numerous instances of teacher centered learning, a type of unidirectional or lecture based learning (i.e., transmission learning). The results suggest that experiences with transmission learning have reciprocity between participants. While participants have issues with transmission learning, there are two reasons transmission learning may contribute to PCK. These experiences include Cindy’s entire middle school experience where she describes “I do not feel that there was
any kind of differentiated instruction provided me,” Joyce and Neil’s “sink or swim” instruction, and Sandra and Ann’s “obedience” as learners. These experiences suggest that the participants’ transmission learning is necessary, but that the experiences left them feeling that there could be more options in curriculum and instruction.

Transmission learning plays important roles. First, transmission learning may have an important role in helping teachers to learn their content-area’s knowledge. The more a teacher learns about their content, the more that content knowledge can be an important part of developing ongoing PCK (Ball et al., 2008; Hashweh, 2005; Kleickmann et al., 2012; Monte-Santo, 2011; Park & Oliver, 2008; van Dijk & Kattman, 2007). Second, learning how to apply curriculum and any type of pedagogical knowledge may contribute to PCK; however, if the onus heavily relies on one type of instructional practice (i.e., transmission, transactional) then the instructors PCK skews away from developing and adapting to the “broad outlines and categories” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8) that knowledgeable teaching should comprise. Therefore, varying the instructional approach to take the knowledge of instructional practices (e.g., transmission, transaction) that contributes to overall PCK should help teach students in specific or numerous contexts (Ball et al., 2008; Bullough 2001; Cochran et al., 1991, 1993; Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Klieckmann et al., 2012; Monte-Sano, 2011; Park & Oliver, 2008).

*Passion, compassion, and empathy.* The key points in debating the validity of emotion (i.e., passion, compassion, and empathy) as a component of PCK can be found in reviewing Shulman (1987) and Cochran et al. (1991). Shulman (1987) presents one of his knowledge base points that can inform PCK as “knowledge of learners and their characteristics” (p. 8). Attempting to expand on the generalized hole left by Shulman, Cochran et al. (1991) put “more emphasis on the environmental context of learning and the teacher’s knowledge of students (p.
These components of PCK presented by Shulman and Cochran et al. leave open a question of how one can know students if they cannot empathize with them, or how one can make emotional connections either as an individual or based on a belief they have formed about teaching.

The results suggest that participant experiences that communicate a passion, compassion, and empathy for teaching affected participants, and those experiences helped form their idea of being a balanced teacher. Some of the participants chose English education as a vocation not only because of their own enjoyment of it, but for other emotional reasons. For example, Joyce’s passion for the job (i.e., a “calling”) intermixes with empathy to help young students (i.e., encourage middle school students to place value on the skills associated with English language arts). Joyce’s mixture of passion and empathy exemplifies teacher belief that “subject matter per se is not paramount” (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995) in the context of developing empathy for her future students in the context of the classroom.

Another example of choosing English education as a vocation based on emotional reasons occurs with Sandra’s description of “helping.” Sandra’s equating “helping” with a realization she could be a “good teacher” supports Zembylas’s (2007) concept of emotional knowledge that contributes to PCK; specifically in that her experience informs her belief and attitude related to teaching and that belief is recognizing the value of the relational aspects of teaching (e.g., compassion, empathy) (p. 358-359). The results suggest that this emotional knowledge proposed by Zembylas (2007), and exhibited in the responses of Joyce and Sandra, supports the notion that PCK can be comprised of any individual belief that the teacher holds that helps them to be the teacher that they aspire to be (Fives & Buehl, 2008). Therefore, the results suggest that passion, compassion, and empathy developed before formal training represent
possible emotional components of PCK for these individuals (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007).

Conclusions for the Second Question

The results suggest that teachers amend some of their practical belief and purpose once in the classroom. The factors that contribute to that amending are demographics and community.

Demographics. How does the population of a school amend participant belief and purpose? The results suggest a few different ways. For example, Sandra’s responses indicate her worry about the “hard” kids she teaches in a transient population. Her worry equates to a realization about the systematic ways of schooling. Sandra also has concerns of the systemic ways schools function (e.g., testing, scheduling, grades) regardless of the troubles or overall education of their population. Sandra’s interactions with her students, interactions that have moved her to try not to “care about them [students] too much,” are moving her towards balance while she tries to maintain a compassionate, empathetic, “helping” viewpoint of education.

How does the example reflect Sandra’s developing PCK? In reviewing Shulman’s (1987) knowledge category concerning “knowledge of learners and their characteristics” (p. 8), and Cochran et al.’s (1991) constructivist perspective, the implication stands that PCK can come from Sandra’s described experiences. The results suggest, however, that even as Sandra attempts to create space concerning the emotional level of knowledge with her students, that in doing so she demonstrates a development of what Zembylas (2007) describes as emotional knowledge that contributes to PCK. Zemblyas (2007) states that “a teacher’s knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one’s self, others (e.g., students, colleagues), and the wider social and political context in which teaching and learning take place” (p. 356). The learning about the characteristics of learners, though, extends beyond expectations. Sandra’s
situation puts a different focus and thought process behind the constructivist perspective of PCK purposed by Cochran et al. (1991), whose definition puts “more emphasis on the environmental context of learning and the teacher’s knowledge of students” (p. 11).

Neil’s interaction with the children of a working class immigrant population situated in mid-America has initiated an amending of his pre-service teaching belief. Neil’s experiences have affected him to amend his “personalized” approach to teaching that he justified since “memorization and application” dominate the educational landscape in the context of standardized testing. Neil’s amending comes with realizing that the best way to help his students will happen by getting them to be consistently better at taking tests. Analyzing Neil’s experiences illustrates he is amending his belief and building PCK that is akin to Cochran et al.’s (1991) constructivist definition, i.e., he synthesizes what needs to be taught based on the academic context and the ability of the students in order for his students to eventually build their own knowledge to apply in any scenario in his classroom. In doing so he amends his own beliefs in order to serve the students he teaches rather than privileging his own learning style. In addition, even though Neil does not explicitly state this, based on our conversations, his amending has direct relation to reflecting upon his beliefs and practices before our interviews and realizing he has to change those beliefs and practices to serve the students better while also being content specific (Ball et al., 2008; Bullough, 2001; Park & Oliver, 2008; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007).

For Joyce, teaching at a “failing school” with a high teacher turnover rate equates to amending her beliefs to embrace the “other side of teaching” by her being “present” for the students. On the one hand she develops an understanding of her students (Fernandez-Balboa & Stiehl, 1995), but yet, Joyce keeps an emotional distance that stands closer to developing
Hashweh’s (2005) TPC’s out of necessity (i.e., she must get the students prepared for a high-stakes test by helping them understand the “language” of testing that she believes “favors students who come from privileged backgrounds”). This belief that she will help these students by being present and teaching them to test reflects the development of emotional knowledge that may contribute to her PCK; specifically on Zembylas’s (2007) described emotional knowledge planes of the socio-political (e.g., understanding how tests benefit some and not others), relational (e.g., what it means for Joyce’s empathy), and individual (e.g., how that affects and amends her teaching belief) (p. 358-359).

The results suggest that Cindy’s demographic situation challenged her to amend her belief in unanticipated ways in the context of age and instructional need. For example, Cindy originally chose secondary education over elementary education for what she perceives as her ability to handle a level of maturation, i.e., “I felt a stronger calling to secondary because I felt that I would be able to challenge my students more.” She expressed though that her experiences teach her about dealing with “lower level learners,” who “have ADD” that come from “crazy home lives.” Cindy is challenged in her teaching more often than she is challenging to her students. The results imply that Cindy’s amendment possibly contributes to her PCK based on knowledge of student learning and characteristics (Shulman, 1987). The results also suggest that with these interactions Cindy learns more from her students about what she can teach and how she can adapt to situations as they arise (Monte-Sano, 2011; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007).

In reviewing Ann’s experiences with her school demographics she communicates that she has had to adjust her “natural mode of operation” (i.e., passion, compassion, empathy), for amending the idea of obedience that she previously experienced as a student herself. The difficulty of integrating a “strict” and “structured” middle school classroom for someone who
understands the necessity of orderly classroom management but yet has a deep empathetic nature which causes an unstated stress. This stress comes out in her quick change of statement. For example, when she finished describing her approach to classroom interaction, she states:

I think they [students] enjoy me and I enjoy them and we have a good time together and classroom management I am probably afraid of a little, but at the moment it is not crazy, it’s not horrible, I don’t know, it’s fun, but I like my students.

Based on the last sequence of phrases, “it is not crazy, it’s not horrible,” Ann’s response suggests a transitional period where she herself remains unsure of what works and what does not in the context of interaction with her students. Ann’s experience in the context of developing PCK suggests an emotional knowledge (Zembylas, 2007) that works from amending her belief about interaction (van Dijk & Kattman, 2007); a grey area that based on what she chooses as successful or not could dictate her further developing a more “strict” and “structured” approach or a move toward refining and applying her “natural mode of operation.” The results suggest that possibly a move towards working on emotional scaffolding by opening up more to students with her own personal experiences and in turn having them share openly their own experiences could be beneficial to developing her future PCK (Rosiek, 2003).

**Community.** While specific demographics in the daily classroom affect amending participant belief and purpose, the results suggest that the surrounding community contributes to those changes. For example, Sandra’s “hard” population comprises what she describes as a lack of “community” that she attributes to parents who:

[J]ust don’t get involved, they either don’t have the time or they just don’t want to, or they are busy because they have five kids and they are laid up all by themselves, but yeah, there is not a strong family community at the school.
The results suggest that the lack of community contributes to a lack of social buy-in with the idea that the school itself is more than just a place where kids go to learn every day. Sandra is also a contributor to this by her own professed living outside of the community with a conservative commute daily of “twenty to twenty-five minutes away.” What she learns from these experiences contributes to her amending her personally held belief which in turn contributes towards formulating her PCK. Shulman (1987) originally describes this as:

Knowledge of educational contexts, ranging from the workings of the group or the classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures (p. 8).

The results suggest Sandra learns how to negotiate the “character” of this community by acclimating to how it functions. Based on her responses, developing the knowledge Shulman suggests through acclimating has brought her difficulty. However, in undergoing this experience, the results suggest that Sandra will continue to build towards the balance of understanding student characteristics (Cochran et al., 1993; Shulman, 1987) which may then translate into her understanding how to build TPC’s that come with teaching content regularly to a demographic and community that she has a working knowledge of how those two things function (Hashweh, 2005).

While Sandra deals with acclimating to transience, Neil’s experience suggests reactive rather than active responses. Neil’s reticence to engage with the community outside of the school and deferring to be “approached to be a part of something” suggests that he amends his “personal approach” to teaching further based on the type of reflection that occurs during in-service teaching (Bullough, 2001). The results suggest that Neil reflects in order to work out how to amend his personal belief towards more structure to ultimately help the students develop better
writing and widen their chances for employment. It seems that education that leads to employment for the children has great community importance for this “blue collar,” “immigrant” population. Much like Sandra, Neil’s acquired knowledge of this community and culture makes his amendment to his beliefs difficult but necessary.

The results suggest that Joyce’s experiences with the community surrounding the school are primarily strong. Joyce’s community is proactive and in her school often. The community help she describes centers on the local churches in her area:

Actually I can say that several of the churches here are very present for us, they are in the hallways helping, bringing the food in, you know, being present.

How does this proactivity help amend Joyce’s belief and purpose? Much like Neil and Sandra, Joyce’s experiences with the community give her greater knowledge about the character of the community (Shulman, 1987). Her experiences suggest that she will be able to continually develop her own compassion and empathetic desires because there are members of the community who are “present” in the schools. The results indicate that Joyce develops PCK through an emotional understanding of the community and how that has reciprocity with her beliefs and purpose (Zembylas, 2007). Also, the results suggest that this type of communal support has commonality based on where Ann and Cindy work. If Ann did not work in a predominantly LDS religious community and Cindy in a predominantly Catholic one, they would not have the emotional knowledge to support what they are attempting to adjust to in the daily classroom.

Elaborating on PCK from a Phenomenological Perspective

If we attempt to understand who people are, what motivates them, and why they perform certain actions, then we can attempt to make fewer assumptions about what they know.
Essentially, we must attempt to humanize the data in any given context when feasible. In examining belief and purpose as possible components of teachers’ PCK, the results suggest that the community and culture that a person teaches within has an effect on the individual’s beliefs and purpose. In this study there are connections between the experiences of the participants, but what could these experiences help to illuminate regarding validation of belief and purpose as proposed components of PCK? A problem that was indicated in reviewing the literature is that validation of PCK and experience can be viewed as a systemic problem. The systemic problem is one of communication, i.e., how does educational research define PCK?

There are a few possibilities in addressing the aforementioned question. First, there exists the problem in the literature reviewed for this study of agreeing that a definition remain open and not static. A major sticking point of PCK in the literature reviewed stands that it has no unanimously agreed upon definition (McNeill & Knight, 2013). John Settlage (2013), speaking from the perspective of a science educator, agrees that a defined PCK has problems due to being general:

The core problem with PCK is that the knowledge is treated as information without sufficient regard for how it manifests itself as action […] what a person claims to believe fades to insignificance if it is not displayed in how that person behaves (p.9).

Settlage’s (2013) point is not just about the generalized defining of PCK but also about a lack of follow-up in PCK research, or even PCK research that demonstrates moving theory into practice or action. However, an earlier content specific study in the science discipline uses data collected from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, lesson plans, teacher reflections, and lesson plans to create components of PCK that help refine, not define, science teacher knowledge (Park & Oliver, 2008).
Settlage (2013) believes that research into PCK is not evaluated with “sufficient skepticism” (p. 10). The grounds for skepticism are strong based on Shulman’s (1987) blanket position that “A knowledge base for teaching is not fixed and final” (p. 5). Settlage’s skepticism can be contextually appropriated to reflect the skepticism of quantifying anything in education. While quantifiable or concrete data may provide useful and insightful, that should not equate a dismissal of generalizing when necessary. In generalizing something you are offering it up for skepticism, not rejection. Shulman’s generalized positon on PCK has presented opportunities for a variety of studies to be conducted concerning PCK in the last thirty years, studies that arguably are also skeptical of PCK, that this study has sampled.

A second problem related to defining PCK in educational research is extending the parameters of experience to predate formal teacher training. Some of the research literature reviewed for this study on PCK, including Shulman (1987), suggests putting a cap on experience that begins with entering a pre-service training program (Bullough, 2001; Hashweh, 2005). This is rational, as PCK is comprised of “teaching” and “content” knowledge. However, if teacher training includes how to be reflective practitioners in order for them to build their PCK (Bullough, 2001), how then can you ask someone to put a cap on an experience that may remind them of times that predate entering the field of education? If a teacher will build their professional knowledge from a foundation consisting of their own educational philosophy (Shulman, 1987), there remains reason to believe that philosophy, or reasons for being a teacher, started early. In bringing those foundational moments, those experiences, to light, the opportunity to learn or grow from those initial instances is always present and could theoretically be used to gauge how a teacher handles or may handle classroom scenarios.
To illustrate the above point, take the example of Neil’s speaking about one of his approaches to getting students to write. In his description, he finds motivation by wanting students prepared to write once they are in the job market. One way of looking at this is that Neil’s motivation occurs because it is his job to prepare students, even at the middle school level, for the real world. Based on his responses in the interviews, some assumptions about what Neil knows, the kind of data that possibly parents and other educators look at to evaluate a teacher, could be made based upon his training in the CCSS and graduating from a teacher training program. With that background one can assume he comes into the job as a knowledgeable teacher, so therefore he would use real-world applicable writing exercises because he was trained to do so. However, knowing his experiences, tracing how he started thinking one way (i.e. wanted a more personal approach to education based on his formal education), became exposed to a demographic and community (i.e. immigrant, working class), and then adjusts to his surroundings to not only better his students, but possibly himself, helps unwind possible assumptions about what could be considered as a contribution to his PCK.

In a hypothetical scenario, imagine an administrator at Neil’s school. In this scenario, the administrator looks at the below average test scores for Neil and conducts a brief fifteen minute classroom observation that does not include interaction with Neil. The administrator that uses his observation to create a profile to understand why the scores were so low so that action can be taken to make sure such low scores do not occur again in Neil’s classroom. The likely deduction would be that low test scores were equitable to a poorly prepared teacher. If someone unravels those type of assumptions (i.e., low test scores equate to poor teacher preparation), about PCK by examining the possible validity of components, such as teacher belief and purpose, and how those change in the classroom through multiple interviews and analysis, then a much richer
picture is provided regarding Neil’s understanding of why he approached the materials a certain way. It is key in this process to avoid concretely defining Neil’s beliefs and purpose as valid contributors to his PCK; rather, let Neil’s communicated experiences share how he changes, how he amends his beliefs to better serve the students, community, and himself, and how those elements contribute to his attempts at being the balanced educator that this study’s results suggest he aspires to be as a professional. The results of this study and the literature reviewed suggest that understanding that any proposed components of PCK can be valid and new “expansions” (Ben-Peretz, 2011) of PCK should always be put forth for analysis.

By unraveling assumptions about components that inform teachers PCK, a question from the data and the literature reviewed in this study remains how could these components (i.e., belief and purpose) be considered for helping future teacher evaluation? While doing away with test scores as a measurement tool is not realistic, nor advisable, amendments to the evaluation processes are possible. Other components could be added to evaluations of teacher’s ability and knowledge, and a component that should have consideration is developing personal communication in the evaluation between teacher and evaluator. Such personal communication may reveal more about who a teacher is, what education means to them, where did they come from, how they communicate, etc. This knowledge may help evaluators form a more complete picture of the teacher.

Through the interview process, the major work was in trying to identify who these participants were. What spilled out of the participants were the individual beliefs about teaching (e.g., creativity, testing, compassion), which were grouped and themed from multiple interviews; a process also applied by Velmans’s (2009) research on consciousness studies. Is that to say that these people are the first teachers to exhibit this? No. What it does indicate is that the emotional
makeup of a person cannot be divorced from the complete picture of what they are capable of and what knowledge and experience they bring to the classroom. Experience counts for something in life and in work. A rational study of humans, a study of experience, is what Dallymar (1981) describes in his writing which centers on being reflective. Thinking about this data in a reflective way, step-by-step and interview-to-interview, helped in understanding the importance of distilling all of the participants’ openness and experience in the interview process, and in thinking about what those experiences may mean towards contributing to a larger conversation. Also, the interview methodology employed made both the participants and the research reflect on the topics (i.e., demographics, community support) as each interview was conducted.

The experiences of the individual, and documenting those experiences through one-to-one interaction in interviews and conversation, could open possibilities of presenting new viewpoints and data to present to parents who are trying to understand why their school posts failing scores; present new viewpoints about why this class or this school does well on tests and these others do not; present new viewpoints through letting educators lead the way in showing and telling about systemic problems. All of these could lead to changes in the way education is conducted school-to-school and across the United States.

**Implications for Research**

As the literature review and the conclusions indicate, there is room for further study into components that contribute to teachers PCK. Research conducted in higher education should consider undertaking studies in the future that my findings outside the scope of this study suggest. Those areas can include but not be limited to other components that contribute to teacher PCK.
One area of research the literature reviewed for this study suggests occurs in the area of long-term studies of PCK. Shulman (1986, 1987) originally implies that he felt that a rich, voluminous case-based literature about PCK would help not only researchers, but also help classroom teachers develop scholarly skills. That hope of educating on issues in a macro-sense can also extend to the general public depending on providing access and relatability in the way the research is presented. Outside of the long-term, a series of short-term studies could be conducted successfully to contribute to a PCK case-based literature for secondary education English Language Arts. The lack of studies on PCK in Secondary Education English Language Arts teachers indicates that there are valuable research opportunities available in short term studies with specific populations. For example, one could model and modify the study conducted by Balboa and Stiehl (1995), combining it with the ideas of Shulman (1986, 1987) for more teachers to be researchers; conducting research and interviews in a Secondary Education English department rather than in a collegiate setting.

The results of this study and the literature reviewed imply that more content specific studies could be helpful in future research (Ball et al., 2008; Kleickmann et al., 2012; Monte-Santo, 2011; Park & Oliver, 2008; van Dijk & Kattmann, 2007). This study utilizes a phenomenological case study approach concentrating on first year Secondary education English Language Arts teachers, and I believe this qualitative methodology could serve other content areas, demographics, and serve as a compliment to other types of data that are collected for evaluation. For example, further study of first year teachers who graduated from a variety of accredited universities and colleges, of different races (i.e., all subjects of this study were white), of multiple and current content areas (e.g., math, music) could be undertaken.
To have an open dialogue, to apply a skeptical eye to the PCK data being studied (Settlage, 2013), requires presenting a wide range of facts, viewpoints, and opinions, and coming to some sort of agreement to continue to move forward. A broad representation could include further study into emotional dimensions of PCK (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007), including before, during, and after pre-service training. For example, research could be conducted into the emotional dimension that religious belief contributes to the life of an educator before during, and after pre-service training. One example from this study was Ann’s beliefs in sharing, love, and service as a part of her teaching, beliefs that have grown out of her involvement with the LDS faith.

The results of this study indicate that a critical phenomenological approach could be useful in studying any cultural power dynamics that may shape the beliefs or perceptions of the teacher and/or the power dynamics of teaching. Using critical phenomenology to study power dynamics between people and between people and institutions can provide research data on how shared experience exists between different people and can be presented from multiple viewpoints (Cilesz, 2011; Csordas, 1994; Desjarlais, 1997; Jackson, 1995; Melançon, 2014; Velmans, 2009; Willen, 2007). Also, a critical phenomenology framework can illuminate what situational or environmental factors have influenced a group of participants (Hill, 2014). To find the commonalities (themes) and the factors requires interviews and interactions with participants. An example of a critical phenomenological framework and method can be found in Shelter Blues (Desjarlais, 1997).

**Implications for Practice**

Amending the way educational research presents and conducts research on PCK has grey areas that need to be explored further. The common theme in much of the literature review for
this study occurs around the idea that evaluating teacher knowledge in order to have better prepared teachers is crucial (Cochran et al., 1993; Shulman, 1986, 1987). With improved, balanced evaluation comes theoretically better teacher assessment (Shulman, 1986). To possibly achieve this through continually modifying a case-based literature on components of PCK, both content specific and general, could require greater localized levels of research design and development.

Shulman (1986) hoped that the gap between educational researchers and teachers would become more balanced as each informed the other in building research on possible components of PCK and developing better teacher assessment. In assembling this study using working classroom teachers, of the five participants I was only granted access to have the opportunity to see one during school hours. This leads to the conclusion that the schools are concerned with how they are represented, and to a degree, try to control what the teachers in their employ feel about policy and procedure. Therefore, creating new policy based on expanding localized research across the schools requires consideration and further research. Perhaps creating more localized groups and engagement that encourages and creates networking opportunities for research based in the classroom through professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) could be beneficial. Furthermore, conducting this research has led me to deduce the most knowledgeable people about how a course of action in a classroom works are teachers. Should they not be at the head of the line in policy making and decisions regarding how they are assessed and evaluated? This is a question that promotes the need for further discussion on amending policies regarding access, evaluation, and communication with classroom teachers.
Expanding the creation of policies by including data collected from teachers on a localized level could be of value in creating different types of evaluations and assessments for pre-service and in-service teachers. In this research, my analysis indicates that the role of the teacher in the community is important. The data I collected indicates that the participant’s relationship with the community reflects what they are experiencing in the classroom. For example, Sandra’s immersion in an ESOL population has made her adjust her thoughts about her own approaches to teaching. An example like Sandra’s indicates that re-thinking how teacher training and professional development should include gauging greater community involvement.

The goal of these suggested practices is to help develop and refine the professional aspects of being a teacher, but also to refine the human relational aspects of teaching. This study and the literature reviewed suggest continuing research into what teacher practices contribute to components of PCK. These practices included but are not limited to continued training, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service teacher reflection (Bullough, 2001). The continuations serve as a way to possibly counteract early teacher burn-out within the first few years of service. Talking with teachers on a regular basis about the failures and successes of the classroom can serve as a way to build professional community. That professional community is important in creating a system of support and encouragement. As the results of this study infer, teachers need to be able to communicate when faced with changes to their beliefs about how and why they teach. Again, as Gee (1987) points out, we cannot exist in isolation. Closing the door and closing oneself of from other teachers and the community is ultimately harmful for any teacher, regardless of whether they are new to the field or a veteran.

Another example is developing emotional scaffolding to refine metaphor and analogy based personal stories to encourage students to share and develop knowledge beyond the
classroom setting (Rosiek, 2003). Encouraging openness and discussion is imperative for developing another facet of balanced teaching. The first step is finding a way to integrate personal anecdotes that have context for the assignments you want to develop with students in mind. If one can begin to refine that ability, then eventually open conversations in the classroom with students can lead to possibly more democratic ways of creating assignments for assessment. This would also help develop PCK through understanding content specific gaps of knowledge while also building knowledge of who students are (Monte-Sano, 2011). Can this be accomplished with simpler student surveys of the class? Yes, and that is valuable as well. What is being suggested is that to continue to grow as an educator requires consistent amending of current practice (i.e., what Bullough, 2001, also suggests) by not losing the ability to hear and engage on more than a binary response level with students, other teachers, and the community around the school. Keep in mind that amending practices in the ways suggested in this section may contribute to building memory–based content specific instruction (i.e., TPC’s) to prepare for any classroom situations that may arise (Hashweh, 2005). In short, the best practices that this study suggests come from finding ways to use experience to an advantage. Experiences are the factors that contribute to the evolving beliefs that improve teacher knowledge that can ultimately contribute to PCK.

Summary

What I discovered in the process of putting this study together was how everything changes along the way from inception to this version of the findings. I say this version of the findings as it is my hope to continue with this research throughout my career, to come back and see what improvements have or have not been made; to inquire if people have or have not been
able to find this writing useful; to hopefully provide a starting place or a jumping off point for further discussions, arguments, or inquires.

In putting this study together I feel as empowered to contribute discussion toward improving issues in education; just as I did when I stepped into my own classroom many years ago. The day-to-day processes that happen in every classroom at every grade level have an effect on the outside world, and the outside world affects the day-to-day classroom. To improve the educational system though educational research, those who conduct research must try to always attempt to bridge the gap between the data of test results and the stories of the people involved that led to that data. To provide a more fully realized picture, however, will require more open communication, more education, more dialogue between scholars, researchers, educators, administrators, policy makers, parents, and communities.

I began this study looking to explore teacher knowledge. In undertaking this research I set out to understand: the various types of teacher knowledge; how teacher knowledge could be measured; if there were alternative methods and theories that could help broaden my own curiosities about what can constitute valuable or applicable knowledge; what could possibly constitute valuable or applicable knowledge for a classroom teacher; and how valuable is experience as knowledge and could that knowledge provide help to a teacher in the classroom looking at how teachers in the classroom were attempting to use their knowledge. I found out in conducting this research a little bit more about who these participants are, what drove them into education, and what keeps them going in the classroom now they are in it day-to-day. I found that the knowledge of these caring, empathetic teachers is a starting place and I believe the participants may help to push this era of teaching into continually expanding thinking about and attempting to implement new ways of refining their own PCK.
For education to move forward new ways of evaluating and communicating need to be taken into consideration now with this era of standards. Yes, it will be difficult to set up methods for spending more to talk with teachers. Yes, it will cost more for the hours of labor and time to enact and refine the methods. Yes, it will be painful and awkward as we find ways to use test data to present one side of an argument, but use other data to get a larger picture. That other data needs to come from the teacher first-hand and not include the activities that they provide and the rationale behind that activity. We need to talk to our teachers because they have a lot to say, because they are open to discussion if engaged and encouraged, and because what they have to say provides a window into what is going on in the classroom and what that might mean for moving education forward in every community. The time for improvement begins now.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SCHOOL SYSTEM APPROVAL

Approval to Proceed with Research

Applicant's Name: Jeffrey Hayes
Date of Submission: 10-29-13
Prerequisite: Adherence to 

Dissertation OR Research Request (Circle the option that applies to your request)

1. IRB Approval
   - Must contain signature (nothing from the internet, etc.)
   - # 1858 PENDING
   - If study requires prior consent from participating institution, please provide that information. If approved, formal IRB approval must be provided before official approval will be granted.

2. Methodology/Abstract (explaining study)
   - Survey or other instrument for quantitative study

3. Consent letter, memorandum, etc.
   - Consent form, explanation, etc. that clearly states participant does NOT have to participate in study (strictly voluntary)

Approved

Explanation (if applicable):

Superintendent or Designee Signature

Upon approval, it is your responsibility (if applicable) and provide the appropriate IRB/HSIRB approval for your study. The administrator has the final decision as to whether or not he/she will allow for the study to be conducted at his/her site.

When all information is completed, please submit to [redacted] via email at [redacted] or through mail to [redacted]. For additional information, contact us at [redacted].

6-10-2013
APPENDIX B
POTENTIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview One

1. When you were a student taking English classes in Middle School (Junior High) and High School, what types of activities/assessments were your favorite or that helped you learn the material best?

2. Did you excel taking English classes? Was your mastery of material in English classes due to the way the material was often presented and assessed?

3. What were your experiences taking tests in English classes in Middle School (Junior High) and High School? Were you a good test taker?

4. Were there English teachers that helped you more than others through recognizing how you learn?

5. Were you ever evaluated as a type of learner (e.g., remedial, advanced, AP etc.), by taking a test in English class? How did that make you feel?

6. Were you ever aware of or was it explained, as a student in Middle School (Junior High) and High School, what a “standard” was? If so, was there an explanation of why a standard is important in English education?

7. How did you decide, or what experiences led you, to enter the field of English education, to pursue a degree in it?

8. What did you learn about standards and assessment while a student in the teacher education program (TEP)?

9. What feelings, beliefs, or opinions did you develop in the TEP about the common core standards? About standardized tests?

10. During your time as a student teacher, what experiences did you have with designing lessons and assessments to teach in your placements? Was there a high level of value placed upon them?

11. How did your placement teachers over the duration of your placement feel about the common core standards and the assessments (i.e., standardized tests) tied to the them? How did you feel about the common core standards and assessment when you finished your placement and graduated?

Interview Two

1. Describe the content of your current classes, that is, what have you been teaching?

2. Describe step-by-step how you currently construct literacy assessments in your classroom for that content?

3. How has your student population influenced your literacy assessment decision making process?

4. Have other teachers you work with influenced your literacy assessment creation?

5. Has there been any other outside of the classroom factors that have contributed to your literacy assessment creation for your students?
6. What are some examples of literacy assessments you have created for your classroom?
7. Have you needed further guidance from other teachers or administrators about creating literacy assessments for your students?
8. Have you had to abandon any planned literacy assessments based on student need that have arisen during instruction?
9. Has standardized testing needs changed how you are attempting to create literacy assessment for your students based on the content you are teaching?

Interview Three

1. Based on your training and your more recent practical experiences, does the creation of literacy assessment by you for your students make sense?
2. How has your life changed, the way you see the world, since you began interacting with the students and the community?
3. With what you know now about literacy assessment, and with what you knew about it coming into your first year, what change do you see yourself making in order to better prepare?
4. Do you feel that you were adequately trained to handle the day-to-day needs of your students in the classroom?
5. How has your previous definition of the role of a teacher changed based on your experiences up to this point?
6. Has the school and community met your expectations of what you thought your relationships would be?
7. What changes do you envision for the school and community based on your experiences so far?
8. Do you envision yourself as a role model or leader in the community now?
9. What aspects of your training would you change regarding literacy assessment based on what you now know and have experienced first hand?
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

November 12, 2013

Jeffrey Hayes
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870231

Re: IRB #13-OR-348, “A Study of First Year Secondary Education English Language Arts Teachers Experiences Implementing and Creating Assessment for Classroom Use”

Dear Mr. Hayes:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on November 11, 2014. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.
Appendix A
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM
Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

You are being asked to be in a research study.

The name of this study is
A study of First Year Secondary Education English Language Arts Teachers Experiences Implementing and Creating Assessment for Classroom Use.

This study is being done by
Jeffrey Hayes
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Alabama
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

What is the purpose of this study—what is it trying to learn?
The research I wish to conduct is a study of first year secondary education English Language Arts (SELA) teacher’s experiences with implementing and creating assessment for classroom use. It is my intention with this research to stimulate discussion about assessment and content standards in American education. I am attempting to learn about with this study how brand new teachers in the field of SELA are attempting to bridge the gap between the theory they have learned in training concerning assessment creation and implementation, the actual practice they now have the opportunity to enact in their own classroom every day, and how they are affected by students, peers, other agencies (e.g., common core standards), and the day-to-day components that go into creating and implementing assessment. I am also attempting in this study to explore further the following questions: what denotes a literacy assessment based on the type of literacy and the type of assessment?; why does literacy assessment holds importance for the teachers who create them?; why is literacy assessment on a micro-level remains needed?; and identify where literacy assessment exists in the language of state/national teaching standards for SELA?

Why have I been asked be in this study?
You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a first year SELA teacher and graduated from the University of Alabama College of Education.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 11/12/12
EXPIRATION DATE: 11/12/14
How many other people will be in this study?

The participants for this research will be recent graduates from the College of Education at the University of Alabama. The number of participants may be approximately 4-7 persons.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

You will be asked to participate in the following: a) possibly participate in face-to-face interviews at least once; b) Possibly be observed during class time in-between interviews 2 & 3; c) Participate possibly in interviews via e-mail correspondence; d) Possibly contributes artifacts to the study data. None of the face-to-face interviews will require travel on the part of the participant.

The interview process is structured on a three-step model. That design is as follows in this order:

Interview 1: Life history: Questions will be asked that help guide the participant to reconstruct their personal lives inside and outside of the school, from the earliest they wish to discuss up till the present. See appendix C for example questions for this interviews.

Interview 2: Details of experience: What the subject has learned about attempting to create or use existing literacy assessments as they are experiencing the growing pains of being a new teacher in their own classroom. See appendix D for example questions for these interviews.

Interview 3: Reflection on the meaning: Assessing through open-ended questioning if conducting assessments makes sense to the subject now, and has it impacted or changed their life, the way they approach teaching, etc.? Do they see a need for creating meaningful assessment? See appendix E for example questions for these interviews.

The rationale for observing classroom instruction time is based on the need to observe how one is thinking about or actually implementing and creating assessment through instruction, which is a key component to teaching theory. Assessment creation and implementation is based on not only written artifacts, rather, it is also about gauging the needs of classroom populations on a regular basis through interaction and conversation as well as teacher reflection. The observation of classroom time will only be for one to two classroom periods in-between the second and third interviews on a singular day that the subject feels most comfortable with being observed. All observation will be only of the teacher. No observation of students will occur. Observation will be conducted only by me, and recorded by using hand written field notes.

Artifact collection will be at the discretion of the subject regarding copies of lesson plans, unit plans, or actual assessment activities. Artifacts approved by the subject can be given during any point in the interview and observation process.

How much time will be spent conducting this study?

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 11/2/17
EXPIRATION DATE: 11/30/17
This research will be for 12-18 weeks, with the possibility of more time as needed. An estimation of hours spent on this study for the subject may range from five to ten hours, counting the time to answer interview questions, the observation, and any follow up time if necessary.

**Will being in this study cost me anything?**

This study will not cost you anything except the time you spend being interviewed.

**What are the benefits of my being in this study?**

There are no specific benefits for taking part in this study. However, the hope is that the primary participants will become more conscious and reflective about their role in teaching as a result of their participation in this study.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

If at any time the researcher perceives the study to have any detrimental effects or to cause a conflict of interest for participants, the research will be discontinued immediately. Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks for participants in this study. Pseudonyms will be used for all schools and participants to protect their identities. The school itself will only be identified by its general location, e.g., an institution in the southeastern United States.

**How will my privacy and confidentiality be protected?**

Privacy will be maintained throughout the data collection process. This will be achieved through protecting the subjects by using pseudonyms and barring markers of location in relation to specific geographies. Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home.

The privacy and confidentiality of the participants will be protected in several ways. Consent forms, transcriptions, field notes, copies of artifacts, and any relevant research data will be safely secured in a locked file in the researcher’s home. All transcribed data will be kept on the home computer of the primary investigator, which remains locked when not in use and original audio/and or visual recordings will be destroyed after approximately two to three years.

Confidentiality will also be protected as I will in no way use personal identifiers and the participants will not be personally identified in the findings. No names or any other personal identifying information will be used in presentations or publications; however, the data will be used by the researcher/primary investigator for presentations, dissertation work, and articles for publication. All subjects will be identified by pseudonyms in the presentations and publications.

**Do I have to take part in this study?**

No. You can refuse to be in the study now or at any time in the future. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate.
What if new information is learned during the study that might affect my well-being or decision to continue in the study?

If any new information is learned during this study, the researcher will inform you. You always have the right to withdraw consent.

What if I have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher at the following e-mail address: hayes040@crimson.ua.edu. Furthermore, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at the University at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCOWelcome.html. You may e-mail us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

What else do I need to know?

You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. Save it in case you want to review it later or you decide to contact the investigator or the university about the study. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and the study is being carried out as planned.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered. I understand what is required of me by taking part in this study. I freely agree to participate.

_________________________________________ Date__________

Signature of Participant

_________________________________________ Date__________

Signature of Investigator
Appendix B
Audio Taping Consent

As mentioned above, all formal interviews will be audio taped by the primary investigator for research purposes, unless the participant requests that it not be, and at which time they will still be able to participate in lieu of taping, rather, the interview will be transcribed by hand written note. These tapes and notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only available to the primary investigator. All materials will be destroyed after they are no longer needed by the researcher.

I understand that part of my participation in this research study will be audio taped, and I give my permission to record the interview.

☐ Yes, my participation during formal interviews can be audio taped.

☐ No, I do not want my participation in formal interviews to be audio taped, but I do wish to participate in interviews and there may be handwritten notes made by the interviewer.
APPENDIX D

MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is comprised of programs in elementary education and secondary curriculum, teaching, and learning.

The vision of the College of Education (COE) at The University of Alabama is to develop effective, ethical, and reflective professionals who advance the theme of the COE: Unites, Acts, and Leads (UA Leads). By engaging in theoretically informed and intellectually advanced effective practice our graduates will

UNITE with the larger community to collaboratively nurture cultural competence, empathy, and a vision of equity and justice for all learners;

ACT to develop the full potential of all learners to be excellent professionals in their field; and

LEAD through continuous research-based critical inquiry of policy and reflective practice to enable transformative change in our diverse local and global communities.

For further information about University of Alabama Faculty, reference the University of Alabama Faculty Handbook at http://www.facultyhandbook.ua.edu/

For further information, updates, and recent news reference the College of Education website at http://education.ua.edu/

Attributions:

Vivian H. Wright, Interim Department Head, 2012-2013 AY
Cynthia Sunal, Department Head, 2013-current

Handbook Committee

Julianne Coleman
Calli Holaway
Robert Summers
Cynthia Sunal and Liza Wilson, Co-Chairs

M. Jenice “Dee” Goldston, Vivian H. Wright, Revisions Sub-committee (2/14)