DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF DISTRICT-LEVEL CURRICULUM,

INSTRUCTION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION AND

SUPPORT EFFORTS: A NARRATIVE

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative record of study seeks to utilize action research to depict one district-level administrator's experience navigating how and under what circumstances a district-wide curriculum change occurs in multiple schools across one school system. The change process in this study targets improving the posted curriculum and adherence to subsequent curricular structures across three middle schools in one suburban school district in the northeastern United States. The study is theoretically aligned to sociocultural constructivist learning theory and the methods are grounded in narrative inquiry. To allow the reader easier access to my story, the narrative is written in two parts: (1) an objective explanation of my process while attempting to enact change within my organization and (2) a subjective description of my reality and my analysis as the story unfolds. Findings include keeping students and then teachers at the center of all decision-making, ensuring all messaging is aligned to the overarching teaching and learning goals for your organization, leading change through goal-setting, curating support, and inquiry, as well as making the most of every minute with teachers and administrators within your organization.

DEDICATION

For all the students who have educated me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOMENCLATURE

BOE   Board of Education (local)

CIA   Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

CTBOE   Connecticut State Board of Education

ELA   English Language Arts

K-12   Kindergarten through Grade 12

SBA   Smarter Balanced Assessment

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Context

Through decades of research and practical application, and although both are still highly debated in and outside the field of education, educators generally know what students should learn and generally how students learn best. We know worksheets "don't grow dendrites" (Tate, 2010) and that a focus on low-level skills and memorization of facts does not engage students (Blumenfeld et al., 1991), nor do these methodologies prepare today's students to excel in tomorrow's world. We know students need to be global thinkers who can "manipulate information, build knowledge, innovate, and be creative" (Franklin, 2011, p. 187), and we know when today's students enter the workforce, they will be evaluated not only on what they are able to produce, "but also on their collaborative, negotiating, planning, and organizational skills" (Bell, 2010, p. 43). Known as 21st Century skills (Larson & Miller, 2011; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012) or even survival skills (Wagner, 2008), it is critical to the success of our nation that American students master both a core knowledge base and these 21st Century skills.

In purposefully ensuring students are learning core knowledge and 21st Century skills, curriculum development becomes increasingly important. Bruner (1960), as Chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' Education Committee meeting, authored a report describing important curricular findings as a result of this seminal conference. First, Bruner posits that any subject can be taught to any child at any age in a form appropriate to the child's stage of development or readiness. In creating curricula, the group of scientists, educators, and, for the first time, psychologists

determined that the structure of a curriculum is key to fostering learning. The structure

should be created by determining the most fundamental underlying principles of the

subject matter, teaching specific topics and skills in the context of the subject matter,

ensuring opportunities for the learner to use and apply the learning in other situations,

and fostering the learner's ability to create connections between the principles and ideas

of a subject matter as unconnected facts or skills tend to be mostly forgotten. In order to

effectively design curricula, the designers must have a deep and thorough

understanding of the subject matter in addition to pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore,

the sequence of a curriculum should be a product of the underlying principles of the

subject matter and is not always chronological in order. Curriculum designers should

take into account that learners move between three stages: *acquisition* of new

information, *transformation* which deals with the manipulation of new information, and

evaluation which is how the learner checks that his manipulation is suited to the task at

hand. Lastly, curriculum materials should be designed to challenge all students so the

pursuit of excellence is not limited to only the gifted student.

Furthermore, the alignment of curriculum and materials, instruction, and

assessments to state standards improves both teaching and learning within a school and

district system (Williams et al., 2010). Although there are many types of curriculum,

including the intended, the implemented and the attained curriculum (Marzano, 2003),

ensuring a well-articulated curriculum and monitoring the use of this curriculum, as well

as an alignment between what is taught and what is assessed is critical to increasing

academic achievement (Marzano, 2001).

Personal Context

Now in my eighth year as a district curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA) leader and having worked in this type of position in four vastly different school districts in three states, I am keenly aware of the varying expectations and responsibilities for CIA administrators. Mostly standard, though, is the fundamental responsibility is to develop, evaluate, and coordinate the implementation of district-wide curriculum and assessments and professional learning experiences in order to improve teaching, learning, and ultimately student outcomes. However, depending on the district's system, CIA administrators also play an integral role in developing strategic plans or goals and monitoring the success of each component to ensure district-wide success, monitoring student and teacher achievement, revising and creating district policies, developing and monitoring budgets, hiring and evaluating teachers and support staff, and interacting with parents and other community stakeholders. With all of these competing district-wide responsibilities, I have often found myself questioning my ability to positively impact school and classroom practices so as to improve student outcomes.

I am currently the K-12 Humanities Program Coordinator for a suburban school district in the northeastern United States. As the Humanities Program Coordinator, I am in daily contact with various teachers, specialists, administrators, support staff, and community members who have a stake in English language arts, reading, or social studies programs. For this study and in my current role, I seek to describe the intricacies of my coordination efforts to improve the curriculum in my district's English Language

Arts (ELA) 6 classes and how current teachers and their administrators respond during the change process.

Curriculum and Assessment Context

  Curriculum. Connecticut initially adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 and, although they have been renamed the Connecticut Core Standards, the content remains the same. In the initial review of my district's posted curriculum documents, I found that each unit identifies every standard or almost every standard for that grade level as being taught within the unit of instruction. Concerned, I developed training sessions and facilitated workgroups focused on analyzing each individual Connecticut Core Standard and the interplay between standards in order to foster a deeper understanding of vertical and horizontal teaching and learning expectations for English language arts and reading. After the training sessions, I facilitated grade-level teacher workgroups to review our posted curriculum documents and realign the appropriate standards to each unit. These sessions occurred over four days in June 2018 with about 35 ELA teachers representing Kindergarten through Grade 8.

  The following August, the teachers presented the completed standards alignment work with the new standards-aligned unit overviews in addition to guiding their peers through a condensed version of the training I delivered to them in our initial June meetings. According to the many teachers who contacted me after the August 2018 sessions, this was the first training and overview they had received on the "new" standards that were adopted in 2010. These training sessions and updated curriculum documents created preceded this record of study, but set the foundation for the next

phase of curricular change within the Humanities department.

Standardized assessments. Connecticut is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and therefore administers the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) for both math and reading in Grades 3-8. As of the latest 2018-2019 ELA SBA administration, 77.5% of the students in my district met or exceeded the ELA grade-level expectations as compared to 55.7% of students state-wide. Table 1 outlines the percent of students in each grade level meeting or exceeding ELA grade-level expectations.

Table 1
Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards on the 2018-2019 ELA SBA

Grade	Connecticut	School District	% Difference
3	54.3%	74.8%	20.5%
4	54.6%	73.4%	18.8%
5	58.1%	82.5%	24.4%
6	55.3%	76.5%	21.2%
7	56.1%	80.0%	23.9%
8	55.8%	77.2%	21.4%

Note. Data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (2019)

Although our district has higher percentages of students meeting or exceeding ELA grade-level expectations as compared to the average results across Connecticut, Table 1 also shows variability in achievement as the deviation from the state average is lowest in Grade 6, Grade 8, and Grade 4, respectively than the grade levels preceding them.

In Grade 11, students participate in the evidence-based reading and writing and mathematics portions of the SAT. Although students are participating in the actual

College Board SAT, the Connecticut State Board of Education (CTBOE) sets the scores required to "meet standard" and "exceed standard" for state-wide accountability purposes. As of the latest 2018-2019 SAT administration, 82.3% of our Grade 11 students met or exceeded the ELA standards set by the CTBOE as compared to 61.6% of students state-wide, a 20.7% difference.

Situational Context

The school district in which I work and where this study takes place in a suburban Connecticut town. The median household income in this town is $138,180 as compared to $76,106 for the state of Connecticut (Connecticut Data Collaborative, 2019; US Census Bureau, 2019). The school district serves just over 9,000 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 at 17 different schools. Of the students enrolled in the district, 8.6% are Asian, 2.7% are Black or African American, 21.7% are Hispanic or Latino, 4.4% are identified as two or more races, and 62.4% of students are White. In Connecticut, three demographic groups make up what the state refers to as "High Needs Students." These demographic groups include students who are English language learners, those eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and those identified as having a disability. In this school district, 4.6% of students are English language learners, 14.6% qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and 11.3% are identified as having a disability. For comparison, throughout Connecticut, 7.2% of students are English language learners, 36.7% qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and 14.8% are identified as having a disability (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2018).

Changing demographics. Over the last two decades, student demographics have changed, while the total number of students enrolled in the

district's schools has relatively remained the same. In 2001-2002, total enrollment

was 8,800 students and as of 2017-2018, the total enrollment was 9,042, an

increase of only 2.8% or 242 students. Table 2 summarizes demographic data for

the 2001-2002 and 2017-2018 school years.

Table 2
Demographic Trends in one Connecticut School District from 2001-2002 to 2017-2018

Demographic	2001-2002	2017-2018	% Change
Asian	664	782	17.8%
Black or African American	204	246	20.6%
Hispanic or Latino	936	1959	109.3%
Two or More Races*		402	
White	6993	5640	-19.4%
Total Enrollment	8800	9042	2.8%
English Language Learner	1426	418	-70.7%
Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible	625	1323	111.7%
Students with Disabilities*		1024	

Note. Data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (2002, 2018)

*Not a reporting category in 2001-2002 therefore percent change cannot be calculated

Race and Ethnicity. In 2001-2002, 7.5% of students were Asian, 2.3% were

Black or African American, 10.6% were Hispanic or Latino, there was no category for

those who identified two or more races, and 79.5% of students were White. Today's

demographic groups in comparison show a 17.8% increase of Asian students, a 20.6%

increase of Black or African American students, a 109.3% increase of Hispanic or

Latino students, and a 19.4% decrease of White students.

English Language Learners. In 2001-2002, 16.2% of students were identified

as "Students with Non-English Home Language." Today, that number has dropped to

4.6% which is only about one-fourth the amount of students identified nearly 20 years

ago.

Socioeconomic Status. Compared to the 7.1% of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals in 2001-2002, the current 14.6% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals represents over a 100% increase.

Students with Disabilities. The school district School Profiles first reported indicators for students with disabilities in 2007-2008. At that time 11.1% of students were identified as receiving special education services in the district. Today, that number has increased to 11.3% which represents only 1.8% increase in the last ten years.

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The Problem

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The middle school ELA classes lack the curriculum structures that would ensure equitable access to teaching and learning resources and materials for all middle school teachers and students in our school district. Although the ELA SBA results shown in Table 1 indicate a decline in scores in Grade 4 in addition to Grades 6 and 8, the elementary humanities curriculum is more complete and more widely used in all 11 of our elementary schools whereas the middle school ELA curriculum is nearly nonexistent resulting in varying educational experiences within and across each of our three middle schools. Furthermore, Grade 6 ELA SBA results consistently show the lowest percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations when compared to all seven tested grades, including Grade 11.

Journey to the Problem

Through my current role in this school district and because I had recently joined the school system, I spent several months of the 2017-2018 school year studying the history and current state of all ELA and social studies curricula through our learning

management systems, and as I visited each of our 17 schools, I was able to meet and begin building relationships with teachers and administrators across our school district. During this time, I was also able to analyze local and state assessment results and review local Board of Education (BOE) policies and procedures.

Through these early school visits and collegial discussions with teachers and administrators, the feedback about the ELA curriculum and Humanities department allowed me to compare what was written, such as the curriculum documents, assessment results, and BOE documents, to that which was unwritten, such as the daily practices, expectations, and perceptions of educators within our system. Many middle school ELA teachers shared their uneasiness with what they considered to be our new curriculum and resources, especially in comparison to the curriculum that had been used prior to these materials' arrival in 2015. Middle school social studies teachers, elementary teachers, and high school teachers exceedingly felt more comfortable with the state of their curriculum and resources. Although, determining where the curriculum documents were housed was an issue district-wide as they could be found in one of two different learning management systems, in our district-wide Google platform, or on someone's computer.

The Significance of the Problem

Without adequate curriculum structures, middle school students across our district are participating in varied and inequitable educational experiences. Because Grade 6 students are also in transition from elementary school to middle school, which includes a multitude of changes in and of itself, the lack of curriculum and delivery expectations has arguably negatively affected Grade 6 teachers and students the most. Additionally, because each school and sometimes even each teacher within each school

is "coping" with the lack of curriculum in their own way, many students are negatively affected again when transitioning from middle school to high school since all three middle schools feed into a singular high school.

In my review of student cohort data for the ELA state assessments over the last five years, I found that fewer percentages of Grade 6 students meet or exceed grade-level expectations as compared to those same students' SBA scores when they are in Grade 5 and in Grade 7. Additionally, the percentage of students in Grades 3-5 who exceed grade-level expectations is consistently at least 10% higher than the percentage of students in Grades 6-8 who exceed grade-level expectations. Because of these documented results and trends in addition to the lack of posted curriculum and agreed upon curricular structures, I have chosen to focus this study on ELA 6 teaching and learning.

The Research Question

In this qualitative study, I set out to describe my experiences as a CIA administrator navigating how and under what circumstances a district-wide curriculum change occurs in multiple schools across one school system. The change process in this study targets improving the posted ELA 6 curriculum and adherence to subsequent curricular structures across three middle schools in one school district.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

Action Research and Frameworks

This qualitative record of study seeks to utilize action research to depict one district-level administrator's experience in broaching curricular change in a school district system. Using a teacher-as-researcher framework and a narrative interpretive approach, I set out to explore: *How do teachers and administrators from multiple schools as well as a district-level administrator, all of whom are entities of a single organization, approach curricular changes in an effort to improve student outcomes?*

As Elliott (1991) explains, the teacher-as-researcher action research framework grew organically in the 1960s from teachers' needs to determine what curriculum and instructional practices were most successful in preparing students for their future lives. When describing what he and his colleagues were doing at that time, Elliott says:

> We didn't call it research, let alone action research. This articulation came much later as the world of academia responded to change in schools. But the concepts of teaching as reflective practice and a form of educational inquiry was tacitly and intuitively grasped in our experience of the innovation process. (p. 8)

Elliott also describes the way he and his colleagues would gather in the staff room to discuss and debate their methods. Now, almost six decades after his experiences, I can recall my own similar experiences as a teacher in the staff lounge. As an administrator, I still crave these discussions, but they are much more difficult to come by as I am no longer surrounded by colleagues attempting similar improvement experiments, and there

11

is no staff room for administrators. Through this qualitative, action research study and my narrative, I hope to provide other CIA administrators a simulated "staff lounge" to think through curricular changes they are attempting to make in their own school or district.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that aligns with this study is constructivist learning theory, specifically Bruner's (1996) sociocultural constructivist learning theory as outlined in *The Culture of Education*. Constructivists believe knowledge is constructed by the learner through active participation in the learning process and through social interactions (Bruner, 1996; Dewey, 1916; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). Bruner (1996) later goes on to emphasize the importance of the human mind being both computational and cultural. That is, the brain is capable of memorization, sorting and recall but it also makes meaning through cultural connections and social contexts, and as Bruner emphasizes, it is in the intersection between the two types of "minds" that learning is most effectively constructed. Similar to Vygotsky (1978), Bruner's theory supposes that new learning builds on prior learning and that through social interactions and experiences, learning deepens. Important to this study, though, is Bruner's idea that learning is a social process *and* an individual journey both of which are grounded in one's own beliefs and cultural point of view. Bruner (1996) explains his views on this interaction of learning by stating:

> ...learners help each other learn, each according to her abilities. And this, of
>
> course, need not exclude the presence of somebody serving in the role of teacher.

It simply implies that the teacher does not play that role as a monopoly, that

learners "scaffold" for each other as well. (p. 21).

Bruner goes on to explain that the role of teacher is still one of authority, but that she

also takes on the responsibility of "encouraging others to share it" (p. 22). Furthermore,

Bruner's theory identifies the importance of jointly producing works through a

meaningful division of labor as a way to make a group of people more of a united

community.

Relative to Bruner (1966) and other constructivist theorists Dewey, 1916; Piaget,

1936; Vygotsky, 1978), in this study, I am the teacher and the ELA teachers and

administrators are the students. Although there are learning theories specific to adults,

such as andragogy (Knowles, 1980) and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1978), this

record of study is not focused on adults as learners, but instead on one administrator

sharing her story as an adult learner attempting to enact curricular change in a system of

adults and children. Central to this narrative is the cultural construct of schools and

district-wide systems, shared authority, and collaborative production of curriculum

works.

Techniques and Methods

Symbiotic to Bruner's sociocultural constructivist learning theory is narrative

inquiry which relies on the idea that learning is a sociocultural experience and that

through story-telling, knowledge is developed and extended. Through narrative inquiry,

the narrator is able to provide detailed descriptions of specific situations and

experiences, thus a "more plausible representation of lived experience" (McAlpine,

2016, p. 40). Unlike other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry is grounded in how the main character or narrator actively interprets events and interactions (Bruner, 1996; Elliott, 2005). Furthermore, narrative methodologies allow the action researcher to generate and value personal practical knowledge (McAlpine, 2016), tell biographical and autobiographical stories about an organization (Creswell, 2007), and capture the detailed stories or life experiences of the work lives of a small number of individuals within the same organization, while providing insight into the possible next steps for the organization (Creswell, 2007).

To allow the reader easier access to my story, I have written my narrative in two parts. First and in standard font, I have objectively explained my process of attempting to enact change within my organization. This version of the story is similar to those accounts typically given by CIA administrators to various stakeholder groups, such as the Board of Education; it gives the facts as related to the intended outcome and some explanation as to why certain decisions were made, but it does not delve into the realities and varied experiences of those involved in the process. In italicized font, I have expanded the narrative. It is in this portion of my story that the reader may find the simulated "staff lounge" in which to compare their own experiences and possibly allow their own narrative to evolve through connections to my experiences and descriptions, especially since it is in interpretation that we find meaning in what "may have previously seemed to be abstract or irrelevant" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 89). In this part of the narrative, I give insight into my personal experiences while navigating the change process and my interactions with other educators and administrators.

In support of providing a simulated "staff lounge," I have chosen to reference and cite supporting scholarship throughout my narrative in order to show a more direct link between the research and the practitioner. This is a calculated and purpose-driven choice as I believe it is most important to the intent of this record of study. By aligning and connecting significant research and practice studies to when they were most relevant to me as a practitioner attempting to enact change within my organization, I am better able to minimize the space between research and practice for the reader.

Accuracy and Transferability

Telling the story from one CIA leader's perspective is the intent of this study. However, as with other qualitative methodologies, I am concerned with ensuring accuracy and transferability as opposed to validity and reliability (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2014; Moen, 2006). To increase the accuracy and objectivity of my narrative and mitigate my own bias, I used triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to support my story by studying the district's posted curriculum documents and materials, communication records with teachers and administrators, and observations of everyday teaching and learning in my organization. Also through my descriptive narrative, other educators and administrators may find they are able to transfer my story or parts of my story to their own schooling realities.

Limitations

As with all methodologies, narrative techniques and methods have limitations specifically that the story is told from one person's perspective. However, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain, through narrative research there is an ability to create an

authentic view of one's reality, but this methodology does not attempt to project an entirely objective reality or generalizable truth. In the field of education, research and speakers and products abound, especially those focused on school improvement and leading systemic change. Throughout my career and as a graduate student, I have read about, participated in, studied, and attempted change in a multitude of settings, but it is rare to encounter first-hand accounts from those who are in the process of leading school improvement efforts or systemic change.

School administration, like most leadership roles, can be isolating. I am dedicated to my profession, but I often find myself wishing for someone to talk to who is experiencing a similar issue that I am confronted with. However, as a district-level administrator, I tend to be the only person in the organization who does what I do. Whereas, unless you work in a one-room schoolhouse, a principal or teacher always has someone to talk to or bounce ideas off of even if it is a colleague in another school within the district's system. So, although Barry (1997) posits that using narrative methods to study organizational change can be difficult due to the sheer number of problems and solutions occurring at any given time in addition to the large size and typically ever-changing membership of a given organization, I will use narrative methods to address the ambiguity and complexity of my interactions and attempts to propel systemic curricular change within my organization.

Lastly, triangulation helps to ensure the researcher sees meaning in various data, corroborates evidence from various sources, and helps mitigate the researcher's bias (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In an attempt to increase my objectivity through triangulation, I have studied our curriculum documents and materials,

communicated with teachers and administrators in an attempt to situate this narrative within their realities, and visited schools and classrooms to see teaching and learning in action in my organization. In order to ensure the accuracy and transferability of my results, I recorded notes, took photographs, and developed an observational protocol (Creswell, 2014) for use during classroom visits.

Structuring the Narrative Analysis

In the next chapter of this record of study, Chapter III Solution and Narrative Analysis, I have embedded my data analysis alongside the solution for this record of study in the form of a narrative. As opposed to quantitative research, data analysis in qualitative research occurs simultaneously alongside data collection (Butina, 2015) and involves "focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it" (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). Aligned with this methodology then, I have chosen to recount my narrative in two conjoined parts: the objective story of the solution in this record of study and my subjective reality and analysis as the story unfolds. By conveying my experiences through narrative storytelling, I am better able to analyze and facilitate a shared understanding of the complexity of my whole story, and by incorporating my analysis directly into the narrative, I am able to maintain a connectedness between events and experiences without segmenting the story into meaningless parts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Vygotsky, 1986). Furthermore, as Moen (2006) explains, it is through storytelling that the actor can create "reasonable order out of experience" (p. 56). Although typical narrative inquiry is concerned with the gathering of multiple actors' stories, in this record of study, I seek to transmit only my reality (Moen, 2006), and through my data analysis I seek to order but not isolate or classify my experiences and interactions.

My narrative involves interactions with other actors, but my analysis is focused on my personal story of navigating my experiences leading a system-wide change process.

In the final chapter, I will summarize my experiences navigating a district-wide curriculum change by outlining my findings and explaining the lessons learned.

CHAPTER III

SOLUTION AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Study Context and Participants

In this school district, the leadership is in what seems like constant fluctuation which affects many facets of our school system as a whole (Honig et al., 2010). Since my arrival in mid-September 2017 and as of December 2019, the district has had three superintendents, two Chief Operating Officers, two Directors of Human Resources, three Directors of Facilities, two Directors of Communication and Family Engagement, one new program coordinator for PE/Health, three Headmasters of the High School, two Assistant Headmasters of the High School, two new elementary principals, four new elementary assistant principals, one new middle school assistant principal, and the School Board has gone through two election cycles which has unseated a total of eight Board members. It is also worth noting that my predecessor had only held her position since 2013, so most of the humanities teachers have worked under three program coordinators in as little as five years upon my arrival.

As this study is focused on middle school ELA and specifically ELA 6 teachers, it is important to note that since September 2017, of the sixteen ELA 6 teachers currently on staff, only one of them is new, having joined her school also in the 2017-2018 school year.

In this narrative study, I am the major participant under study. Also important throughout my story, though, are the educators I interact with and therefore have contributed to my story. Those educators include Grade 6 ELA teachers, middle school administrators, my supervisor, and one outside literacy consultant. Further, this study

takes place in my school district and the data collection activities are a part of my current role as a CIA administrator.

In some of my very first interactions with teachers, they always asked if I planned to make changes to their curriculum and materials. *I found these questions striking because "I" would never make changes to something so important without input from the very teachers who would be using the curriculum and materials. It is my firm belief that teachers are expert professionals who should be treated as such (and often are not), and I am the person in the system of schooling who assists in aligning and coordinating what teachers need to do their best with our students. In everything I do, I have two priorities. The first is keeping our students--*all *of our students--at the center of decision-making, and the second is intentionally respecting the expertise and experiences of our educators. I had to think about how I could build trust and convince the teachers of my conviction in these two fundamental beliefs.* Upon further discussion, I found that with each new program coordinator the curriculum and adopted resources had also changed. In an effort to calm those concerns, I communicated regularly that I would *not* be making immediate changes to our curriculum or adopted resources and I made a point to ask every teacher and administrator I came in contact with about our curriculum. *Where is the curriculum posted? [The answers varied. Some said Schoology, some said Aspen, some said Google, some said they didn't know.] Did they have all the supplemental resources they needed? [The answers varied. Some said yes, many said no, some said they did not even know what they needed.] What did they like about our current curriculum or resources? [In summarization: not much.] What did they dislike? [Many of the issues shared centered on not having enough books for*

20

students and not knowing what to teach and when.] What else did they need? [time to plan, more books for students to read, lessons or lesson examples, and more professional development on the adopted materials] How did this particular curriculum come to be? [The prior coordinator brought the materials we now use, but the coordinator before that is who began transitioning all K-8 ELA classes to the workshop model.]

As this was my fourth experience being a "new" administrator in a school district, I was surprised that the teachers were conditioned to believe that a new administrator also meant new curriculum and resources. I had never joined a district and made autonomous decisions about the curriculum or resources. I knew how detrimental that type of decision-making was, but this was also the first district wherein the adopted curriculum was a packaged resource and no other district-created curriculum existed. I found this most concerning of all. How were the teachers supposed to know the "what, when, and why" if they had essentially just been handed various textbooks with no accompanying district-created curriculum documents? Where was the scope and sequence (Frase et al., 2000; Marzano, 2003)? The explicit standards-alignment (Frase et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2010)? Example lesson ideas (Frase et al., 2000)? Formative or unit assessments (Frase et al., 2000, Marzano, 2001)? How would I lead this big of a change? How quickly could the change be made? I began to doubt that any attention had been paid to the differences between standards, curriculum, materials and resources, and how each component affects instruction, only adding to my concern for the clear lack of structures that would ensure equitable academic experiences for all of our students.

Proposed Solution and Narrative Analysis

Through my journey to the problem, I performed one piece of a curriculum management audit by reviewing the curriculum components as discussed by Greene (2000), which includes measuring to what extent each of the following components is present in the district's posted curriculum guides: clarity and validity of objectives, congruity of the curriculum to the testing/evaluation process, delineation by grade of the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes, delineation of the major instructional tools, and clear linkages for classroom utilization (p. 144). *I participated in a curriculum management audit in 2013 when I was a CIA administrator in one of the largest school districts in Texas. A complete audit is exhaustive and takes hundreds of hours as well as many people. In my current role, I was attempting to get a handle on what we have or have had in relation to curriculum documents and how teachers are deciding what to teach and when. A central focus of the curriculum management audit is trying to measure and compare a district's written, taught, and assessed curriculum, which also leaves space for identifying the hidden curriculum (English, 1988; Marzano, 2003). Similar to the curriculum management audit data collection procedures, I reviewed documents, spoke with current teachers and administrators, and visited schools and classrooms to see teaching and learning in action.* What I found was a misalignment between the BOE policies, the district-posted curriculum and adopted materials, and the everyday practices occurring in each of our middle school ELA classrooms. For example, in the district's BOE curriculum policy 6140 (see Appendix A), it is stated:

The District shall develop and implement an excellent, research-based curriculum that is designed to maximize student learning. Curriculum includes

vertically and horizontally aligned components that have specific and measurable

student learning outcomes (knowledge and skills), assessments and suggested

learning experiences and/or instruction strategies. (para. 2)

In comparison, the middle school ELA curriculum in our district has not been vertically

or horizontally aligned. Regarding vertical alignment, several units, including teaching

and learning resources and materials, are published in more than one grade in our online

learning management system and are being taught in multiple grade levels. Regarding

horizontal alignment, teachers from each school and even within a school have been

teaching units in various sequences and some units are not being taught at all three

schools. The student learning outcomes included in the posted curriculum documents

are not specific or measurable, nor are they present in the adopted curriculum materials.

There are no assessments, common or otherwise, included in the online learning

management system; some schools have created their own assessments, but not every

teacher gives said assessments and each school has its own version of assessments for

some of the units. Furthermore, the adopted, packaged curricular resources mostly

assume the teacher will use her own knowledge of instructional strategies in order to

teach a given "teaching point" for each lesson included in the teacher's curriculum

manual. Our posted curriculum does not supplement the adopted resources with

"suggested learning experiences and/or instructional strategies" as our BOE policy

requires. *The more I uncover about the state of our curriculum, the more I understand*

the teachers' and principals' conflict with what is infamously and regularly called "the

district office." I choose to believe these educators are not in conflict with me, per say,

because I did not get us here. However, I do feel tremendously responsible for

correcting the mistakes that led us here--to this place with very little curriculum and even less guidance and instructional support. It truly is as if I am not only working to enact curricular change but also to change people's outlook and deep-rooted feelings about "the district office." If I cannot gain teacher's and principal's trust, it could prove nearly impossible to improve our curriculum and create structures to ensure all students are receiving similar access to the expectations laid out in the Core learning standards (Adams, 2013; Kondakci et al., 2017). This, in turn, could negatively impact many of our students, so failure to build trust and lasting relationships is really not an option.

Although my analysis showed we were in need of drastic curricular changes in order to provide equitable educational experiences for all of our students, I knew that too many changes or too big of a change would be detrimental to the department's success. *Change theory and my own experiences tell me change is hard. I suppose if it were easy, it wouldn't be a change. As Fullan (2006) summarizes, there are theories about change, there are theories in use about change, but most importantly there are theories of change in explicit action which "connect the strategy to the desired outcomes" (p. 3). I wanted to make sure that I was making change through explicit and sustained actions, so I started by determining what the end goal would be and then I worked backward to create incremental changes that would ultimately result in a new curriculum development process and comprehensive final products (see Appendix B).* I decided we would first realign the current curriculum map based on student needs as identified in the latest SBA claim and target results and in vertical alignment to the Grade 5 and Grades 7-8 curriculum maps. The 2018-2019 SBA claim results show that only 48% of

sixth- graders scored "above standard" for the reading claim as compared to 55% of fifth- graders and 56% of seventh-graders. Similarly, only 46% of sixth-graders scored "above standard" for the writing claim as compared to 58% of fifth-graders and 53% of seventh-graders. *These results in addition to the five-year trend analysis of SBA results are concerning because the data show that each year the SBA results drop between Grade 5 and Grade 6 and with the exception of the 2014-2015 results, the Grade 7 scores remain lower than than the same students' Grade 5 scores and in 2017-2018 the Grade 7 scores were even lower than the same students' Grade 6 and Grade 5 scores. I believe one reason for this consistent decrease in scores is in part a result of the lack of structured middle school curriculum, which exists more comprehensively for our K-5 ELA classes. My working hypothesis is that if we, the teachers and I, can come together and develop a curriculum and accompanying structures, the ELA 6 scores will improve and will continue to improve through Grades 7 and 8 (Frase et al., 2000; Harden, 2001; Rawle et al., 2017).*

In late July through early August of this 2019-2010 school year, I worked with a current middle school ELA teacher who is pursuing her administrator certification to create a new common pacing guide for ELA 6. *This ELA teacher has worked on previous curriculum writing teams and is seeking experience to eventually move into a district-level CIA position. She and I have spoken often about the history of curriculum development in this district, and we have congruent ideas about what changes could be made to improve teaching and learning at the middle school level. Although she is seen as a leader amongst her peers, her principal, and myself, I did have to promise her that I would not tell the other teachers that she was "the one who made all these changes"*

because she was concerned they would be upset with her. Deeper than her concern for their feelings towards her was, I believe, an uneasiness in how negatively they may respond to the changes and her ability to confront that negativity. If this teacher worked directly for me, I could coach her on how to address such situations, but because I do not have coaches or specialists working with me and my department, this was not a task worth taking on at that moment. Instead, I simply promised to keep it our secret. Although some units were re-ordered in the new common pacing guide, the content and adopted resources remained the same. *Maintaining the content and adopted resources was critical to this first stage of change. In doing so, I was keeping the commitment I made in 2017 while still beginning to lay the foundation of a newly designed and widely accepted district-created curriculum. In keeping my commitment, I am hopefully leading our department to second order philosophical change by building trust (Adams, 2013; Fouts, 2003; Kondakci et al., 2017) in order to improve relationships, initiate collaborative ownership of a coordinated and focused curriculum, and sustain long- lasting change (Fouts, 2003).*

I also decided to name this new document a pacing guide as opposed to a curriculum map because (1) I wanted to reiterate to the teachers and administrators that we are making a change in our practice, and (2) I knew that in the next phase of this curriculum improvement plan, we will create a complete scope and sequence to include standards alignment and set amounts of time in which students should master certain skills as aligned to formative assessments, which are also nonexistent right now. When developed collaboratively, mapping out curriculum becomes an important professional development opportunity as well as a way to involve teachers in the designing and

alignment of what is to be taught and when (Drake & Burns, 2004), and the final

product is mostly synonymous to a scope and sequence. However, in unstructured

interviews with teachers and administrators, I discovered that no one seemed to know

where our curriculum maps came from or who made them. As Bernard (2011) suggests,

I kept a clear focus in the back of mind [figure out where our curriculum came from and

how it is being used], but I made sure to limit my input in an effort to increase the

comfort level of those educators and administrators I was able to chat with, so I could

elicit as much information as possible in my hunt for our curricular reality. Ultimately,

it was as if the maps just appeared around 2013 or 2014. Several teachers have been

members of the district's curriculum writing teams, but even they were not exactly sure

where the maps came from. It is essentially irrelevant how the curriculum maps

originated or who made them because the teachers mostly expressed that they did not

use them, they did not know how to access them or if they did know how to access them,

they simply do not like the way the learning management system functions.

    From what I could ascertain, teachers were instead using the adopted

curriculum books in sequential order as they are numbered one to four. However, this

numbering system is only true for the writing books; the reading books are an entirely

different and difficult story. The middle school reading units are still being developed by

the publishing company, so every 8-12 months a new book is released, except when it's

not (and that has happened twice now). One of many major problems with the reading

materials is that unlike the K-5 materials from the same company, the middle school

reading materials are being published as shared 6-8 resources. Even worse, the books

are not published over the summer when teachers and districts could take the time to

look deeply through the materials. Instead, the books tend to be published around August and once you include the purchasing procedures that must be followed by any school or district organization, and then await the shipping and arrival of the materials, we are actually able to get our hands on the curriculum resources around October or November. Obviously October or November is absolutely not a good time to try and review new curricular resources and re-work the entire year's scope and sequence to accommodate said curriculum. Added to that is the question of which grade level should get the book.

The professional development consultants for the materials tout to the teachers that each new book can simply be split into thirds and each grade level can assume responsibility for one section. What they fail to mention to the teachers is that each lesson in the book builds on the prior one, so if Grade 6 takes the first one-third of the book, Grade 7 takes the second, and Grade 8 takes the third, then Grade 6 students only receive one-third of the instruction needed as outlined by our standards and Grades 7 and 8 students (and teachers) are picking up in the middle of a sequence of lessons instead of being exposed to the entire unit in addition to the fact that Grades 7 and 8 students also only receive one-third of the instruction needed as outlined by our standards. Confounding the issues with the publisher and the professional development consultants is the fact that since their inception about five years ago, the middle school reading resources still only include five units. Five units to be shared *amongst three grade levels. Amplifying my problems as the CIA administrator is the fact that teachers have also been left without a reading curriculum for those roughly five years. Consequently, as I attempted to discuss these issues with my supervisor in order to*

explain my planned course of action she would reprimand me because she felt I was not honoring the past curriculum work completed in prior summer work teams. When I express concern for the lack of middle school ELA curriculum, she refers me to the posted curriculum maps and sometimes large three-inch binders are left on my desk with a note identifying the contents as curriculum. It has become increasingly clear that what I consider to be curriculum including teacher-created components such as a scope and sequence, unit outlines aligned to standards and stated learning objectives, exemplar lessons and materials, and connections or links to adopted resources is not in line with what my supervisor considers to be curriculum. In her curriculum, which is what is currently posted for teachers to follow, documents collect information such as all or almost all of the middle school ELA standards, bulleted lists of what students will know and do as copied from adopted resources, and lists of or hyperlinked documents to adopted resources.

What is posted now is neither guaranteed nor viable (Marzano, 2003). Now in my third year in this organization, I know not to discuss curriculum issues with my supervisor because as she has shared, when I express that the middle school ELA curriculum is lacking, I am insulting her and the work she has done over the last seven years to improve this district's curriculum and learning management systems. This is difficult for me to come to terms with because if we as CIA administrators cannot speak directly and matter-of-factly to each other about curriculum, instruction, and assessment problems, then how can we honestly expect changes or improvements to occur? I find myself in a delicate position because I want to be respectful of my supervisor's feelings, but I also cannot ignore the gaping holes in the middle school curriculum, the stress the

holes put on the ELA teachers, and the inequitable learning experiences provided to our students as a result. Ultimately, I am navigating this daily internal and sometimes external conflict by continuing on my learning journey grounded in my beliefs and perspective while reminding myself to appreciate that my supervisor is on her own individual journey grounded in her own beliefs and perspectives as well. My struggle lies in what Bruner (1996) calls contrast, confrontation, and metacognition--or my conflict between our social interactions and my attempt to make meaning between her ideals and my own while also attempting to enact curricular changes.

In moving from our current curriculum map which only loosely identifies the maximum number of days allotted for each unit to a pacing guide which includes more concise start and end dates for each unit, I hope to incrementally change teacher perception as related to the even stricter time requirements that will come with our future scope and sequence. *The stricter time requirements are important to ensuring each of our units "fit" into the school year and that the most important skills and concepts--such as those that are new to a grade level, those which students typically need more time to master, and those which should be emphasized based on the latest data results--are given more time than those skills and concepts of which students are showing or have shown mastery (Jacobs, 2004, Marzano, 2003). Critical to the long-term process and success of building a new and common scope and sequence is the involvement of teachers (Harden, 2001; Rawle et al., 2017), which seemingly did not happen when our current curriculum maps were designed. It is interesting, though, because I have found it quite difficult to get teachers together to do curriculum work even though I have the funding to pay them for their time outside of the school day or*

pay for substitutes in order to do the work during the school day. Since the June 2018

standards alignment work, our regularly scheduled curriculum writing week has been

cancelled. I am now finalizing a plan that will allow teachers to be a part of the

curriculum development process throughout the school year in addition to any

possible summer dates. For the 2020-2021 school year, I have set aside the funding

and the time to host after school meetings during which we can continue our

curriculum writing work. I am hoping to capitalize on the fact that although the

realignment of the pacing guide was not physically done around a table with all

teachers present this last summer, it is reflective of teacher feedback regarding the

time constraints and sequence of our current units. And, when we are ready to move

on to creating a full scope and sequence and other curricular documents, all teachers

will be invited and encouraged to meet me at "the table" during after school

curriculum writing meetings. In coordinating the change in this way, I expect to make

the most of each ELA teachers' practical knowledge, content knowledge and their

connections to our department, our curricular history, and each other by providing the

space for computational knowledge and sociocultural convergence (Bruner, 1996;

Rawle et al., 2017).

Another important change that accompanies our new pacing guide is the visual

convergence of reading and writing units. In the previously developed curriculum map,

reading and writing units were separated and stacked on top of each other which

pictorially represented that each is to be taught separately (see Appendix C). This has

perpetuated the separation of reading and writing instruction in sixth grade and is

contradictory to what we know about the reciprocal interaction between writing and

reading and the improvement of student comprehension, content knowledge, literacy skills, and critical thinking skills (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graham & Hebert, 2010). With the new pacing guide (see Appendix D), units have been visually collapsed eliminating the printed separation of reading and writing instruction. With this collapse, the timing metrics were also changed. In the original curriculum map, units were displayed as covering a certain number of days until they added up to the 180 school days represented on the school calendar. However, as any classroom teacher and many educational researchers (Marzano, 2003; Education Commission of the States, 2005) will tell you, there are not 180 *instructional* days in a school year. Many events take away days or blocks of instructional time, such as assemblies, field trips, picture days, assessments, and the like. So, in the new pacing guide, each unit is now assigned a number of classroom blocks including extra blocks to allow for unforeseen lost instructional time and blocks for assessment administrations. The blocks dedicated to each unit were created based on our most recent SBA results in addition to any new skills that occur in Grade 6 as outlined by the Connecticut Core Standards. The change in how time is depicted and how units have been visually displayed in the pacing guide reiterates that teachers do not and should not separate reading and writing units, but should use every available block of time when planning for and delivering integrated lessons. *Although the change in the ideology of how time is allotted and used has caused some pause and questions, overall, the teachers have expressed positive feedback for the change. One ELA 6 teacher wrote, "I applaud your determination to put structure in where it has been lacking, clarifying the expectations and adding the component of accountability that will lead to more consistency across classrooms and*

schools." Another said, "This is really what we've needed. Hopefully, all three schools can be on the same page now because it's really hard when I get a new student from one of our other schools and he has already done what we're doing or he's never heard of it."

However, another teacher and her librarian from one school shared that their ELA teachers could not follow the pacing guide because their school has too many students and not enough books. This also poses a problem for me as the CIA administrator because in our district we are committed to student choice, personalized learning, and in ELA, we ground our instruction in the Workshop Model. These three commitments should ensure that there are always "enough books" because students have been able to choose what they are reading, even if choosing within a certain parameter like a particular genre. After all, it would prove quite difficult to teach nonfiction text structures if students chose to read science fiction novels.

Additionally, at the end of 2017-2018 every middle school teacher received around 75 new texts for their in-class libraries, in 2018-2019 they received another 100-150, and in preparation for the 2019-2020 school year, teachers received another 50-75 books to add to their in-class library. To ensure the titles would be useful, I purchased all of these texts as aligned ancillary materials from the same company that develops and publishes our current curriculum. Some of the titles are packaged as singular texts and some are packaged as "book club" resources wherein teachers receive 6-10 copies of 5-8 titles. To help solve this school's problem on this day, though, I promised to get them more texts ASAP and asked that they send me an email documenting their needs. When the assistant principal emailed me a few days later, the only request was for 200

copies of one particular title for ELA 6. Since this school only has about 300 students in

ELA 6 and each school has about 50 copies of this popular title already, I set up a

meeting with her to re-discuss our three commitments to student choice, personalized

learning, and the Workshop Model. I wanted to speak in person about why I would not

be able to purchase 200 copies of the same text. I had hoped to garner more support for

the ELA instructional model from this school's administration during this meeting.

Although the meeting was cordial and ended with what I thought was a shared

understanding that students should not be participating in the whole-class reading of

novels, I found out later that the school's PTA purchased the 200 books. I was upset that the

administration at this school allowed for and asked for the PTA to make this purchase, but

there is truly nothing I can do about the acquisition of those books. All I can do is continue

to try and build better relationships with the administrators and teachers at this school with

the goal of improving equitable educational experiences for all of our middle school

students through coordinated and focused curriculum (Fouts, 2003).

In addition to coordinating the development of improved curriculum structures, I

also needed to coordinate support for the teachers through this initial change by way of

targeted professional development. *If I expected real change in practice, I knew that the*

professional development I would coordinate would need to focus on determining what

we teach (standards, curriculum, and resources) and how (instructional techniques and

scaffolds), it needed to bring the group together to work collaboratively throughout the

school year, and it needed to include in-class follow-up (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009;

Elmore & Burney, 1999; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Masuda et al., 2012). To do this, I

contracted with a local literacy consultant who has extensive experience using our

adopted curricular materials in addition to her many years of literacy coaching in and around our geographical area. She and I met in mid-August to discuss both my long term and immediate goals for grade 6 ELA. I outlined the pacing guide changes that would be rolled out to teachers this school year, and we were able to discuss various ways in which she could provide steady support throughout the year. Ultimately, we decided to schedule between seven to ten professional learning days dedicated to supporting all ELA 6 teachers. The days would be cumulative and would include time dedicated to visiting classrooms and hosting professional development sessions with structured time to lead teachers through the collaborative planning of integrated reading and writing units and lessons. *I had actually started working with this consultant last school year to help close a professional learning gap that had existed for years between four of our elementary schools (three are Title I schools and one is referred to as "almost Title I") who had received extensive training and support with our adopted curriculum and resources each year while the other seven schools received either very little support during the first year of implementation or none at all. My supervisor had met this consultant at a conference and suggested I meet with her. I admit that I took my boss' suggestion as more of an order, but it was easy to see in our first meeting that she and I had similar educational belief systems (thankfully).*

I wasn't sure that I needed or wanted an outside consultant, but I did know that I needed help if I was going to make much needed changes at both early elementary and grades 6-8 in addition to my responsibilities at grades 9-12. After many dead-end requests for possibly adding an elementary and secondary humanities specialist to my staff, I finally discovered that as an organization we are unable to add staff to the

Central Office. In Connecticut, school districts are part of the Town Governance, and

without delving into the multi-faceted political battleground inevitable is such an

affluent and highly educated town, the fact of the matter is that the Board of Education

(aka Central office) is not allowed "under any circumstance to add to the head count" at

the district office. I believe the most successful systems, those that evolve and flourish,

"grow their own" experts and leaders, so for our organization to rely on and pay for

outside support negates our efforts to improve our system from the inside out.

As it stands now, I will continue to work with this outside consultant to provide

curriculum and instruction support. However, I am always aware that in this age of

seemingly never-ending budget cuts, I could soon lose access to this support. It has been

shown that the positive effects of district leadership on curriculum, instruction, and

student success is easily overshadowed and often impeded by administrator turnover,

new state and local policies, and funding changes (Honig et al., 2010). Given the

extensive administrator turnover that this district has experienced, the incremental loss

of funding my department is currently experiencing could easily negate any progress we

are making, so I maximize every minute this consultant is with my teachers. I

communicate often and honestly about what I need from her, and we plan each session

so that it aligns to the long term goal of creating common curricular structures across

all three middle schools to ensure equitable student learning experiences for all of our

students.

Central to the success of this professional development plan and this phase of my

curriculum improvement plan was the involvement of the three middle school principals.

During our beginning-of-the-year leadership summit meetings, I was able to sit down

with the three principals and delve into the pacing guide changes and the professional development support plan that I intended to roll out this school year with the ELA 6 team. I was also able to stress the important role they would play in holding teachers accountable for following the new pacing guide and attending the professional development sessions. Because the three principals and I had discussed early on in my arrival their need for more structure in the ELA curriculum and their want for improved SBA Level 4 scores, I was able to garner their support for my professional development plan as it was closely aligned to their expressed needs. *My end of the bargain is to support the teachers through relevant professional development sessions which would also include time to work on creating and curating materials to use immediately in their classrooms. In exchange, the principals agreed to ask the teachers who attended the sessions questions like, "So, what kinds of resources did you make in your session yesterday?" and "When will you be meeting with your team to share the resources you made yesterday?" I gave them these question-stems in exchange for my promise that the teachers should always be able to answer them--*always*. My goal was, and still is, that the principals will learn to trust me and my methods, and that they will come to believe that I am capable of improving curriculum and instruction in their schools with their support, and that "district office" is in fact useful and supportive to their schools (Honig et al., 2010).*

 I also committed to staying in consistent communication with both teachers and principals through emails, phone calls, and meetings as well as visiting the teachers' classrooms. One way I communicate with teachers is through what I call "Friday Footnotes" (see Appendix E). Using this messaging routine, I am able to minimize the

volume of emails I send to teachers. And since teachers know (because I tell

them/remind them when I send the first three messages of the year) that I only send

Friday Footnotes when necessary, they know to read through the message in its

entirety because the information is important, time-sensitive, and targeted directly to

them. Overall, the feedback for this procedure has been extremely positive. Many

teachers have reached out to thank me for finding a way to keep them informed and for

not sending an email every Friday just because it's Friday. Principals and assistant

principals have also shared their appreciation for having all of the information in one

place and because it allows them to check in with their teacher/department leaders to

make sure that whatever is in the Friday Footnotes is being handled within the school-

based team. And for me, I have a routine way to communicate with the teachers and

administrators, but I don't have the added pressure of creating a weekly message.

Instead, I can focus my energies where they are needed, and I can remember to send

Friday Footnotes when important messages or reminders arise.

Next in the sequence of change-making events was to present the new pacing

guide to teachers. Each year, when teachers return in August but before students return

for the new school year, the CIA administrator team hosts a full day back-to-school

conference which includes sessions dedicated to providing curriculum, assessment, and

professional learning updates to each grade level and content area. *Embedded in this day*

is also numerous other sessions focused on newly purchased technology tools, meeting

with teacher union representatives, discussing new laws or policies, and a continued

support of facilitating personalized learning, which is a major component of our five-

year strategic plan. However, our new superintendent asked that we shorten this day in

order to give teachers more time in their classrooms prior to the students arriving for the new school year. As a result, for this back-to-school conference, all sessions except for curriculum update sessions were cancelled. The curriculum update sessions were shortened to 60 minutes and occurred at the same time. This extensive change was disheartening because our CIA team had worked diligently for months to ensure this day of professional learning would be worthwhile and productive for both administrators and teachers. Furthermore, because I am responsible for K-12 ELA, reading, and social studies, I was unable to host each of these 30+ sessions on my own. Instead, I had to create a presentation slide show with facilitator notes for each grade level and content area, and recruit either a teacher leader or district-level instructional coach to lead each session.

For this particular school year, I also had a new early literacy program rolling out for all Kindergarten teachers across our 11 elementary schools as well as a new literacy screening assessment and process rolling out for grades K-8 and the literacy specialists who serve each of those 14 schools, so I had to be present in both of those sessions. Although ELA 6 would be seeing the new pacing guide for the first time but because the actual content and resources had not changed, I decided to have a district-level instructional coach lead this back-to-school session (as opposed to a teacher leader) while I worked with the Kindergarten teachers and literacy specialists. This particular coach has worked specifically with the middle school ELA teachers for several years, so I hoped her rapport would help to encourage and support the teachers through this initial review of the updated pacing guide. As could be expected, teachers still had questions and concerns regarding the change after returning to their home

campuses.

Routinely after the back-to-school conference, the principals at each school host grade-level team meetings to check in on each team's goals and anticipated needs for the year. Following those meetings this year, the three middle school principals asked that I host a follow-up ELA meeting to further discuss the pacing guide changes for this school year. We were able to schedule a meeting for the second week of school, which allowed us the opportunity to meet in a timely manner while also allowing the teachers to get through the first week of school without the added time constraint of an after-school meeting.

At this September follow-up meeting, I designed a few experiences that would explain why the pacing guide was changed. I collected and presented student feedback data from the prior school year's climate survey which showed that only 27% of secondary students reported using ideas from school in their daily life and only 32% found the things they were learning to be interesting, alongside the fact that 87% reported that it was important to do well in their classes. *I led teachers through a discussion of what this data could mean for us as educators as we embark on a new school year.* Then, I shared cohort SBA results for our incoming 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students as well as the results by claim and target; each grade level's results included the students' cohort results since Grade 3. *I facilitated a discussion about the facts of these numbers while limiting the teachers' opportunities to make inferences in order to keep our focus strictly on the data as related to expected outcomes and keep the conversation away from teachers' opinions regarding the results. It has been my experience that when a group of teachers is gathered to review student work or testing results, the*

conversation can quickly revert to trying to determine what the student did or did not do in order to get the results being reviewed instead of focusing on ways to improve our own curriculum and instruction. Ultimately, I asked the teachers to determine what their students would need from them this year based on the climate survey results and the SBA results. Then, I pushed the teachers a little further and asked them to identify specific skills as outlined in our Core standards that would need to be addressed at each grade level and then across all three grades in our attempts to improve student results. *By keeping the discourse in the Core standards and in our student results, the group was able to begin making explicit plans for updating the lessons and some of the unit goals as well.*

Following this intentional review of the data, I moved back into the changes that were made to the pacing guides. Although some teachers still had concerns, the group was able to determine it was important that the changes were made and a consensus was reached that it would be possible to abide by the new pacing guide. *The meeting did become contentious at times, but I focused on responding in an overly calm manner and asking follow up questions as needed to make sure I fully understood what was being asked or concerns that were being shared. If I did not have an immediate answer or solution, so I made a note so I could address the need in the future. Then, I explained that I could not promise any quick fixes, but I could promise to continue working with the group until we feel like we got "it" (whatever that would be) right. I knew the meeting was heading in the right direction when teachers started addressing the group to explain why the pacing guide changes might be good for the middle school ELA department. I was honestly thrilled(!) that a few of the educators in the room were*

willing to dive into the new common pacing guide and try it out. These types of meetings do not always include any positive or optimistic remarks, so I definitely counted this as a win! However, I knew our upcoming professional development sessions would be critical to keeping the group engaged in trying to follow the common pacing guide. I also reviewed with the teachers the professional development sessions that would occur throughout the first semester and the focus for each. Following the meeting in "Friday Footnotes" email to all teachers and administrators, I reviewed what was discussed and the decisions that were agreed upon: (1) more time is needed to work collaboratively to horizontally plan for and better align the curriculum across the three middle schools, (2) teachers will follow the 2019-2020 pacing guide, and (3) teachers are given the professional freedom to make changes to the day-to-day curriculum, but the basic tenets of each unit (i.e. genre study and standards) will remain intact as outlined by the pacing guide.

As part of the support I promised to provide for ELA 6 teachers and administrators, I set out to schedule classroom visits specifically to observe entire class periods of ELA 6 teachers at each of the three middle schools. *In our district, classroom visits are typically scheduled so that visitors rotate between classes every 10-15 minutes, but it was important to my change-making process and this study that I was able to remain in a teacher's classroom for the entire class period.* This was a bit of an undertaking because each school preferred to set up the visits in different ways. *This is one of the most difficult parts of being a district-level administrator-- trying to balance the specific ways each individual school functions and trying to do things as simple as sending emails and as complicated as changing the pacing guide in the way that will*

make sense and respect each staff's routines and culture. Trying to set up the class visits took over two weeks and many emails and phone calls to finalize. I am astounded by the amount of back-and-forth communication required to finalize a seemingly routine in-school experience. Ultimately, the process more or less went like this (1) I called each assistant principal responsible for the ELA department at their school to let them know that I wanted to set up full-length classroom visits for their ELA 6 classes, (2) I emailed each school a few dates with open-ended time slots and asked them to check their school calendars for conflicts, (3) once I was able to whittle down one date with each school, we embarked on setting up the time slots. Because my day-to-day responsibilities require that I work with hundreds of staff members at 16 of our schools, it is nearly impossible to dedicate an entire day to any one school. Thankfully, each assistant principal was able to solidify two or three sequential class periods to visit, so I could maximize my time in the ELA 6 classes while at each school. As is always true, everything did not work out exactly as planned, but I was able to visit all three schools and see six ELA 6 teachers' full class periods.

In mid-September, prior to the upcoming classroom visits, ELA 6 teachers from each middle school came together for the first professional development session. The principals and I determined two teachers from each school would attend because of the difficulty in acquiring substitutes in our district. On this first full-day workshop the two teachers from each middle school served as representatives for their respective Grade 6 teams. *Ideally, all sixth-grade teachers would be able to attend, but it really isn't possible to have an entire grade level team out of one building, let alone all three. When opening the session, I began by explaining and reiterating that those in*

attendance were there to not only represent their school, but also to serve as the

teacher leader who would bring back the day's learning and products to the other

members of their team. I also let them know that their principals would be checking in

sometime during the week to see what artifacts they had created during our time

together and to discuss when and how they would be sharing this information with

their whole team. This transparency is critical to our success as an ELA team within

the larger organization. I did not fully explain that I had given the principals questions

stems; that could only serve to degrade the principals and their intentions. I did want

the teachers to know, though, that the principals and I were in contact about the

intended outcomes of the day's professional learning and it is important that they be

ready to take on the day knowing they would be responsible for sharing their learning

with their colleagues. I thanked them for taking on such an important role in an effort

to show my appreciation for the important work they would do during our time

together while reinforcing the importance of both their individual growth and the

group's growth (Turner et al., 2009). This first full-day workshop focused on

understanding the intricacies of the ELA Core standards, identifying and using the

most effective instructional strategies to ensure mastery of certain skills as aligned to

the Core standards, and ensuring instruction and learning activities are focused on

facilitating students' abilities to transfer their learning to other subject areas and to their

lives outside of school. In meeting these objectives, the session was grounded in the

curriculum and resources for the newly re-ordered *Unit 2: Studying Characters and*

Stories. Again, the unit was not new, but it had been moved up to earlier in the school

year from unit 4 to unit 2 (of 6 total units). About two weeks after this session, I

emailed teachers a feedback survey regarding the professional development session and how they may have used what they learned with their peers and in their own classrooms (see Appendix F).

Of the six teachers who attended the workshop, five completed the feedback survey. Three teach both on-level ELA 6 classes and Advanced ELA 6 classes and two teach only ELA 6 classes. One teacher from School A shared that she chose to attend this workshop because her principal "is pushing for better test results," one teacher from School B chose to attend because she wanted to be able to hear the information first-hand, another teacher from School B chose to attend because she "[tries] to take advantage of any professional development opportunities that are offered" in order to grow as an educator, and the final two teachers, one from School A and one from School C, cited specific reasons which aligned to the session description as to how they chose to attend this session. Unlike the other teachers, both teachers from School B shared that the portion of the workshop that focused on an overview of the tenets of the workshop instructional model was repetitive and unnecessary because they had both received prior training and have an understanding of this subject matter. Interestingly, all three schools have previously worked with the professional development consultants for our workshop model materials, but only teachers from this one school shared concern for having repeated this information.

However, through unscheduled and informal classroom visits in all of our schools (K-12), I have noticed that in all of the middle school classrooms, I very rarely see any components of the workshop model. If I schedule my classroom visits ahead of time, then I am more likely to see teachers attempting to work within the workshop

instructional model, but there are still clear weaknesses in the teachers' abilities to

facilitate this type of classroom learning environment. All of this tells me that teachers

not regularly incorporating the workshop model. This is why I did not devote an

extended amount of time to ensuring teachers have truly internalized how we use this

model in our district, but I did ensure that our professional learning session included a

quick overview of the tenets of this instructional model. Based on the survey feedback

from teachers at School B, I am beginning to think the teachers are intentionally

choosing not use the Workshop Instructional Model. I wonder why that is? What

instructional model are they using instead? These are questions I will need to pursue.

In any case, I will continue to use this feedback as I plan future learning sessions along

with several of the teachers' requests for more information about the alignment of our

materials to the Core standards and the expectations of the SBA and more support for

executing the new common pacing guide.

Thankfully, all five teachers found at least something from the professional

learning session useful or relevant to their practice, said they would recommend the

session to their peers, and they did or would be sharing the materials and teaching ideas

they gained from the session, all of which research has shown are positive indicators of

continued in-class success for teachers and students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009;

Masuda et al., 2012).

Before conducting the classroom visits in October, I shared with teachers and

administrators the Middle School ELA: The Workshop Model "Look-Fors" document

(see Appendix G) I created which outlines the structure of the Workshop Instructional

Model, which was adopted by our district nearly seven years ago. This document served

to consolidate the components of the Workshop Instructional Model one document; no new or changed information was added. However, by consolidating this information to one sheet of paper, I was able to ensure clear and consistent messaging to teachers, principals, assistant principals and my supervisor about the expectations for lesson delivery and in-class interactions when using the Workshop Instructional Model. *Another important reason for developing the "Look-Fors" document was to create an observational protocol (Creswell, 2014) which could also be used by other educators within my organization. To ensure this document and especially the meaning of the document was readily available, widely understood, and used by both teachers and administrators, I shared it with both groups several times in person and electronically. I initially shared the document with the administrators during our August leadership summit meetings which allowed me to review its contents and purpose before sharing it with teachers. I reiterated to both teachers and administrators that the "Look-Fors" were collected from our current curriculum resources and that none of the information was new or changed. I shared and reviewed the document with ELA teachers during an after-school meeting in September which the administrators also attended. The teachers reviewed the document and expressed no concerns with its contents; they agreed that the information was not new and they shared their appreciation for the consolidated format. Closer to the October classroom visits, through "Friday Footnotes" I emailed the document to each school's ELA team and their administrators with a quick note reminding the group that I would be using the it during my visits but, again, none of the information in the document was new or changed. I also posted the document in our learning management system for ease of access, and let the teachers and administrators*

know that in the same "Friday Footnotes" message.

One of the most important things I have learned as an administrator is that messaging matters! The content and the timing, but most importantly how to carefully craft what I need to say and why—especially in print, since tone can be (and often is) misconstrued through email. Also, I have learned that in order to garner a shared understanding, I have to find the balance between saturation and over-saturation. In this instance, I shared this "Look-Fors" document physically twice with principals and once with teachers, I shared it electronically once with teachers and administrators, and I posted it in our district-wide curriculum repository so all educators could access the document whenever they needed to. Now halfway through the school year, the messaging seems to be working. The teachers have now seen me use the document when visiting their classrooms, and I have used it as a teaching tool in our professional development sessions. I was also able to join one of our assistant principals as she conducted her own regularly scheduled walkthroughs and we used the document which allowed her to experience using the document with me as her guide. To continue improving middle school ELA curriculum and instructional structures, I will continue to use and reference the document. Additionally, I will continue in my efforts to join school administrators when they are performing classroom walkthroughs, so I can guide them through using the "Look-Fors" document in an effort to ensure all ELA classrooms at all three middle schools are moving towards providing equitable learning experiences to all our students.

The results of the walkthrough data collection show, as is expected, that teachers are stronger with certain components of the workshop model while they are still growing

the expertise in other components. As shown in the "Look-fors" document, the workshop instructional model has four main components: the mini lesson, independent work time, conferring, and a time for students to share their work and progress. I also added a fifth section for "General Instructional Components" to account for our own district-wide expectations such as posting a learning target that includes language from the ELA Core standards, using our adopted materials and resources, and purposefully differentiating instruction. When conducting my class-long visits, I marked when I saw any of the detailed descriptors for each of the four components and the fifth district-wide expectations section. In the data analysis, I marked a number 1 if I did see the detailed descriptor during my visit and a number 0 if I did not (see Appendix H).

Overall, the majority of ELA 6 teachers I observed were abiding by our district-wide expectations and adequately executed the independent work component of the workshop model. In reviewing each of the 25 detailed descriptors, only two were present 100% of the time: *Anchor charts are present in the classroom and visible to students* and *Students have reader/writer journal/folder/portfolio*. There were also two detailed descriptors not present at all: *In reviewing a student product, teacher functions as a coach and provides specific scaffolds to improve student's skill application in reading/ writing. -OR- Teacher and student engage in interactive reading/ writing or guided reading/ writing.* and *Students set/re-visit reading/ writing goals.* In comparison to the September professional learning feedback survey results, many of the data points collected through the Middle School ELA: The Workshop Model "Look-Fors" document are incongruent with School B's teacher perceptions regarding their own expertise in teaching and facilitating learning through the workshop model. *During the*

mini lesson, none of the three teachers from School B, one of which also attended the September professional learning session, incorporated the following six details of the workshop model: (1) Teacher communicates specific observable and measurable criteria for student success today., (2) Students use content-specific language., (3) Teacher ends the mini lesson by directing students to apply today's skill and strategy in their own reading/ writing., (4) In reviewing a student product, teacher functions as a coach and provides specific scaffolds to improve student's skill application in reading/ writing. -OR- Teacher and student engage in interactive reading/ writing or guided reading/ writing., (5)Students set/re-visit reading/ writing goals. or (6) Learning outcome/target is clearly aligned to and uses the academic language from CORE ELA Standard/s. Furthermore, only one of the same teachers from School B incorporated differentiated instruction and the three stages of the gradual release of responsibility model during the mini lesson, and this teacher did not attend the September professional learning workshop.

I know I have to find a way to connect to the teachers at school B and involve them in this second order, philosophical change (Fouts, 2003), but it is important to understand just how difficult it can be to facilitate a change in teacher practice. In my experience, teaching is unlike many other professions. For teachers, how they do their job and how successful they are in their practice is as much a part of their psyche as is their age or eye color. As educators, our entire being is teaching, so changes to teaching and learning practices are more complex than, "It was X, and now it needs to be Y" particularly at School B where SBA scores are consistently the highest in the district. It has proven difficult to help teachers at School B change their practices in

order to teach all students and especially those students who are struggling to do well.

During the full-length classroom visits and a few other school visits, I was also able to meet with teachers and administrators to talk about their experiences with our curriculum both this year and in years prior. *It was during these mostly unstructured discussions that I set out to ask a few standard questions: Do you know how the curriculum that is in Aspen came about? Where do you get most of your lesson planning resources? and Do you feel like you have what you need in your classroom to incorporate the Workshop Model? Otherwise, though, I let the conversation go where it needed to go in an effort to gain a more complete understanding of our current curriculum, how the schools do or do not interact horizontally and vertically with the curriculum, and the teachers' needs. As Forsey (2012) suggests, I wanted to transition the power over to the teacher or administrator, so I intentionally entered into the discussions with a sense of naiveté and tried to convey myself as "tabula rasa" with regard to our curriculum development process, curriculum documents, learning management systems, professional development, and anything else specific to our district and our department. I never countered with any indication that I had already heard or seen anything the interviewee was explaining.*

It was through these discussions, or oral narratives, that I was able to learn about the history of our curriculum and the teachers' and administrators' feelings and beliefs about our curriculum and the humanities department as a whole. For example, I met with two teachers who regularly collaborate to plan their daily lessons and intended unit learning outcomes, one of which also attended the September professional development day. Through our interactions during this meeting and through her body

language, I could see one of the teachers become physically agitated when explaining why she believes that all sixth-grade students need to begin the year with a multi-week unit on "how to be a sixth-grader." This unit was omitted in our new common pacing guide, and she was adamant that the students do not come to sixth-grade ready to read for extended periods of time on their own and that this unit helps her train the students to do so. Her teacher counterpart mostly sat silently and sometimes nodded in agreement. In the same meeting, though, both of the teachers expressed sincere and immediate concern that they never have enough time to teach all of the units in the school year, let alone before the SBA. I was perplexed. In the coming months, I would need to find a way to help the teachers better understand the types of decisions that have to be made in order create a viable curriculum, such as reprioritizing units and lessons based on student needs (Marzano, 2003).

Throughout our interactions, I took notes and asked versions of "Can you tell me more about that?" many times. All the while, I was repeating in my head "tabula rasa, tabula rasa" even though many, many *times I wanted to interject and further explain my thoughts about topics they were broaching and problems they were experiencing. For instance, I desperately wanted to explain why we cannot stop our ELA instruction for* weeks *to focus solely on "how to be a successful sixth-grader," but that we could integrate executive functioning skills into our ELA instruction and in doing so the teachers could also find more time to ensure they have taught the students to mastery both before the SBA and the end of the school year. I did, however, make a mental note and a written note to find a way to work through this pacing dilemma and executive functioning need in an upcoming professional learning session since this topic is clearly*

52

directly related to the teachers' work and working through the problem will benefit both

the teachers and the students (Masuda et al., 2012).

The next professional learning day was a district-wide release day in November.

By this time, I had visited the six ELA 6 classrooms and emailed each teacher to thank

them for welcoming me into their classroom and including a statement of praise in

relation to something I observed in their classroom. This district-wide release day is

designed as a large choice-based conference. All 1,200 educators and support staff in

the district including teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, and administrators came

together at our high school to self-select sessions that run concurrently all day. Sessions

are led by outside experts as well as our own teacher experts. Time is also scheduled for

horizontal and vertical content-area teams to meet, collaborate and plan in response to

current in-class needs. For this November district-wide day, ELA 6 teachers had a

choice of four sessions in the morning in addition to a dedicated planning time, and in

the afternoon they were required to attend a two-hour technology training for a new

platform being integrated at the middle schools. The majority of the ELA 6 teachers

chose to attend the horizontal planning time as was expected because several had

expressed that the posted curriculum and materials for the next unit of instruction were

seriously lacking, especially for the writing components. Also tied to this unit is a

district-wide writing benchmark assessment, so the time to best prepare for this unit and

daily lessons was critical to their successful implementation.

Although the planning time was specifically provided in the day's conference

schedule, it was unstructured. Teachers were provided a common time and place to

meet, but outside of the session title and description which outlined that the time was

being provided to plan for the upcoming *Reading and Writing Nonfiction* unit, teachers were self-leading the session. *Unfortunately, instead of focusing on planning for the upcoming unit and benchmark assessment, the ELA 6 teachers spent the time redesigning the 2019-2020 pacing guide in preparation for the 2020-2021 school year. Clearly, the teachers involved felt this was an important task, but how did they determine it was more important than planning for their upcoming unit of instruction?* After this conference date, many of the ELA 6 teachers began to express concerns that their students were unprepared for the writing benchmark exam that was scheduled to occur at the end of this unit. *I was initially angry and extremely disheartened that the teachers' chose to redesign the pacing guide instead of planning for the upcoming unit and assessment, especially since the entire group had agreed that no changes would be made to the pacing guide this year. I also couldn't help but wonder* why *they made this particular choice. They had asked for time to plan for the next unit, and I gave it to them. Not only did I schedule the time for them, typically these types of planning sessions are limited to 90 minutes on our conference days, but for this date and in light of our mutual agreement to work through the pacing guide this year, I scheduled the planning session for two and a half uninterrupted hours. And for two and half uninterrupted hours, they did not even begin to work on planning for the upcoming unit or benchmark writing assessment. I just could not make sense of how this happened.*

A few days later I emailed the middle school principals to request their continued support regarding the agreements which were made at the September follow-up meeting before communicating the postponement of our upcoming December

professional development day (see Appendix I). The principals met and discussed what had occurred and emailed me back stating, "you have our support in sending [a] message to the 6th grade ELA teachers. All three schools had admin presence at the September meeting and heard the message that we are not changing the curriculum this year" which was greatly appreciated. After several rewrites, I was able to craft a clear message to the ELA 6 teachers (see Appendix J).

I ultimately decided to postpone our regularly scheduled professional development session that was to be held in early December to allow for more instructional time for teachers and students. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee I will be able to reschedule the session due to each school's and the consultant's schedule constraints, and research has shown that teachers need close to 50 hours of quality professional development in order to improve their skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Jaquith et al., 2010). Additionally, because the professional development sessions are an important part of my plan to improve our curriculum and build trust and relationships, this was a very difficult decision to make.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Summary of Findings

I began this record of study by identifying the varied and competing responsibilities of curriculum, instruction, and assessment district-level administrators. Findings from this narrative study give insight into the realities of one of those multi-faceted responsibilities as a CIA administrator attempts to enact curricular change across multiple middle schools in one Northeastern school district. The purpose of this study was to provide a first-hand account of how one CIA administrator tries to abide by prior findings about systems change and the role of curriculum within successful systems while also recounting the typically unwritten realities involved in making and hopefully sustaining change.

In this qualitative narrative, I set out to describe my experience navigating how and under what circumstances a district-wide curriculum change occurs in multiple middle schools across one school system. As framed by Bruner (1996) and other constructivists, important to my story is the cultural construct of schools and district-wide systems, sharing authority, and the collaborative production of curriculum works. Through my two-part narrative, I have described and analyzed the intricacies of my coordination efforts to improve the curriculum in my district's ELA 6 classes and my interactions with teachers and school-based administrators during the change process.

By telling my story in two parts, the explanatory story commonly shared publicly and with district stakeholder groups and through my personal narrative, I have attempted to create a simulated think-space where other CIA administrators may connect to my

realities and interpret their own when trying to make changes across multiple schools in their own organizations. To increase the objectivity of my narrative, I used triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to collect other sources of data to support my narrative including the district's posted curriculum documents and materials, communication records with teachers and administrators, and observations of everyday teaching and learning in my organization.

In analyzing my own story and experiences enacting change within my organization, I have summarized my experience navigating how and under what circumstances a district-wide curriculum change occurs by outlining the following findings:

1. Keep students and teachers, in that order, at the center of everything you do.

2. Ensure all curriculum and instruction materials, practices, expectations, and messages are aligned to the overarching teaching and learning goals for your organization.

3. When making a change:

    a. Develop the end goal, make a plausible plan, and stay the course.

    b. Curate support by actively building relationships.

    c. Inquire, respectfully and genuinely, about current and past practices.

4. Make the most of every minute with teachers and administrators within your organization.

Important to this record of study, I have also included artifacts to support my narrative in the appendices. Oftentimes one of the hardest parts of being an administrator and not having a sounding board or team of colleagues is developing

your communication tools and department documents. Sharing my examples will perhaps serve some procedural purpose to other CIA administrators. Below I expound upon my findings.

Two Priorities

Always keep students and teachers, in that order, at the center of everything you do. I faced several internal and some external conflicts throughout my story. In these times of conflict, I focused my thinking and decision-making on ensuring the outcome would be best for all of our students. After that level of thought, I then questioned my decisions to ensure the outcome would also be best for our teachers. For example, although all three middle school principals supported the required use of the updated pacing guide, not all teachers agreed. As I stood in front of these educators at our after school meeting, I took a brief moment to weigh the options. I could concede to those educators who contested the use of the new pacing guide or I could stay resolute in the required use of the guide. I asked myself, "Which of these decisions would ensure equitable academic experiences for all students within our school system?" The required use of the guide. Then, I asked myself, "Which of these decisions would ensure equitable access to teaching and learning resources and materials for all middle school teachers within our school system?" The required use of the guide. So, the decision was made. I stayed resolute in requiring the use of the newly updated pacing guide.

In consistently keeping students and teachers, in that order, at the center of all decision-making, I am better able to champion choices I have made and defend my decisions when challenged. Furthermore, when confronted with educators who resist or who are unsure of engaging in change, like at the September follow-up meeting, I

intentionally focus further discussion on the same two questions: What is best for our students? Then, what would be best for our teachers? In leading discussions this way, I am attempting to further second order, ideological changes in practice (Fouts, 2003).

Clear Messages

Ensure all curriculum and instruction materials, practices, expectations, and messages are aligned to the overarching teaching and learning goals for your organization. My district's teaching and learning goals are outlined in BOE Policy 6140 (see Appendix A). However, the current state of the ELA 6 curriculum is not aligned to the expectations laid out in the policy and our curricular materials are incomplete. Over the years, the disjointed messages and materials have proven detrimental to the culture of our teaching and learning organization.

Throughout my attempts to enact curricular change across multiple middle schools in this school district, I intentionally focused on improving the communication between and across my office, the ELA 6 educators, and administrators. I incorporated the use of Friday Footnotes (see Appendix E). I talked with teachers and administrators in low-risk settings, I provided experiences for teachers to collaborate and explore why a curricular change is necessary in our organization, and I brought teachers and administrators into the discussion about past and current practices as we continue to plan for our future curriculum creation and implementation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Harden, 2001; Rawle et al., 2017).

I also initiated the beginning stages of improving our curriculum and instruction materials and practices by publishing an updated pacing guide focused on moving us

closer to a guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003). Additionally, I planned for and provided targeted professional development to support teachers as they worked towards mastering the intricacies of the ELA Core standards, identifying and using the most effective instructional strategies as aligned to the Core standards, and ensuring instruction and learning activities are focused on facilitating students' abilities to transfer their learning to other subject areas and to their lives outside of school. Teachers were also provided intentional time for horizontal planning.

To further support teachers as the implemented the updated pacing guide and administrators as they supported the implementation, I created the Middle School ELA: The Workshop Model "Look-Fors" document (see Appendix G) which consolidated the components of the Workshop Instructional Model as well as our district-wide usage expectations into a single document. By sharing the document several times to teachers and administrators and by using the document regularly, I was able to provide a clear and consistent message about the expectations for lesson delivery as outlined in the updated pacing guide. Prior to using the document in classrooms, teachers were provided the opportunity to review its contents, provide feedback, and request changes. Although the teachers expressed no concerns, involving them in the use of the document gave me the chance to foster my genuine openness to their ideas (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Forsey, 2012).

One important lesson I learned is that no matter how specific and thorough I am when crafting and delivering messages, sometimes contexts or perceptions outside of my control impede my intended outcomes. For example, although my department's expectations for professional learning are clearly disseminated across the district, our

message was thwarted this year with the cancellation and consolidation of our back-to-school conference. Furthermore, although I pay special attention to bringing all the right people to the table to determine the importance of a message and ensure it is well-received, compliance to the message is just not guaranteed. In my story, throughout the creation of and preparation for presenting the updated pacing guide and requiring its usage, I met with principals and teachers several times. Even still, the majority of the ELA 6 teachers chose to spend time that was reserved for and dedicated to the horizontal planning of an upcoming unit to instead create another pacing guide that they proposed be used in the following school year. Arguably, the ELA 6 teachers were collaborating on a project they believed to be most important at the time, but in doing so, they were ultimately unprepared to teach an upcoming unit in the current school year.

Enacting Change

As an experienced district-level administrator and classroom teacher, I have previously experienced change and led change in several settings. I have found, as Fullan (2006) explains that the key to change is motivation. People do not change their actions or practices unless they are motivated, intrinsically or extrinsically, to do so. Interestingly, Fullan points out that "motivation cannot be achieved in the short run" (p. 8), instead he posits that it could take one to two years to develop motivation across an organization. In the era of school improvement, Fullan's theory seems unrealistic, yet critical to the success of enacting change. He also points out that the combination of several factors incites the motivation to change, such as a moral purpose, the capacity to change, the necessary resources, as well as collegial and administrator support. In analyzing my narrative in this record of study, I identified three ways in which I

intentionally attempted to enact change within my department. Although I chose these three theories of action because of my past experiences in attempting and leading change, my actions are comprised of some of the factors Fullan has identified in his research.

Develop the end goal, make a plausible plan, and stay the course. To ensure I connected my change strategies to my desired outcome (Fullen, 2006), I articulated the end goal first. As explained in this record of study, the end goal is to eventually create a district-wide comprehensive ELA 6 curriculum that will ensure equitable access to teaching and learning resources and materials for all middle school teachers and students in our school district. Then, I worked backward to determine the incremental changes that would need to occur and in what order to ultimately reach our goal (see Appendix B). After my initial review of curriculum and assessment documents, assessment results, and instructional practices, the first step in this long term plan was to facilitate an analysis of the Connecticut Core ELA standards and an alignment of those standards in our curriculum documents. The next step is that which has been conveyed in this record of study, to create and implement a revised pacing guide while also building trust and providing support to teachers and administrators.

In maintaining a plausible plan to enact change, although the revised pacing guide did re-order some of the ELA 6 units, the content for each unit and the adopted resources remained the same and the timing structure was updated to better support the actual amount of instructional time teachers most likely have and each unit is now allotted a number of classroom blocks, extra blocks have been added to allow for lost instructional time, and blocks are allocated for assessment administrations. The re-

ordering of some units and the amount of time allotted for each unit is based on the most recent SBA results and any new skills that occur in Grade 6 as outlined by the Connecticut Core Standards.

Also important to my long term plan is committing to the plan, even when confronted or challenged. The role of administrator certainly includes some authority over others. However, to cultivate second order, ideological changes in practice (Fouts, 2003), authority must be shared among the members of a group, and the importance of jointly producing works through a meaningful division of labor (Bruner, 1996) must not be undervalued.

Our group is still in the beginning stages of developing a community which strives to capitalize on each individual's strengths in order to improve the outcomes for the group as a whole, and because of that I have found myself making some accommodations while balancing my commitment to the plan I developed. For example, even though the ELA 6 teachers did not horizontally plan for an upcoming unit when the time was provided, I rescheduled an upcoming professional learning and planning day in response to their concerns that missing a day of class would be detrimental to their students' success on an upcoming exam. By asking myself what would be best for our students and then what would be best for our teachers, I decided it was more important to support the teachers' immediate in-class needs and try to conduct this previously scheduled professional learning and planning day on a different date in the spring semester.

Curate support by actively building relationships. I knew that in every interaction and with every decision, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant, I

had to exude my willingness and desire to work with and support teachers as they focused on perfecting their teaching craft. I quickly discovered negative perceptions of district-level administrators in this organization, and I began to pinpoint the valid reasons for this disregard such as a lack of curriculum and teaching resources as well as no clear expectations or vision for what we teach and why. I decided that by building a better curriculum and providing more immediate and effective support, I could begin to change the negative views teachers and administrators had towards "district office," but it would be an ambitious process.

As Fullan (2006) explains, although it could take an extended amount of time to reach the final goal, a district-wide comprehension curriculum for ELA 6, it is important to incite motivation within our group if we are ever to make the change at all. Without a foundation built on trust and mutual respect, I do not believe it is possible to inspire the motivation or foster the capacity to change as is necessary to accomplish the monumental task of designing a new curriculum and creating structures to ensure all students are receiving similar access to the expectations outlined in the ELA Core learning standards (Adams, 2013; Kondakci et al., 2017). However, by working together as a community of learners and capitalizing on the group's varied experiences and expertise (Bruner, 1996; Frase et al., 2000; Harden, 2001; Rawle et al., 2017), we could begin to build trust and mutual respect and go on to develop a comprehensive curriculum that will improve student access to equitable learning experiences as well as improve SBA ELA scores in not only Grade 6, but also in Grades 7 and 8.

I also found that through building relationships with other educators and administrators, I was able to curate help for me and my cause, improving our curriculum

in order to improve student outcomes. Within our organization I do not have and will not have assistance in the form of a specialist or coach, but because the role of K-12 administrator for two core subject areas is quite the sizable task, if I am ever to enact and support change, I have to find assistance in other, creative ways. Luckily, at this time, I have the funding to hire an outside consultant with a background in ELA and the curriculum resources we currently use. However, I believe it is important that our organization and specifically my department focuses on "growing our own" curriculum and instruction experts. Throughout my story, I shared that I was able to garner support for curricular change from the middle school principals as well as some of the ELA teachers. It is through this collegial and administrator support that principals have been able to support teachers and teachers have been able to support their peers through this change process. Additionally, with the professional learning and coaching support provided by our outside consultant, I have been able to coordinate a robust system of support as we engage in changing our curricular practices.

Be respectfully and genuinely inquisitive of current and past practices. Then, build from the good and let go of those things that no longer serve the organization. Upon my arrival to this organization and still today, I intentionally take steps to build trust by asking questions, facilitating discussions, and actively listening. The teachers, administrators, and I talk about the current curriculum, the prior curriculum, the adopted resources and materials, the resources and materials teachers have curated and created, our assessment practices as a department and the assessment practices of individual schools and teachers, the professional development opportunities teachers have been able to attend and the types they want to attend, how they access the

curriculum used on a daily basis, where the district curriculum is stored, any holes or gaps they see in our curriculum or assessments, what they would like to see in future curriculum creation ventures, and sometimes our professional histories. Throughout these discussions I am careful to limit my input and the sharing of my thoughts or perspectives in effort to promote feelings of comfort and ease (Bernard, 2011). Also, by limiting my inclination to formulate a response or a solution, I am better able to actively listen and ruminate on what I am hearing from teachers and administrators in our organization.

A pivotal conflict I faced in my story is an ongoing difference of beliefs between me and my supervisor. She and I differ in our conceptualization of curriculum. I consider a comprehensive curriculum as one which includes teacher-created components such as a scope and sequence, unit outlines aligned to standards and stated learning objectives, exemplar lessons and materials, and connections or links to adopted resources. However, my supervisor considers what we currently have posted for teachers to follow as a comprehensive curriculum. Currently, we have one document per unit which contains a collection of information such as all or almost all of the middle school ELA standards, bulleted lists of what students will know and do as copied from adopted resources, and lists of or hyperlinked documents to adopted resources. I do not agree that our current curriculum is guaranteed or viable (Marzano, 2003) as it does not specifically outline what should be taught, when it should be taught, and to what extent it should be taught. Ultimately, our curriculum has not provided equitable academic experiences for all students within our school system. This conflict creates a delicate situation, and her supposition is that because I believe we need to change our

curriculum, I am not honoring curricular work that has been completed in the past. Still, I believe that our current curriculum no longer serves our organization, as proven by my analysis of assessment data, curriculum documents and materials, and classroom observations, as well as through my discussions with teachers and administrators. I am, however, finding it difficult to convey that I want to build from what is good, such as the bulleted lists of what students will know and do, and let go of those things that no longer serve the organization, such as the lack of a specific, sequential outline what will be taught and to what extent.

Time

Time is always an issue, so it is important to capitalize on every minute by making sure every meeting, every message, and every product is intentionally getting you closer to your end goal. As any educator will tell you, one thing that would ease their stress and make them better teachers is time. Time to plan, time to meet, time to create, time to grade, and even time to just think deeply about what they need and what their students need. When considering how I would enact curricular change within my organization, I knew I had to find ways to capitalize on what little time we could amass. Perhaps the most important coordination effort I made was in planning for professional development to be delivered by an outside consultant in the form of workshops, structured planning, and classroom visits. To maximize the time teachers will be able to work with this consultant, I communicate clearly what I need from her, and we plan each session to align to the long term goal of creating common curricular structures across all three middle schools to ensure equitable student learning experiences for all of our students. A common theme in each of the sessions

is structured time to lead teachers through the collaborative planning of integrated reading and writing units and lessons using our adopted resources and by creating resources that may be needed to most effectively teach our students. Another way that I have tried to maximize time is to make sure the teachers who attend each session take what was discussed and created back to their colleagues. The principals help me do this by asking the teachers about the resources they created and when they will review them with their team.

As a district-level administrator, I too am always in search of more time. When scheduling classroom visits for this record of study, I was modifying my organization's typical procedure. Typically, in our district, classroom visits are scheduled in intervals of 10-15 minutes so that the visitor can observe several classrooms in a short amount of time, most likely 60-90 minutes. However, in order to maximize my time using my observational protocol, the Middle School ELA: The Workshop Model "Look-Fors" document (see Appendix G), I needed to schedule multiple classroom visits that would entail joining a teacher's class in its entirety. In attempting to set up these class visits, I spent more than two weeks crafting and fielding emails and phone calls to finalize a schedule at each of the three schools. The preparation time paid off, though, as each assistant principal was able to schedule sequential visits, so I could maximize my time in each of the classes while at each school.

In another instance of maximizing time, towards the end of my study, an assistant principal responsible for the ELA department at her school asked that I join her to visit classrooms. She had already scheduled the date and times, but she was hoping I might be able to join her. This was not a scheduled event for me or for this record of study, but

I chose to capitalize on her invitation. In doing so, I was able to model for her how to use the Middle School ELA: The Workshop Model "Look-Fors" document (see Appendix G) as we visited classes, and the teachers were able to witness our use of the document.

Implications for Practice

This study provides some considerations for school and district leaders. As Honig et al. (2010) show, district-level administrators positively impact teacher and student outcomes when they are able to work in partnership with school leaders. However, as is often the case, when CIA administrators are viewed as outsiders by school staff and administrators, curriculum and instruction improvement becomes exceedingly more difficult. For this type of system-wide change to occur both school and district leadership must commit to engaging in the work together and symbiotically respect each other's contribution to the improvement process. It took two school years, but I felt I was finally able to make marginal relationship gains with the middle school principals since they agreed to support the change I was beginning to initiate in the 2019-2020 school year. Further research into district systems that more quickly facilitate these commingled working relationships could prove very beneficial to teacher and student outcomes.

This study also demonstrates a need to provide more professional learning opportunities for CIA administrators. In some states, no administrator certificate is required for CIA administrators, and for those states who do require an administrator certificate the training and coursework is focused on developing school-based leaders and only includes one or two classes focused curriculum and instructional leadership,

development, and improvement. For an educator wanting to pursue CIA administrator roles, these courses provide only cursory information. Although there are national and regional organizations for curriculum supervisors, attendance at these worthwhile professional improvement conferences and meetings is not always possible due to budget constraints. Future research and the development of more appropriate training and coursework for educators interested in pursuing CIA administration is needed.

Recommendations

Through this record of study, I shared my personal story. If I am honest, a part of me is concerned that someone in my organization will read this narrative and I could suffer consequences. It is commonly known, although not written, that administrators and teacher leaders are not to discuss in-house district issues with outsiders. Conversely, if the brain is both computational and social and if learning is an individual journey and a social process (Bruner, 1996), then why do educational leaders mollify or omit their practitioner problems? Perhaps though telling my own story, others will too. Maybe as a professional domain, we could even start telling our stories to each other, resulting in improved competencies and practices throughout the field of education.

In the age of accountability, the success or failure of a teacher is often measured by her standardized testing results. For the school district in this study, standardized testing results are comparatively and consistently high, but if we are to ensure all of our students are learning and growing then we must measure success in other ways. For example, in School B, SBA scores are always the highest in our district and in 2018-2019 only 13% or 38 Grade 6 students scored below standard for ELA assessment.

However, when reviewing scores for one ELA 6 teacher at School B, I find that 32% of students in one of her classes scored below standard. In other words, almost one-third of the students in this class did "pass" the state's end-of-year assessment.

Although celebrating the 87% of Grade 6 students and their teachers at School B who met or exceeded grade level expectations as measured by the SBA is important and justified, I argue that it is just as important to investigate why the other 38 students were not able to meet grade level expectations. In this study and as the CIA administrator responsible for developing, evaluating, and coordinating the implementation of district-wide curriculum and assessments, I have focused on the importance of developing a cohesive, comprehensive curriculum in ensuring equitable academic experiences for all students within our school system. If my success as an educator were judged as being only as strong as my lowest my test scores, how would my perspective change? In what would I change my everyday planning and practices? It is in this space that I believe curricular structures become critical.

Closing Thoughts

This story continues. As I finalize this record of study, our organization is now into the second semester. I have conducted more in-class visits with and without our consultant and school administrators. Three professional development days are scheduled to occur over the next few months, and I am already well into planning the dates and agendas for our continued curriculum development into the 2020-2021 school year. It will take a few years to see if my coordinated efforts to develop a comprehensive curriculum system will improve ELA SBA scores (Frase et al., 2000; Harden, 2001; Rawle et al., 2017), but I do think we are still headed in the right

direction. I will continue to find ways to foster teachers' and administrators' belief that any child at any age can be taught any subject, with the use of a structured curriculum connected to the underlying principles of the subject matter that provides opportunities for *all* students to apply and transfer new knowledge will better ensure equitable academic experiences for all of our students. I look forward to continuing this curriculum improvement journey within my organization.

Through my story, I hope other CIA administrators find they are better able to make sense of and articulate their personal realities into stories. Although each of our intricate realities will vary, it is through narrative storytelling that practitioners are able to focus on the lived experiences of educators in order to depict the realities of schooling. In practice, doctors call on their scientific knowledge, their own professional experiences, and a patient's health history, current state, and immediate needs in order to treat them. The same is true for educators. In practice, educators refer to the science of teaching and learning, their own professional experiences, and each individual student's academic and personal history, current state, and immediate needs. In both instances, the numbers are important, but so is the story. And, in lieu of direct observations and in person discussions, it is through the educator's story that the art of leading and teaching is uncovered.

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BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6140

Curriculum 6140
Page 1

The *Mission* of the____Public Schools is to educate all students to the highest levels of academic achievement; to enable them to reach and expand their potential; and to prepare them to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative and compassionate members of society.

The District shall develop and implement an excellent, research-based curriculum that is designed to maximize student learning. Curriculum include vertically and horizontally aligned components that have specific and measurable student learning outcomes (knowledge and skills), assessments and suggested learning experiences and/or instruction strategies. Curriculum is dynamic, student centered and adaptive to the changing needs of all learners.

Curriculum Grade Level Expectations will be:

- consistent for all students across the District; content-rich and important to learn; rigorous, specific and measurable;
- simply and clearly worded;
- aligned with state and national curriculum frameworks and standards; aligned with Board goals, objectives and funding;
- prioritized and selected giving consideration to instructional time constraints; made available to parents;
- adapted to the differing learning needs and abilities of students and subgroups; inclusive of a plan for the integration of technology;

In accordance with state statutes, the prescribed course of study shall include at least the following subject matter:
1. The arts, which may include, but is not limited to dance, music, art and theater;
2. Career education;
3. Family and Consumer Science;
4. Health and safety, including, but not limited to, human growth and development; nutrition; first aid; disease prevention; community and consumer health, physical, mental and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, and safety and accident prevention;
5. Language arts, including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling;
6. Mathematics;
7. Physical education;
8. Science;
9. Social studies, including, but not limited to, citizenship, economics, geography, government and history;
10. At least on the secondary level, one or more World Languages and Career and Technical Education.

The curriculum development/revision process will be conducted by a District Curriculum Committee that has the responsibility to recommend, develop, review, and approve all curriculum for the District and said curriculum shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Education.

The Board of Education has responsibility and authority for the district's curriculum, subject to any limits specified by the State. Teachers shall teach within the approved curricula.
(cf. 6121 Nondiscrimination: Instructional Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
1016b Prescribed courses of study, as amended by PA 08-153.
1016c et seq. re Family life education.
1017 English language to be medium of instruction.
1017 et seq. re Bilingual instruction.
1018 Courses in United States history, government and duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
1018a Contents of textbooks and other general instructional materials.
1018b et seq. re Firearms safety programs.
1019 Effect of alcohol, nicotine or tobacco and drugs to be taught. Training of personnel. Evaluation of programs by alcohol and drug abuse commission and department of education.
1019a et seq. re Substance abuse prevention team.
1024 Course in motor vehicle operation and highway safety.
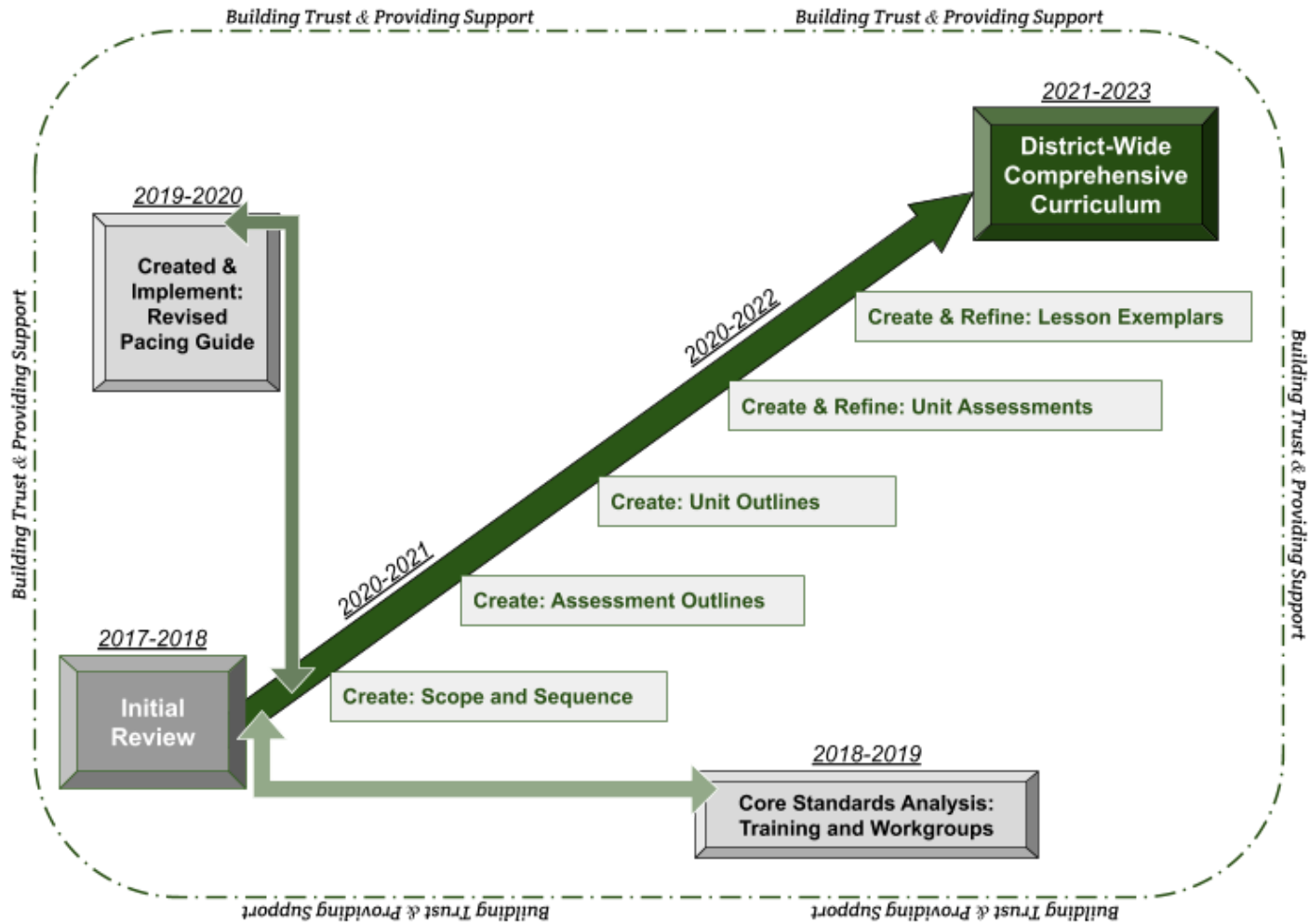1021 et seq. re Vocational education and cooperation with business.
10-220 Duties of boards of education as amended by PA 08-153.
10-221a High School graduation requirements.

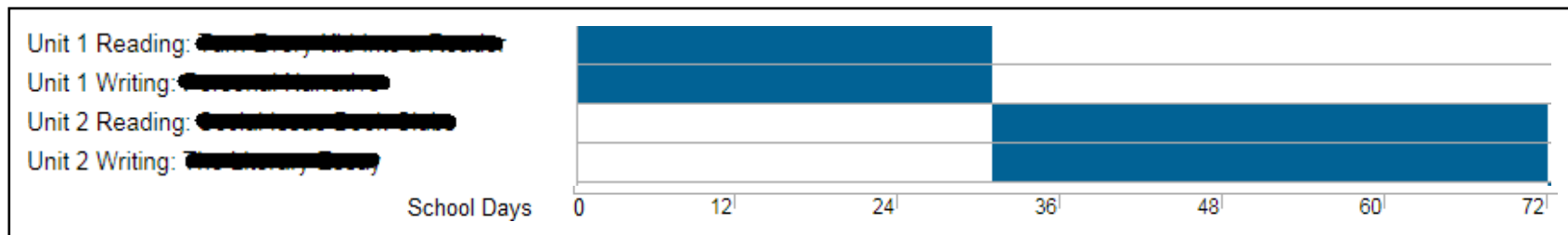**Policy adopted by the_____Board of Education: 4/19/2018**

APPENDIX B

MY LONG TERM CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2017-2023

APPENDIX C

ELA 6 CURRICULUM MAP 2014-2018 (EXCERPT)

APPENDIX D

ELA 6 CURRICULUM MAP 2019-2020 (EXCERPT)

Through your team time and this year's professional development sessions, the materials outlined below will be thoughtfully consolidated and used to correlate reading and writing teaching. By intentionally showing our students the connection between reading and writing, students will become better readers and writers, but also better critical thinkers.
(To review the planning session dates and time, please check in with your Learning Facilitator or check Performance Matters.)

2019-2020 Grade 6 ELA

# of Blocks/Periods	
15	**Unit 1: Personal Narrative** (Writing ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮) (& 2019-2020 ▮▮▮▮▮ attached in Schoology) +Embedded ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ (& 2019-2020 ▮▮▮▮▮▮ attached in Schoology) Reading is focused on student choice and embedded mentor texts.
2	**In-class** **Writing Portfolio Submissions: Personal Narrative** Submission Window: September 23-27 Scores Due: October 4
# of Blocks/Periods	
22-25	**Unit 2: Studying Characters and Stories** Reading: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Character▮▮▮▮, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ (15 sessions) Writing: Literary Essay▮▮▮▮▮, focus on ▮▮▮▮▮ (7 sessions) **Expected Completion Date: October 30**
2	**Pre- & Post- Timed Wriiting Assessments**

FRIDAY FOOTNOTES: AN EXAMPLE

K-12 Humanities

FRIDAY FOOTNOTES

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRESENTERS

THANK YOU to our Humanities 11/6 presenters! **When you see these educators, give 'em a high-five!**

It takes a lot of courage and a lot of preparation to stand up in front of your peers and share your personal classroom experiences!

- ██████████ and ██████████, *Sharpening Your Toolkit for First grade Reading and Writing Workshop*
- ██████████, *Grounding Instruction in the Read Aloud*
- ██████████, *Conferring with Writers: Learning from the TC Summer Writing Institute*
- ██████████ and ██████████, *Levels are a Teacher's Tool, NOT A Child's Label*
- ██████████ *Laying the Groundwork for Station Rotations to Ensure Personalized Learning*
- ██████████, *Aesthetics in the Classroom*
- ██████████, *Language Arts Interventions: Tiers and Tracking Student Progress*
- ██████████, *Integrating Resources in the PBL Classroom*
- ██████████ *SOLE: Self-Organized Learning Environment*
- ██████████ *GRIT: Building Reflection and Resilience in Students*
- ██████████ *Playlists in the Social Studies Classroom*
- ██████████ *Project Based Learning in the Secondary Classroom*
- ██████████ and ██████████, *Graphic Novels in the Humanities*
- ██████████ and ██████████ *The SAT and the Social Studies Classroom*

APPLYING UNIVERSAL DESIGN TO LEARNING IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

SIGN UP BY NOVEMBER 16

Date: Friday, December 7

The workshop is full, but we still have 7 available spots!

This workshop is dedicated to helping you consider the needs of your students with IEPs and planning instruction that ensures they have access to your curriculum. The presenter will show **how UDL can aid ALL teachers in creating engaging entry points for ALL learners**, including students learning English, students from underserved communities, as well as the most sophisticated learners in the classroom.

Substitutes and mileage/parking/train will be funded through the district Humanities budget.

If you would like to commit to attending this session, please complete the following information BY NOVEMBER 16.

SIGN UP: APPLYING UNIVERSAL DESIGN

NEW COLLEGE BOARD SCHOLARSHIPS

The site below gives more information, but here's College Board's opening statement about the news:

The College Board is investing $25 million in a new scholarship program, with students able to earn $5 million in scholarships each year, beginning with the class of 2020.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 ELA 6: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SURVEY RESPONSES

School A

	The grade/s & course/s you teach in 2019-2020	Before attending the session, what factors led you to choose this session?	During the session, did you find anything particularly useful or relevant to your professional practices, especially as related to curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment? Please explain.	At any point, did you begin to question your choice in attending this session or did you find yourself wanting to leave the session? If yes, please explain.	After attending the session, would you recommend this session to your peers? Why or why not?	Did/Will you share materials/ resources/ ideas from the session with other teachers? Please explain.
Teacher 1	ELA 6, Advanced ELA 6	I wanted to know more about how to align the TC curriculum materials, particularly for writing, to CCSS and SBA language.	Yes- towards the end of the session we discussed a strategy/activity called "Ranking" where we (the students) we taught how to rank answers from BEST to WORST. This was one strategy that can help teachers align their instruction and assessment to SBA and CCSS by using the same language and question structure. I also liked time to Speak to my colleagues from other schools about what is working and not working for them.	No- I found the whole day to be engaging and useful.	Yes. I would specifically recommend it to any teacher who wants time to collaborate with colleagues from different schools on the units. I would hope that in future sessions even more strategies for CCSS/SBA alignment using the TC curriculum is offered. I would also like more resources for practice and assessment that use CCSS/SBA question stems and styles. I am already making these myself, but I wish there was a resource I could pull from (I am using commonlit as well).	I did-- I shared all of my notes and reviewed some of the strategies with my colleagues.
Teacher 2	ELA 6, Advanced ELA 6	The idea that this was going to focus around standards because [my principal] is pushing for better test results.	That there are 4 main focuses we should be targeting: Character, Theme, Structure, Author's Purpose	No, but I was hoping it would be a bit more specific to teaching the standards.	Yes because I did walk away with some helpful information/suggestions.	Some but haven't really had time to share in detail.

School B

	The grade/s & course/s you teach in 2019-2020	Before attending the session, what factors led you to choose this session?	During the session, did you find anything particularly useful or relevant to your professional practices, especially as related to curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment? Please explain.	At any point, did you begin to question your choice in attending this session or did you find yourself wanting to leave the session? If yes, please explain.	After attending the session, would you recommend this session to your peers? Why or why not?	Did/Will you share materials/ resources/ ideas from the session with other teachers? Please explain.
Teacher 1	ELA 6	I like being "in the know" and being at these meetings is really the only way to feel connected to what is going on, even with wonderful colleagues who share out information. It's not the same as being present and part of the discussion.	I enjoyed discussing how text complexity changes with the levels. Kerrie is clearly an expert on this and I found it helpful. I thought it gave us a good forum for talking about the units we will teach this year. Many teachers feel unsure about what we are teaching this year, and the months are passing quickly. I especially appreciated the opportunity to talk to representatives from [the other two middle schools] and discover that we are on the same page in many ways. I always enjoyed seeing my middle school colleagues.	I think the overview of workshop was overkill...I have never taught anything but workshop model (I started teaching in Greenwich in 2005 when F&P's workshop model was first introduced.) I really feel that we are "nailing" the workshop model and I do not want to spend any more time discussing the workshop model.	Yes, I would. It offered a forum for some important discussions but I would not recommend repeating the basics of the workshop model.	We did share the materials and discussions we had with our colleagues. We meet as a department on Friday afternoons. Our concern continues to be whether we have enough books for each unit to be able to teach 313 students the same unit at the same time (while being able to offer plenty of choices) and we are still confused about what units to teach at certain points in the year and desperately want more clarification as the year ticks on. Thank you for taking the time to ask for our feedback! We need more training on how to incorporate SBA practice into our daily lessons without saving it all for test prep.
Teacher 2	ELA 6	I try to take advantage of any professional development opportunities that are offered as I believe it is essential for growth in the practice.	The opportunity to discuss the new pacing and scope of units and the collaboration between middle schools was extremely useful and relevant to what we needed now.	Karries portion of the day was a repeat of the PD we received in year one from TC. However it opened the door for us to discuss resources, methodology and best practices across middle schools.	I always encourage my peers to attend relevant PD that will keep us growing and in the know.	Yes I discussed and shared the new nonfiction unit and our plans for how might execute the new scope and sequence.

School C

	The grade/s & course/s you teach in 2019-2020	Before attending the session, what factors led you to choose this session?	During the session, did you find anything particularly useful or relevant to your professional practices, especially as related to curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment? Please explain.	At any point, did you begin to question your choice in attending this session or did you find yourself wanting to leave the session? If yes, please explain.	After attending the session, would you recommend this session to your peers? Why or why not?	Did/Will you share materials/ resources/ ideas from the session with other teachers? Please explain.
Teacher 1	ELA 6, Advanced ELA 6	I chose this session to help me with the Workshop Units	I am using many strategies that we discussed at the meeting. I am still working on my mini lessons and using the sketch book	No.	I think my peers would benefit from this because it helps with the units.	I will be sharing the information from the meeting.
Teacher 2	(no response)	(no response)	(no response)	(no response)	(no response)	(no response)

MIDDLE SCHOOL ELA: THE WORKSHOP MODEL "LOOK-FORS"

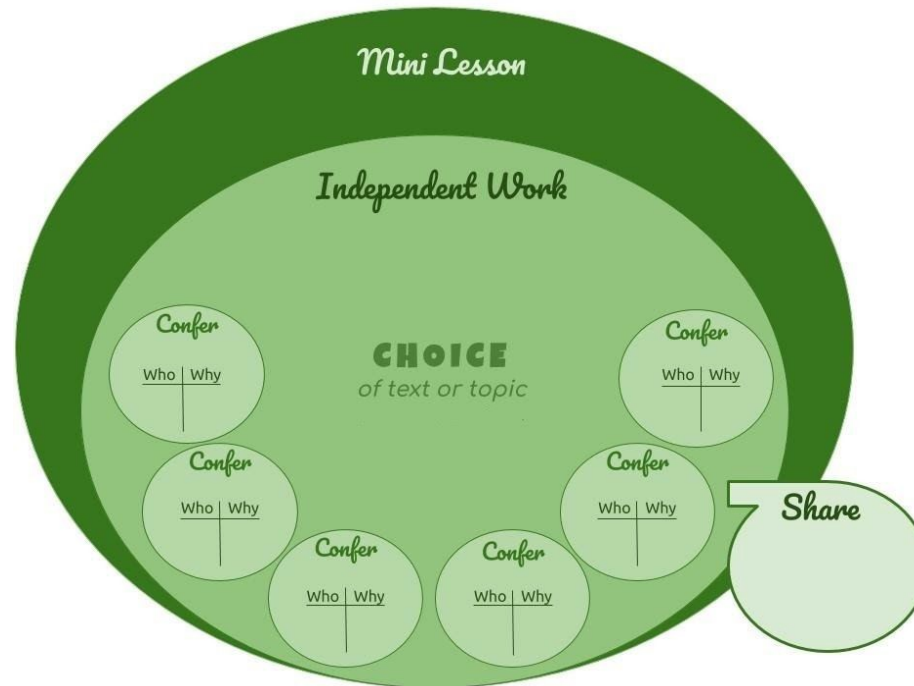Middle School ELA: Teaching and Learning Classroom Walkthrough Form
Targets were created using our curriculum and workshop instructional model goals & expectations.

Teacher_____**School**_____**Grade/Course** 6   7   8   ALP   SpecEd   ESOL **Date** _____

How long is the class period?_____minutes   **How many students are in class today?** _____.

<u>Th</u>e Workshop Instructional Model: Illustrated

Target	Seen today...	Notes/Questions
Mini Lesson (7-10 minutes)		
Learning outcome/target is posted and clearly communicated to students and sets a specific purpose for today's teaching and learning.		
Teacher communicates specific observable and measurable criteria for student success today.		
Teaching is focused and explicit & includes step-by-step strategy instruction.		
Teacher presents content accurately using content-specific language.		
Teacher employs the three stages of the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, We Do, You do) during the mini lesson.		
Students are prompted to discuss and explain at least twice during the mini lesson. *(Students do n<u>ot</u> have to share out to class)*		
Students use content-specific language.		
Teacher ends the mini lesson by directing students to apply today's skill and strategy in their own reading/ writing.		
The mini-lesson was_____minutes.		
Independent Work (30-40 minutes)		
Students work independently, but are able to reach out to peers for support.		
All-to-almost all students are observed applying the mini-lesson strategy in their own reading or writing today.		
Students are given choice in text or topic, but not in skill application.		
Conferring (occurs during Independent Work)		
Teacher works with students in 1:1 - 1:3 configurations.		
Students are prompted to showcase their thinking as well their work.		
In reviewing a student product, teacher functions as a coach and provides specific scaffolds to improve student's skill application in reading/ writing. -OR- Teacher and student engage in interactive, guided, or shared reading/writing.		
Teacher uses content-specific language.		
Students use content-specific language.		

Target	Seen today...	Notes/Questions
Share (5-7 minutes)		
Teacher selects specific students to share their application of today's strategy & skill *(to model exemplars and/or to inspire others)*.		
Students who share are able to explain the "how" and "why" of their reader/writer choices.		
Students use content-specific language.		
Students set/re-visit reading/ writing goals.		

Overall

Target	Seen today...	Notes/Questions
Learning outcome/target is clearly aligned to and uses the academic language from CORE ELA Standard/s.		
Teacher uses TC Units of Study as a resource.		
Overall, teaching and learning activities provide differentiated opportunities for all students to deepen understandings and work toward mastery of new learning.		
Anchor charts are present in the classroom and visible to students.		
Students have a reader/writer journal/folder/portfolio.		

Other Notes or Observations

APPENDIX H

ELA 6 WALKTHROUGH DATA COLLECTION

Pacing Guide: Studying Characters and Stories	10/24	10/24	10/22	10/22	10/22	10/23
Target	A - AR	A - RP	B - CG	B - MG	B - KR	C - RM
Mini Lesson (7-10 minutes)						
Learning outcome/target is posted and clearly communicated to students and sets a specific purpose for today's teaching and learning.	1	1	1	0	0	1
Teacher communicates specific observable and measurable criteria for student success today.	0	1	0	0	0	0
Teaching is focused and explicit & includes strategy instruction.	0	0	1	1	0	0
Teacher presents content accurately using content-specific language.	0	1	1	1	0	1
Teacher employs the three stages of the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, We Do, You do) during the mini lesson.	0	1	0	1	0	0
Students are prompted to discuss and explain at least twice during the mini lesson. (Students do not have to share out to class.)	1	1	1	1	1	0
Students use content-specific language.	0	1	0	0	0	0
Teacher ends the mini lesson by directing students to apply today's skill and strategy in their own reading/ writing.	1	0	0	0	0	0
Independent Work (30-40 minutes)						
Students work independently, but are afforded the opportunity to reach out to peers for support.	0	1	1	1	0	1
All-to-almost all students apply the taught strategy in their own reading or writing today.	1	1	1	1	0	0
Students are afforded choice in text or topic, but not in skill application.	0	1	1	1	1	0
Conferring (occurs during Independent Work)						
Teacher works with students in 1:1 - 1:3 configurations.	0	0	1	0	1	1
Students are prompted to showcase their thinking as well their work.	0	0	1	1	0	0
In reviewing a student product, teacher functions as a coach and provides specific scaffolds to improve student's skill application in reading/ writing. -OR- Teacher and student engage in interactive reading/ writing or guided reading/ writing.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teacher uses content-specific language.	1	1	1	1	0	0
Students use content-specific language.	0	1	0	1	0	0
Share (5-7 minutes)						
Teacher selects specific students to share their application of today's strategy & skill (to model exemplars and/or to inspire others).	0	0	0	0	0	1
Students who share are able to explain the "how" and "why" of their reader/writer choices.	0	0	0	1	0	0
Students use content-specific language.	0	1	0	0	0	0
Students set/re-visit reading/ writing goals.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall						
Learning outcome/target is clearly aligned to and uses the academic language from CORE ELA Standard/s	1	1	0	0	0	0
Teacher uses TC Units of Study as a resource.	0	1	1	1	1	1
Overall, teaching and learning activities provide differentiated opportunities for all students to deepen understandings and work toward mastery of new learning.	1	1	0	1	0	0
Anchor charts are present in the classroom and visible to students.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Students have reader/writer journal/folder/portfolio.	1	1	1	1	1	1

EMAIL TO MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

September 14, 2019

Hello, Middle School Principals.

I am reaching out to request your continued support. As discussed at the "Special" September ELA Wednesday meeting, and with your support during and after that meeting, I believe it has been clearly stated there will be **no changes to the pacing guide** at this time. Unfortunately, in the 2+ hours specifically given to ELA teachers to plan for their upcoming units at our November 5th PD day, the ELA 6 team used their time to make changes to the pacing guide.

At a quick glance of the ELA 6 document shared, two issues stand out--

1. A 5-week workshop launch to begin the school year. Students have been "doing workshop" since Kindergarten, so all of the structures and routines of the workshop model are in place. Also, I see that the group has listed out some grammar, mechanics, and usage skills in that launch window. However, we know from decades of research that instructing students on these skills out of context does not work. For a quick overview of that type of research, check out Writing Next.
2. Another 5-week chunk of time at the end of the school year that is unplanned/not paced.

Outside of the pacing issues presented above, <u>a larger issue still exists:</u> ELA 6 teachers/teams may be unprepared to teach Unit 3 which was set to start late last week/early this week, which also requires a district-wide assessment (after a semester postponement). Some teachers have expressed they are worried there isn't enough class time get through this unit and/or the writing task, so in light of these in-class time concerns, I am **cancelling the December 5th** pull-out with Karrie, so teachers don't miss a day of instruction with students. I hope to reschedule the day in the spring semester.

I need to send a message to the teachers that reiterates that there will be no changes to the pacing guide, that encourages them to focus on planning when unit/lesson planning time is provided, and that informs them of the cancellation of the December 5th training date. According to the November 5th sign-in sheet, most ELA 6 teachers from all three schools were present, so it is clear that the message should be sent to all Grade 6 ELA teachers. I just wanted you to be aware of this before I email the teachers. If you have any concerns, please let me know. Otherwise, I plan to send this message tomorrow, Friday, 11/15.

Thank You,
Lori A. Elliott, Humanities Program Coordinator

EMAIL TO ELA 6 TEACHERS

September 15, 2019

Hello, ELA 6 Teachers.

As a result of our discussion at the "Special" September 11 ELA Wednesday meeting and in subsequent conversations, along with the support of your administrators, the mutual understanding was that there will be **no changes to the pacing guide** at this time, **but more planning time would be provided** to support your efforts to move through this updated pacing guide (through PD days with Karrie and on full-release days). In addition to our first day with Karrie, I was able to carve out a few hours for that work on November 5th. However, it seems that some of the time was spent making changes to the pacing guide, albeit for next year.

Some concerns have been expressed that there isn't enough class time to get through this 3rd unit and/or the explanatory/informative writing task. In light of these timing and PD day concerns, the next pull-out session with Karrie on **December 5th is canceled** so no instructional time with students is missed.

Major curriculum and assessment work, such as the creation of a scope and sequence document and CBA assessments will begin this summer. At that time, and in cross-district collaboration, we will also tackle pacing concerns. Until then, make sure you are following the 2019-2020 pacing guide posted in the district ELA 6 Schoology folder.

Thank You,
Lori A. Elliott, Humanities Program Coordinator