

DISSERTATION

HOW TEACHERS EXPERIENCE CHANGE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF
A DISTRICT-WIDE CURRICULAR REFORM

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ABSTRACT

HOW TEACHERS EXPERIENCE CHANGE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF A DISTRICT-WIDE CURRICULAR REFORM

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to better understand how teachers experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Interpretative phenomenology within a single case study was used to explore the experiences of the teachers as they moved through this significant reform. Thirteen teachers were interviewed and the findings were analyzed according to Van Kaam's method. The key findings are presented in the form of three continua: GVCIA: I like it...but; Leadership: From empowering to demoralizing; and Attitudes toward change: A grand adventure through don't they trust me.

Although most teachers understood the need for unifying the curriculum and appreciated the content, they were also concerned with specific aspects of the implementation, including the speed of the implementation, the lack of resources to support the change, and losing the "art" of teaching. How each specific building-level leader presented the implementation made a difference in the attitudes of the participants towards acceptance. The essence of their experience was *hearts in the game*. The shadow of *hearts in the game* was loss of passion and loss of efficacy. *Hearts in the game* means teachers were able to adjust and adapt to the new curriculum by daily remembering their mission for teaching. Leaders who trusted them to be professionals, honored what they had done in the past, and allowed some flexibility within the curriculum helped keep *hearts in the game*. Although the focus of this study was the experiences of the teachers as they adopted the GVCIA, one factor that appeared to affect the implementation was the fact that many other changes were happening at the same time.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is a certain...flavor of the day in education...we all know that pretty soon the book will close on this 'latest greatest' thing, and then another book will open on another 'latest greatest' thing'... from an interview with Elise, a high school teacher

This sentiment summarizes the feelings of many educators today, as they face continuous reform efforts throughout public schools. Yet the need for change is evident as nationwide public schools are faced with tremendous pressures to respond to challenges such as unacceptable achievement gaps among students, ever-changing technology, high stakes accountability, and declining funding with which to carry out the reforms. Almost daily accounts of students being underprepared for higher education or not prepared for the 21st century workforce are discussed in various news sources. While it was believed for many years that the United States had the finest education system in the world, the perception in recent decades has been that we are falling behind the rest of the world in the education that our children are receiving (Marzano, 2003). The Soviet launching of the Sputnik in 1957 was an awakening to the general public that perhaps we were not keeping up, particularly in math and science.

The mission of the public school system to educate all children, no matter what background they come from, no matter what other obstacles they face, no matter what they bring to the classroom is noble. The benefits for every child to have a good education are widely recognized; without a good education, attaining upward mobility and the middle class life is virtually impossible. Mehta, Schwartz, and Hess (2012) have boldly stated that if we fail to educate our children then we have failed to establish a true democracy. The economy today requires a workforce that is smart, skilled, creative, and equipped for a global market (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Yet despite the current efforts of schools and leaders, too many

students are still dropping out of school before graduating, and more than 50% of those who do graduate are not ready for college level work or the workplace (Fullan, 2002; Mehta, Schwartz, & Hess, 2012).

In an effort to improve the education that all children receive, school districts bring forward reform initiatives at an unceasing pace. Reeves (2006) alleged that public education is in a precarious state in the United States, and that change must happen to provide the opportunity for a quality education for every child. Educational leaders are hired and fired in this climate of change and reform based upon their abilities to bring about lasting and sustainable change. Fullan, Hill, and Cr`evola (2006) were quick to point out that although change is constant, the continuous waves of reform rarely penetrate to the classroom to bring about systemic improvements in instruction. They maintained that most reforms are “on too small a scale, too limited in their scope, underconceptualized, too fragmented, under-resourced, and without a rigorous research foundation” (p. 43).

Despite these challenges prominent researchers believed the opportunity for “breath-taking improvement” (Schmoker, 2006, p. 14) and “unprecedented effectiveness” (Marzano, 2003, p. 10) was within the grasp of those school leaders who were courageous enough to implement changes that contribute to highly effective student learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Fullan, et al 2006; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2006). These researchers claimed that immediate and dramatic change could take place in public schools, without additional resources, if some commonly accepted best practices were implemented quickly and fearlessly. Schmoker (2006) provided evidence that suggested school districts should implement changes that would have the greatest impact on student achievement without requiring greater time and money. He maintained that existing funds of time, talent, and

money were being diverted from the greatest opportunity for better schools: “*a simple, unswerving focus on those actions and arrangements that ensure effective, ever-improving instruction*” (p. 5; italics in original).

Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000) conducted a meta-analytic study summarizing findings from over one hundred research studies to determine the most effective instructional strategies and concluded that a guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVC) is the single most significant school-level factor to affect overall achievement in students. A guaranteed and viable curriculum is defined as meaning that in each grade level, every teacher will teach the same content at the same time. This would mean that, for example, every third grade child in every school across the school district would have equal opportunities to receive the same quality education. A guaranteed curriculum will only be effective, however, if it is actually taught, and that leads to another and equally important component of GVC which is instruction and assessment. After the GVC was implemented, these additional elements were added and the GVC was expanded to include instruction and assessment (GVCIA).

The reality that change is necessary has been well documented. Operating schools the same way they have been run for decades has not achieved the desired results of a quality education for all children. Far too many students leave school ill-equipped to navigate their future and experience success at the next level (Fullan, 2004). There is little consistency and alignment in what students are learning from one class, one school, or one teacher to another. In addition, there are alarming discrepancies in demographic groups; for example, although Hispanic and African American students have made great strides in improving their achievement in mathematics and reading, there is still a disparity in academic performance between groups of students by race and color (Schmoker, 2006; Mehta, Schwartz, & Hess, 2012). Discrepancies

also exist between students graduating from high poverty schools, defined as schools with 76-100% of students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) and low poverty schools, those with 25% or less eligible for FRPL (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In 2008, 68% of twelfth graders in high poverty schools, compared to 91% of twelfth graders in low-poverty schools, graduated with a diploma. At the end of 12th grade the average Black or Hispanic student performed at about the same level as the average White 8th grader (Schmoker, 2006). According to Collins (2001) the first step to change was to “confront the brutal facts,” and these graduation and achievement data are indeed brutal. Change must happen to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to receive the education that will provide them with a chance at a better future.

Another rationale for the need for change was revealed by Schmoker (2006) when a significant study indicated that effective teaching practices were absent in the majority of 1500 classrooms visited (Learning 24/7, 2005, cited by Schmoker, 2006). For example, evidence of a clear learning objective only occurred in 4% of the classrooms; research-based high-yield strategies were in use in .2% of the classrooms; classrooms in which less than one-half of students were paying attention was 85% (p. 18). In another research study Schmoker (2004) boldly stated that teachers have always had a protected status unheard of in other fields in that they can go into their classroom, shut the door, and no one knows what happens. Schmoker (2009) and Fullan (2002) agreed that the woes of public school could be altered with simple and achievable changes in curriculum, instruction, supervision, and student engagement. They cited clear evidence that these changes would indeed make a dramatic difference in student achievement. Few would question that the quality of teaching that happens in the classroom is

directly related to the outcomes for students. The piece of the puzzle that has not been well researched was how these seemingly “simple” changes affect the practitioner in the classroom.

Change is never easy. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) suggested that when change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist change. Schmoker (2004) also spoke to this, stating that reform often brings new demands of time to already overburdened teachers and administrators who “then use this as an excuse (arguably, a good one) for failing to achieve results” (p.31). Teachers generally enter the field of teaching because they care about children and they want to prepare each of their students to have the best possible future. Experienced teachers who have spent many years of their professional lives creating units and lessons that they believed would “light fires” in their students, and make a difference in their lives, now find themselves (and their cherished lessons) under increasing scrutiny. Eckel and Kezar (2012) documented that the amount of significant and often traumatic changes in education have increased greatly due to conflicting needs such as reducing costs, improving productivity, or creating new growth. Although change can help organizations improve, too often change causes more pain than success. Kezar (2009) noted that there is little meaningful data to understand the processes of change.

Statement of Purpose

Although the need for change in education has been widely researched, the dynamics of how change affects practitioners has largely been ignored in the literature. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand how teachers experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How did teachers experience the process of change in a major educational reform?
2. How did the teachers feel about the process and the results of the reform?
3. How did continual change affect teachers' motivation, desire to teach, and their own personal motivation to teach?

Significance of the Study

Educational reform is a topic of great interest at the highest levels of policy making and the need for change is well documented (DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Fullan, et al, 2006; Marzano, et al, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2006). Many studies evaluated the value and benefits of various reform projects, but there was little research on how the changes are implemented in public schools, and how these changes affect those who are experiencing continuous change. While there is a vast amount of literature on the subject of change, change management, and the change processes in business (Collins, 2001; Kantor, 1983), a thorough analysis has not been done of the effects of implementing educational reform, the teachers' experiences with continual changes, and what effects those issues have on the success of the implementation processes (Kezar, 2009). Until all students, in all districts, in all states, graduate from public schools prepared for higher education and the workforce, leaders will continue to search for ways to improve the education of students. Until that day comes, change and reform are inevitable in public education. At a time when school reform is continuous and necessary, it is important to know how change affects those who are charged with implementing the changes. This study will add to the scholarly research on change, focusing on how teachers experience change in

educational reform. In addition, it is hoped that this study will inform the practice of leaders as they implement future reforms.

The next section describes the reform that River Canyons School District undertook in an effort to improve the academic achievement of the students in the district. This case study will explore in-depth the phenomenon of how teachers experienced this reform. All identifying characteristics have been given pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of those involved.

The Project

River Canyons School District (RCSD) had been experiencing flat test scores for a number of years, earning the designation of a district in need of improvement. As a result, RCSD qualified to have the Assessment Plan to Improve Districts (APID) team come into the district to conduct a comprehensive study to help improve the test scores of their students. The APID team discovered that consistency was lacking in classrooms and schools around the district, and recommended that a unified curriculum be implemented. As a result of the APID review, which in part stated that the curriculum needed to be aligned throughout the district, RCSD developed a new Office of Instructional Support and created a position for the Director of Curriculum and Assessment to lead the office. The project to develop the unified curriculum was called Implementation of Support for Curriculum and Assessment. RCSD quickly moved to implement a plan that they had been researching, referred to in educational circles as a guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVCIA). A guaranteed and viable curriculum means that the essential content for each grade level is identified and then sequenced to ensure that the content can be adequately addressed in the time allotted (Marzano, 2003). In RCSD a curriculum was created for each grade level, which included the essential content to be taught, along with the unit plan, resources and assessments. In addition to the content, a pacing guide was created for each grade

level to identify exactly where in the term a subject needed to be taught and when it was time to move to the next topic to ensure that all of the classrooms in the district moved at the same pace.

The APID report initially indicated that the process of creating a guaranteed curriculum would take about three to five years to implement. However, RCSD had already begun the work of aligning the content across grade levels in specific subject areas, using teacher teams who had been selected from each grade level and from different schools to work on common curriculums, so the director believed that the process could be done in six months. Working with the existing teacher teams, they developed a time line for implementation, and then prepared materials so administrators could present a consistent message about the changes that would be coming to their schools. The materials included a video of the superintendent explaining why RCSD must adopt a common curriculum, and presented the research that indicated that a guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVCIA) was the school-level factor that has the most impact on student achievement (Marzano, 2003). The next step was to appoint teachers to work in grade level and discipline teams to create the common curriculum. The district committed to have representation from each high school feeder system across the district and across grade levels. Each grade level team created a year-at-a-glance guide, a one-page pacing guide, and the conceptual themes for each unit. In addition, the teams created a unit plan, which included specifics such as the “big ideas,” essential questions, and learning targets. To aid in lesson planning, a Teacher’s Resource Center was made available to all teachers on the website, which provided links to thousands of resources, including yearly plans, pacing guides, and unit plans, with resources linked directly to the specific lesson such as discovery video streaming. For example, if the lesson was the Civil War, the Resource Center links would include the lesson plan, lesson plan ideas, links to videos

of the root causes of the Civil War, and numerous other supplemental materials to enhance the lesson planning.

The GVCIA was introduced in each building before leaving on summer break. The first step in the presentation to the faculty was to show the video of the superintendent, who gave the background of the project and laid out the plan for the next school year. Next, all teachers attended a summer institute the following August, where the GVCIA was presented in full to teachers. The curriculum and pacing guides were shown at that time, and the first units were printed off and given to the teachers for the start of the school year.

Throughout the first year of implementation, teachers were encouraged to give feedback through the Teacher's Resource Center on pacing, content, and other issues, and the team spent the spring and summer reviewing the feedback and writing Version 2.0, which was made available online and presented the following August at the next summer institute. The following section gives a vignette describing the initial presentation to a district elementary school and shows how some teachers might have initially experienced the project.

Changes in Store: A Vignette

Diane glanced at the clock and realized the faculty meeting was about to begin. As she walked out of her classroom, she met up with Pam and Karen, and they walked to the all-purpose lunch room/auditorium together. "Ready for another year-end meeting? I think we've heard lots of versions of the 'end-of-school' speech!"

"Yeah, let's see, she will first tell us that this is the best school she's ever worked at, and she will tell us that we had a fabulous school year."

Karen chimed in, "and she is so proud that we know what we are doing, and she trusts us, and then...hum, what will come next?" At that moment, they arrived at the auditorium, and

the conversation moved to greeting colleagues in other grade levels and chatting about upcoming summer vacations as they found their seats.

“Hello! We have had a fabulous school year, and I know you are all looking forward to a much-deserved summer break” the principal announced. “Before we go, I want to show a video from our superintendent of schools.”

As the video revealed the plan that was slated to roll out for the upcoming fall school year, the teachers watched with growing levels of disbelief and consternation. “A guaranteed and viable curriculum? What does that even mean? They are telling us we need to teach poetry and fractions...don’t they know we ARE teaching poetry? Don’t they know we ARE teaching fractions? What do they think we are doing to these kids?”

The principal closed the meeting saying “This is a non-negotiable expectation. There will be a summer summit to train you in how this will be implemented. You will, of course, be compensated for attending the summit. Have a great summer!”

The teachers left, dazed, as they contemplated what was going to happen in a few short months. The art of teaching, as they had practiced for years, was soon to be dramatically changed...”

Researcher Perspective

This study resulted from my years in public education and the changes I have seen implemented or have been a part of implementing myself. Throughout this time, I have experienced major reforms, and I have been part of implementing reforms that I believed would have a positive impact on students. I recognize in myself that I have not always implemented change in the most effective manner. I have used the phrases “Ask for forgiveness later” or “Ready, Fire, Aim” way too flippantly, which eventually may erode my credibility with those I

want to inspire to change. During those years I have heard the frustrations of teachers who have faced mandated change without any chance to provide feedback. I have worked for administrators who have implemented changes without any great understanding of the “why” behind the change (Sinek, 2009). I have been through turnovers in superintendents, who implemented changes as a result of external pressure. I wanted to understand the experiences of educators who experienced and implemented change and my hope is that this study will not only help me to be a better leader as I find ways to improve outcomes for students, but that it will be a guide for others as well.

This study is organized in the following manner. Chapter 1 frames the study and provides background into educational reform and the need for change in education, as well as the need to manage the change for affected participants. Chapter 2 includes the relevant literature on educational reform, change theories, and the experiences of the followers. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology, research design, participants, data collection and procedures, data analysis, and the limitations of the study. The ethical considerations of the study are also detailed in this chapter. The findings are presented in chapter 4 and conclusions and recommendations for future studies are in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section includes a review of the literature detailing the history of the continuous nature of educational reform and what creates the need for change in public schools. Next, the literature related to how educators experience continuous change is reviewed, followed by the literature on change models, both in business and in education.

Educational Reform as a Continual Process

The literature on the history of educational reform suggests that for centuries, education has been of the highest importance to educators, politicians, and citizens alike. The second president of the United States, John Adams, declared

The whole people must take on the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it. There should not be a district of one mile square, without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense of the people themselves. (Adams, 1856)

The Land Ordinance of 1785 was adopted by the Continental Congress requiring the establishment of a system of public education, and provided a mechanism to raise money to fund schools (League of Women Voters, 2011). Thomas Jefferson drafted a plan for education as one of the first tasks of the new democracy. He stated that a well-educated citizenry was essential to protect liberty and the general welfare of the people, and if the people of the nation were ignorant, the nation would soon perish (Tyler, 1996). The primary function of education in a democracy is the education of responsible citizens. From Jefferson's time to the present, educational leaders have been on a continual mission to identify what students should learn in order to be responsible citizens. The American dream was the promise of the public school to "open wide the doors of opportunity to all who were willing to learn and study" (Ravitch, 2000, p. 22).

The major reforms of the next century changed the delivery of education from the one room school house, where students of all ages were in the same room with one teacher, to the current model of assigning students to grades based on age. In 1837 when Horace Mann was elected to serve as the secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, he created a system for training professional teachers based on the Prussian model of education, which believed that everyone was entitled to the same content in education (Peterson, 2010). An additional reform was that students progressed with their grade and received a certificate of completion when they completed all the courses the school offered.

Shortly after the Mann reforms, the first teacher's union was established with forty-three members (National Education Association, 2012). The goal was to improve the conditions under which teachers worked and children learned. The National Education Association (NEA) has strengthened over the decades to be an effective force in determining policy and advocating for the rights of teachers.

Criticism of public education led to continuous reforms beginning in the early 20th century in an effort to improve K-12 schooling (Marzano, 2003). The earliest reforms of the last 100 years can be traced back to John Dewey and his progressive education theories when he opened up a process of inquiry intended to expand children's perceptions of the world (Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010; Rulison, 2012). Dewey believed in the role of democracy to promote education, but his ideas were not widely accepted, due to a bureaucratic system of school administration that was not receptive to new methodology (Ravitch, 2000). Coinciding with the progressive era, Ralph Tyler initiated the "Eight Year Study" (1933-1941), which followed students through high school and into college and occupations. The findings from that study led to the publication of "Basic Principle of Curriculum and Instruction," which was published in

1949. Tyler's model, which became the basis for many other models of instruction, consisted of defining objectives of the learning experience, identifying learning activities for meeting the defined objectives, organizing learning activities for attaining the defined objectives, and evaluating and assessing the learning experiences. The principles of teaching and learning first published by Tyler are still utilized today (Ediger, 2012).

One of the most significant reforms in United States history, and an important step towards equality in education, was the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruling that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” and requiring public schools to educate all children, regardless of race (*Brown V. Board of Education*, 1954). Previous to this ruling, individual states could decide to educate White and African-American children in separate facilities.

Triggered by the Soviet launching of the satellite “Sputnik,” Americans became increasingly aware that education in math and science was lagging behind other countries, and began to question the rigor and validity of public schools. As a result of these concerns, the National Defense Education Act was passed in 1958, authorizing increased funding for scientific research and science, mathematics, and foreign language education (Heilig et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003).

Criticism of public education continued into the 1960's when President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty spurred a nationwide survey concerning the availability of educational opportunities to impoverished youth. Even by today's standards the survey was extensive, as more than 640,000 students in multiple grades took achievement and aptitude tests. The results, commonly known now as the “Coleman Report,” painted an alarming picture of public education and stated that “schools bring little to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his

background” and drawing the conclusion that whatever students bring into to school, they carry throughout their education (Coleman et al., 1966). This report, and a reanalysis in 1972, led many to believe that educational reform was a waste of time if schools had so little effect on overcoming students’ background characteristics (Jencks et al., 1972).

In 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law by President Johnson, which allowed the federal government to enter public education, a role that was originally granted by the 10th amendment to state and local government (U.S. Const. amend. X). Title I was a major provision of ESEA, which provided federal dollars for improving educational opportunities for low income children. In 1980 the Department of Education was established as a Cabinet level agency, and the federal government’s role in education has subsequently grown considerably. The original mission of the Department of Education was to guarantee equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the system. In the last two decades federal dollars for education have increased dramatically and with additional funds has come increased accountability and reporting requirements from state and local governments (Whilden, 2010).

Even though the American public had become increasingly critical of public education through the 1960s and 1970s, the next decade brought escalating concern about the state of American education. In 1981 the Secretary of Education to President Ronald Reagan created the National Commission on Excellence in Education to examine the quality of education in the United States due to “the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our education system” (A Nation at Risk, 1983, p. 1). The committee released a groundbreaking report entitled “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.” This report further

fueled the belief of the American public that the United States was falling behind in educational achievement and resulted in a demand for increased rigor.

Since the passage of ESEA in 1965, there have been numerous reauthorizations, including a revision in 1994 after the release of “A Nation at Risk.” The 1994 revision included a heavy emphasis on low-income schools (Whilden, 2010). In 1990 President George H. Bush along with then Governor Bill Clinton held a summit for all 50 governors with the intention of establishing educational goals for the nation. The National Educational Goals, announced by the president and adopted by the governors, stated that by the year 2000, all children would start school ready to learn; high school graduation rates would increase to 90%; students would be competent in challenging subject matter; teachers would have the knowledge and skills that they would need to be proficient; every adult American would be literate; schools would be safe, disciplined, and free of drugs, guns and alcohol; and schools would promote parental involvement. Although President Bush was not able to get the bill passed by Congress in 1990, President Bill Clinton signed into law Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994.

In 2001 President George W. Bush announced No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was another reauthorization of ESEA, and signed into law by Congress in 2002 (PL 107-110). The original intent of No Child Left Behind was to improve student achievement through alignment of state standards for what students are expected to know and be able to do in reading, writing, and math. NCLB included increased accountability for the states, school districts, and schools, and greater choice for parents, especially those attending low-performing schools. An additional provision of NCLB gave states and local agencies more flexibility in the use of federal dollars and placed a strong emphasis on reading for young children (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). NCLB tied high stakes assessments with school improvement directives, with

expectations increasing each year until 2014, when all students will be expected to be proficient in reading and math. NCLB also included, as a major provision, the requirement of highly qualified teachers in core subjects.

While NCLB has been praised for the increased accountability and emphasis in student achievement for disadvantaged subgroups, there has been growing criticism of the reliance on test-based accountability, and the lack of resources to carry out the mandates (Duncan, 2009). The latest reauthorization from President Obama's administration allowed some flexibility from the mandates of the NCLB Act of 2001 in exchange for serious state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that all students are on track to graduate with college and workforce ready skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

In 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allocated over 100 billion dollars in funding toward K-12 educational institutions. President Obama announced an ambitious new program, "Race to the Top," which provided more than four billion dollars in federal grants to states who can demonstrate ambitious yet achievable plans for comprehensive education reform. The program promotes competitive education standards between schools, and the schools finishing the race "at the top" will receive a much heavier grant. Designed to reward states that embrace reform and bypass those that do not, grants are awarded to educators to "support bold and courageous reform at the state and local level" (Duncan, 2012, speech).

Educational reform over the last century has moved America forward and encouraged greater progress in educating our children, but there are still unacceptable achievement gaps between schools and school districts, the dropout rate is still too high, and too many students are still graduating from high school without being college or workforce ready. Education will be in

a state of continuous reform as long as schools continue to push for excellence. The next section reviews the literature on current and future reforms.

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

One of the issues plaguing education today is that teachers feel that they can't overcome the background of students who come to them unprepared and lacking support from home (Gorski, 2008). Indeed, socioeconomic factors are well-documented as seriously impacting a student's ability to benefit from education (Borman & Dowling, 2010; Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972; Van der Berg, 2008). The Coleman report (1966) led many to believe that schools could have little impact on overcoming a student's background. Follow-up reports in subsequent years substantiated those findings, and research from an international education foundation on poverty and education paints an equally grim picture, stating that the home background of pupils is the single most important factor influencing educational backgrounds (van der Berg, 2008).

While acknowledging the reality of poverty and the background variables that come into play, such as the education status of the parents, the hidden costs that come even with free public education, and the lost opportunity costs of education, there is much research over the last 35 years that suggests effective schools can have a tremendous impact on student achievement in spite of these external factors (Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2009). Marzano compiled school effectiveness research from the last several decades and organized the results into three general factors that influence student academic achievement: (1) school-level factors, (2) teacher-level factors, and (3) student-level factors. School-level factors are those that are a function of policy and school wide decisions and reforms, while teacher-level factors depend on

the individual teacher, and student-level factors include the background of the student, including home environment, intelligence, and motivation.

He further collapsed multiple lists of school-level factors lists into five factors, in the order of impact on student achievement: (1) guaranteed and viable curriculum, (2) challenging goals and effective feedback, (3) parent and community involvement, (4) safe and orderly environment, and (5) collegiality and professionalism.

To create this list, Marzano synthesized the work of other researchers, utilizing the criteria that only those factors that could be implemented without drastic addition of resources would be considered. For example, it is quite possible that a smaller teacher-to-student ratio would have a significant impact on student achievement, or a longer school day, or more tutors, or more technology, but the reality in most school districts is that change needs to happen within the boundaries of the fiscal and human resources that are currently available. In comparing the school level factors identified by the researchers, all address the same basic factors, with slightly different terms to describe the same factors. To illustrate an example, Edmonds (in Marzano, 2003) used the terms “high expectation for student achievement” and “frequent monitoring of student progress,” while Schreens and Bosker (in Marzano, 2003) used “monitoring” and “pressure to achieve,” so Marzano organized the terms into the category of challenging goals and effective feedback.

The school level factor that has the strongest correlation with student achievement is a guaranteed and viable curriculum, which is a combination of “opportunity to learn” and “time.” Opportunity to learn was first identified in the literature by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, when they conducted the First International Mathematics Study(FIMS) of 13-years-olds and final –year secondary students in 12 countries

(Foshay, 2012) . The study found that “opportunity to learn” or the way a subject is actually taught in the classroom versus what is described in the curriculum is a key indicator of the differences in student performance. One significant finding was that student achievement was related to the opportunity to learn provided in the curriculum.

Opportunity to learn had a profound effect on the thinking of scholars and researchers with regard to school reform (Marzano, 2003), but the Second International Mathematics Study (SIMS) shed even more light on curriculum and instruction (Travers & Westbury, 1989). Three types of curricula were identified in SIMS: the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum. The intended curriculum is what is mandated by the state, district, or school to be taught at each grade level. The implemented curriculum is what is actually taught in each classroom, and the attained curriculum is what the students actually learn. Because there is so much emphasis on standards for specific courses and grade levels, most educators assume that the standards are being taught in each classroom, but there have been numerous researchers who have identified that there is a discrepancy between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum (Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2006; Fullan et al., 2006). Even if school districts use highly structured textbooks as a basis for a curriculum, classroom observations have indicated that teachers make independent decisions about exactly what they will cover and to what extent (Marzano, 2003). The concept of opportunity to learn is “a simple but powerful one- if students do not have the opportunity to learn content expected of them, there is little chance that they will” (p.24).

The second component of the guaranteed and viable curriculum is time. Viability means ensuring that the intended curriculum can be implemented in the time available. However, it is a reality that the number of concepts that a teacher is expected to cover can far exceed the number

of minutes in a school day. A synthesis of research conducted on standards identified over 20 standards and 3,093 benchmarks for 14 different subject areas; the amount of time estimated that it would take to adequately teach the content was 15,465 hours; and the average amount of time available in a school career is 13,104 hours (5.6 hours of classroom time per year, 180 days per year, and 13 years of schooling) (Marzano, 2003, p. 24). One additional point made by Marzano is that not all of the available time is actually used for instruction. Using estimates based on classroom disruptions, socializing time, and other non-instructional time, Marzano suggests that about 3.9 hours per day of the 5.6 hours available are used for instruction, which does not allow for adequate time to teach all the standards. The first school level factor to ensure that students have the opportunity and time to learn the material that they will be tested on by implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum appears to be intuitive, but the actual implementation of this principle presents a very significant challenge.

One logical solution to the problem would appear to be to increase the amount of time spent on instruction, and many discussions on educational reform propose the idea of longer school days and or school years (Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1998; Joyner & Molina, 2012). Students in the U.S. spend less time in school compared to students in other countries, and the connection is often immediately drawn that more time in school equals higher achievement scores. Scientifically based research to correlate class time with student achievement is difficult because of the numbers of factors that affect student learning, and the lack of a common definition of what constitutes in-class learning (Joyner & Molina, 2012). Since education is still mostly under state and local governance, the amount of time students spend in class varies across the country, both by school year and the hours in a school day. The

research suggests, however, that the amount of instructional time is not as important as how that time is spent (Marzano, 2003).

Marzano (2003) proposed several action steps to implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum. First, because of the compelling argument that the existing standards cannot be achieved in the available time, yet the proposal for a longer school day is impractical in the U.S., he suggested that the benchmarks in the existing standards be “unpacked” by delineating the content to identify what is essential versus what is supplemental. Reeves (2006) identified this process as focusing on Power Standards. He maintained that every educator knows that not all standards are equally important, but that individual educators struggle with giving up what they think is most important. Ainsworth (2003) gives three criteria for identifying power standards. A power standard must have leverage, with solid evidence that success in one standard will lead to success in another area; the knowledge gained will endure beyond a simple test question; and that they will be essential for the next level of learning. Reeves (2006) suggested that one way to discover what the most important standards are is to ask a grade level teacher what knowledge and skills a student should have mastered from the previous grade in order to be prepared for the current grade. Rather than listing all the required standards, a classroom teacher will quickly be able to zero in on what the most important concepts are for incoming students.

After the most important concepts are identified for the viable curriculum, the next action step identified by Marzano (2003) is to sequence and organize the essential content in a way that optimizes the learning experience for students. The essential concepts must be organized into categories that form a realistic and logical sequence. This scope and sequence may differ by school or school district, but the important point is that time has been spent to identify the

essential concepts, organize them into “big ideas” or “topics” and establish the sequence for the topics or big ideas.

Once the guaranteed and viable curriculum has been established, steps must be taken to ensure that teachers address the essential content (Marzano, 2003). Reeves (2006) suggested transforming the private domain of teachers to public practice, a practice that is far more common in other industries than public education. Although there is a great deal of research on the benefits of collaboration and the positive relationship of collaboration to school improvement, the fact remains that most teachers work in isolation (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). Establishing professional learning communities is one of the most effective ways to allow teachers to work together to determine how they will meet the agreed upon standards. According to Schmoker (2006) learning communities have emerged as one of the best, most agreed-upon means by which to continuously improve instruction and student performance. A true learning community is where teachers work together to establish a common, concise set of essential curriculum standards, based on state or district standards, and create a common pacing schedule. In order to be most effective teams must meet regularly, and the time must be focused, talking in precise and concrete terms about teaching practices and the consequences. Reeves (2006) added that frequent formative assessments must be utilized as part of the learning community process to provide immediate feedback to students and teachers, and guide the instructional decisions.

Although lengthening the school day or the school year may not be practical given the resource constraints in public education today, increased instructional time can be found by protecting the instructional time that is available (Marzano, 2003). This requires a system-wide commitment to the concept that instructional time should not be interrupted, being as efficient as

possible about announcements, passing periods, assemblies, and other non-instructional activities (Aronson et al., 1998).

Research suggests that implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum is a school-level factor that has the most impact on student achievement, but the implementation can be challenging. A clear focus on what students must learn, and school-wide efforts to protect instructional time and to provide teachers with time for collaboration are essential to implementation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum. The next section will review the literature on how followers experience continual reform, followed by how reform can be effectively implemented.

How people experience change

Change and reform are continuous in education, as leaders seek to educate all children, yet change is not always easy for people to adapt to. This section will review the literature describing the experiences of people as they move through change.

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) described change as stepping into unknown space and disturbing the equilibrium, an activity that can be disruptive and disorienting. Rather than accepting the adage “people resist change,” they suggested that what people resist is not so much change, but loss. When change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist change. Kanter (1983) described the threat of change as the feeling of loss of control, powerlessness, and helplessness before the change has even become the reality, because there are still too many possibilities open and people cannot experience themselves in the change. Change implies loss when a person’s current fund of assets and skills becomes obsolete and when there are no resources available to help with the transition. Acknowledging that change may come

with deep losses means having compassion for the pain that comes with deep change (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

The downside of change is when it is seen as a threat, or when it comes as a jolt, or seems abrupt or shocking. Kanter (1983) emphasized the upside of change as well, stating that change can be exhilarating, refreshing, and a chance for a new beginning. Change brings opportunities when people have been planning for the change, are ready for it, and have an idea of what the change will be like. Heifetz and his associates (2009) noted that leaders must connect with the values, beliefs, and anxieties of the people whom they are trying to move. Unless the leader's heart is part of the mix as well, it is difficult to be present in that way.

Many times, the loss people dread in change is about losing traditions, history, and identity. The question is not only, "Of all that we care about, what must be given up to survive and thrive going forward?" but also, "Of all that we care about, what elements are essential and must be preserved into the future, or we will lose precious values, core competencies, and lose who we are?" (Heifetz et al, 2009, p. 23).

Often people involved in change initiatives may appear resistant to change, but Schmoker (2006) contended that teachers might have been labeled as "resistors," even if they were only resisting initiatives that had no clear purpose. Change initiatives in the past may have failed because teachers have been asked to commit to numerous initiatives over the decades without any compelling reason to do so. If there is to be any sustainability in reforms, change must be implemented by presenting a thorough, evidence-based case for effective instruction.

Even in the most carefully implemented reform, a project will often encounter an unexpected rough phase. Fullan (2002) identified this phase in implementing change as an "implementation dip," which is literally a dip in performance and confidence as followers

encounter an innovation that requires new skills and new understanding. Leaders who understand the implementation dip know that people might be experiencing two kinds of problems: the social-psychological fear of change, and the lack of technical know-how or skills to make the change work. Darling-Hammond (1997) suggests that leaders must be aware of the ebb and flow of change, understanding that there will be “swells of enthusiasm,” as well as “undertows of resistance” (p. 277).

Sinek (2009) theorized that most changes start with the “What,” which refers to the change being proposed, and the “How,” which refers to the implementation process, but then neglects letting followers know the “Why” behind a change. He labeled this model as the “Golden Circle” and maintained that if followers can understand the why behind a reform or innovation, then they will be inspired to follow. Similarly, Heifetz, et al (2009) stated that one distinctive aspect of leading change is that leaders must connect with the values, beliefs, and anxieties of the people they are trying to move, and articulating the “why” can make that connection.

Those in the teaching profession have experienced multiple changes in public education. No Child Left Behind (2001) has as one of its provisions the dependence on high stakes testing. A new bill in the Colorado state legislature will tie teacher evaluation with their student’s test scores (HB191). This has the potential of increasing the anxiety levels of teachers even more. A quantitative research study using survey methodology revealed that teachers in an atmosphere of high stakes testing experience lower morale, higher instances of cheating, and negative psychological and physical effects (Franklin & Snow-Gerono, 2007). Respondents were asked to rate the pressure they felt to improve students’ test scores, how often they attended to testing issues in curriculum and instruction, and how their job climate characteristics had changed over

the last three years. Narrative comments were also included in response to the invitation to include additional thoughts about how testing is affecting their lives as educators.

Criterion variables for this study were job satisfaction and degrees of pressure felt by mentor teachers. Multiple regression analysis was used to test for relationships stated in the null hypotheses. Narrative comments were coded and analyzed for themes through multiple readings.

The results suggested that all of the teachers felt increased pressure to improve test scores, with the greatest pressure being from media, school boards, and their principals. More than 95% felt that testing creates greater tension for teachers and students. The greatest fear is that the joy of teaching and the love of learning have been lost in the environment of high stakes testing. Teachers reported being pushed to the breaking point, fearing that they can't last much longer in the field of public education. It was not so much that teachers didn't see the value of the testing, but that the increased emphasis is taking away the joy and wonder of education, turning even little kindergartners into factory workers through continued "drill and skill." One participant commented that testing and data are important, but teachers work with real little human beings, not tally marks on a paper. Another conclusion was that collaboration has stopped because teachers feel that if they share their good ideas, the other teacher might receive the bonus pay. The researchers concluded that teachers will continue to leave the profession if current conditions and unrealistic expectations remain.

One comment on a teacher blog stated that "the task is impossible, but that doesn't prevent some teachers from trying and then feeling badly that they didn't do as much as they should have for students. That is part of what makes teachers excellent, but it's also the part that wears us out" (Weimer, 2010).

Understanding the ways that followers experience change can help leaders more effectively implement change processes. The next section reviews the literature on change models, both in business and in education.

Change Theories

Change is a prolific topic in the literature, extending beyond scholarly journals into popular reading. If the topic “change” is entered into search engines, pages and pages of potential works will emerge as suggested reading. Choosing the most relevant change theories that will apply to education was the challenge. The criteria for selecting change models to review was that the model was seminal, having stood the test of time, appearing in many research articles, and that the theory was adopted by numerous corporations or institutions.

One of the earliest change models is Lewin’s Planned Change Theory, which has dominated the theory and practice of change management for over 60 years, and still guides those implementing change today (Burnes, 2001). His model, first articulated in 1939, attempted to combine two commonly held notions of that era regarding the change process (Hawkinshire & Ligget, 1990). One school of thought was that change should be smooth, and any evidence of disruption was an indication that the goals were inappropriate, or the implementation was faulty. The opposite view was that for any fundamental change to take place there must be disruption. Lewin combined the two points of view into a holistic model of planned change, postulating that change has multiple phases, and some will be smooth, while others will be disruptive (Hawkinshire & Ligget, 1990). Lewin further stated that to break open complacency, it is sometimes necessary to stir up emotions (Burnes, 2001; Hawkinshire & Ligget, 1990).

Lewin’s planned approach can be used to explore leadership, participatory management, work environments, and conflict resolution. He combined four concepts to bring about effective

change (Burnes, 2001). The final component, the three-step model, which was considered his key contribution to organizational change, involved unfreezing the present level, moving to the next level, and re-freezing at a new level. Unfreezing means that old behaviors must be unfrozen before new behaviors can be adopted. The moving stage seeks to identify and evaluate all the forces at work on a trial and error basis, because without reinforcement change can be short-lived. Lewin's model can be applied to education reform to ensure change that is necessary, well conceived with regard to all the stakeholders, and designed to outlast the current leader. Lewin believed that there needs to be a "felt need" for employees to adopt and sustain new behaviors, and that new behaviors must be anchored in the organizational culture, addressed in the "freeze" phase of change (Burnes, 2001).

Another change theory observed that corporations respond in one of two ways when solving problems: segmentalism or integrative action (Kanter, 1983). Segmentalism is anti-change, and prevents innovation. Characteristics of segmentalism include compartmentalizing actions, events, and problems, and adopting a "specialist" bias, rather than an integrative approach. Specialists have little or no incentive to consult other specialists. Kanter further describes this approach as inhibiting the entrepreneurial spirit and making the organization a slave of the past rather than having the ability to master change. Integrative action, on the other hand, embraces change as an opportunity to challenge limitations, and allows workers to operate on the edge of their competence. Integrative action is the willingness to move beyond received wisdom and to combine ideas from unconnected sources. She reported that major change takes place in a paradigm shift, when working assumptions on which people have depended become so inappropriate that they break down and are replaced by a more appropriate set of behaviors. Her research suggested that there are three sets of skills required to manage integrative, innovation-

stimulating environments, allowing for small changes to add up to big changes later on. The first is “power skills,” those skills required to persuade others to invest information, support, and resources in new initiatives. The second skill is the ability to manage issues associated with using teams and employee participation, rather than “top-down” directives. The third skill is an understanding of how change is designed and constructed in an organization, and how the small changes introduced by an individual relate to large strategic changes.

Kanter (2003) suggests that there are roadblocks to successful innovation which include first, an “elevator mentality” with restrictive vertical relationships, honoring the “chain of command” above all other relationships. A second roadblock is the idea of “departments as fortresses,” and the absence of communication across departments. Middle level leaders may be more likely to guard their own turf and concentrate on pleasing their bosses, rather than providing assistance to individuals from other departments. A third roadblock is that resources were difficult to obtain, even for routine tasks.

Fullan (2008) suggested six “secrets” for leaders who are implementing change. The first secret is to “love your employees.” He describes “loving” your employees as creating conditions to help them succeed and find meaning, increasing skill development, and fostering the personal satisfaction from making a contribution. The second secret is to connect peers with purpose. In large scale reform, leaders face the “too-tight-too loose” dilemma. There needs to be focus and clear requirements, but if that approach is taken too far, people feel constrained and rebel. Fullan suggested rather that people need to feel empowered. The job of leaders is to provide good direction while pursuing the implementation through purposeful peer interaction. The third secret is to build capacity in the employees by developing the individual and collaborative efficacy to accomplish significant results. This includes new competencies and new resources,

such as time, ideas, expertise, and new motivation. The fourth secret is that learning is the work, and suggests that far too much time is spent going to workshops and taking courses, rather than learning while doing the “hands-on work in the trenches.” The fifth secret is that “transparency rules,” which Fullan described as clear and continuous access to practice and results.

Transparency creates a positive pressure that is experienced as fair, reasonable, and actionable. An example in the school setting is using test scores to help inform how change should happen. The final secret, according to Fullan, is that systems learn. He acknowledged that most often, success can be related to one leader, and when that leader leaves, often the success fades. The most important element of this secret is that all the other secrets are put into play by a leader who stays the course on key moral principles.

Another change model that is useful for implementing change is William Bridges’ model of managing transitions (Bridges & Bridges, 2009). Bridges asserted that there is a difference between change and transition, and that there are three phases to managing transitions and helping followers through times of change. The first phase involves letting go of old ways and the old identity. Change means that there is an ending, and people need to be helped through the loss. He suggested that celebrating those endings will help followers move to the new beginning. The second phase of change is the neutral zone, the in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn’t fully operational, which is when critical re-aligning and re-patterning take place. The third phase is coming out of transition and making a new beginning.

Bridges asserted the major reason change initiatives fail is because the transitions are ignored, and stated “unmanaged transition makes change unmanageable” (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, p. 7). Leaders cannot overlook the letting-go process, and the losses that come with change. Bridges asserted that change may fail when leaders forget to celebrate the endings and

acknowledge the neutral zones, and simply start with the final stage of change. He maintained that change triggers thousands of smaller changes, all of which require people to stop doing things the old way, a way which may have earned rewards, feelings of satisfaction, and results, and now requires new and unfamiliar behaviors. Too often, those implementing change jump straight to the final step of managing transitions, which is the new beginning, but skip over the important first two steps.

Change is not necessarily going to be smooth and without issues, and acknowledging those rough transitions will make the difference as to whether change is successful. Successful change can be measured by asking if the people affected did things differently, if they let go of the past and went through that difficult time between the old way and the new way, and if they came out doing things in the new way (Bridges & Bridges, 2009).

One reason that change initiatives may fail is that leaders fail to create a sense of urgency (Kotter, 2012). If the participants don't understand the urgency of a reform, resistance is created. Leaders can get impatient, rush implementation, and either overestimate how much change they can impose, or underestimate the difficulty of moving people out of their comfort zones. Another reason change may fail is that there is not a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition. Kotter contends that if there is a struggle between a weak committee and tradition, then tradition will always win. Finally, change may fail if the vision is unclear, or communicated inadequately. Often, victory is declared too soon, and the change is not firmly anchored in the corporate culture. Lewin (1939) called this stage the "refreezing stage," which stabilizes the group in the new behavior to ensure that behaviors are relatively free from regression. Communicating the vision over and over will help "refreeze" the new behavior (Kotter, 2012).

Following the lead of change models in business, several prominent researchers have presented models for change in education. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) concluded that there are two levels of changes affecting educators: first order change and second order change. First order change was identified as those changes which were perceived to be an extension of the past that fit into existing paradigms. First order changes were likely to be accepted because of the common agreement that innovation was necessary; therefore the attributes of required of leaders to implement these changes differed from those required to implement second order change. Second order change often conflicts with prevailing values and concerns, and requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Resistance may occur during second order change because only those who have a broader perspective of the organization viewed the innovation as necessary.

Twenty-one responsibilities were identified for leaders that correlate to student achievement. Leaders implementing first order change must address at least nine of the responsibilities, simply to create a purposeful community. The responsibilities of a leader in first order change include inspiring and leading challenging new innovations, establishing strong lines of communication with stakeholders, and recognizing and celebrating accomplishments as well as acknowledging failures. They must demonstrate an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff through relationship; be visible through quality contact and interactions with stakeholders; foster a sense of culture through shared beliefs; and involve faculty in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. Further, they must be aware of the details and undercurrents in the institution, and use this information to address current and potential problems through situational awareness.

For those leaders implementing second order change, Marzano, et al. (2005) identified seven responsibilities necessary for effective leadership. These include: knowledge of best practices of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and an understanding of how the selected change might affect current educational practices; willingness to be the driving force behind the change initiative; commitment to ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices; willingness to challenge the status quo to inspire faculty to operate at the edge of their competence and monitor the efficacy and impact on student learning; flexibility; and finally the ability to communicate to all stakeholders. In the responsibilities that are common between both first and second order change, the first order change is broader and more universal, whereas the second order change is specific to the innovation or reform being implemented.

Darling-Hammond (1997) revealed features of leadership that support innovation in education. First, a culture of inquiry is necessary to provide a context for adult engagement. Secondly, leaders must understand the ebb and flow of change, which include the swells of enthusiasm, as well as the undertow of resistance, and tolerate the cross currents, eddies and still waters that characterize the teacher's engagement with change. She reiterated the need for a clear and compelling vision, and that the leader remains steadfast to the vision, even through difficulties. As so many other educators have advocated, time for teachers to meet and discuss teaching and learning and make recommendations and plans for change is crucial to change being successful and sustainable.

Summary

The research has clearly shown that education has been in a state of reform for many decades and is likely to continue to undergo change, as long as there are unacceptable

achievement gaps between groups of children, as long as technology continues to advance, as long as students graduate from high school unprepared for the workforce and post-secondary training and education, and as long as new leadership comes along. Although there is a great deal of research in the education field indicating that there are changes that can make a dramatic difference for students, the experiences of the educators who are involved in the implementation have not been explored. In addition, there are many change models that have been proposed and utilized in the business world, but they don't appear to have been considered in the implementation of change in education. This study will attempt to fill that gap in order to better understand the experiences of educators who are involved in continuous change.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter details the research methods approach that was used in this study. The first section is an overview including the theoretical perspective in which this research is grounded. The next section describes the research design and rationale based on the purpose of the study and its guiding research questions, and provides an overview of the site and participants. The chapter concludes with a description of the data collection procedures and data analysis that was used, and a review of trustworthiness, including issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Overview and Theoretical Perspective

Change is inevitable in education today, as leaders strive to improve the education that all children receive, but change is difficult, and takes a toll on the practitioners who are mandated to implement continuous change. As the literature review revealed, change is necessary, and change that has been shown to make a significant difference in overall student achievement is possible to implement (Schmoker, 2006). What has not been reported in the literature is how teachers experience change. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand how teachers experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Merriam (2009) asserted that the research perspective best suited to studying affective and emotional human experiences is phenomenology. The aim of phenomenology, according to Moustakas (1994), is to “determine what an experience means to those who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” and from there to derive the “essence” of the experience (p.13). Larkin and Thompson (2012) agreed, adding that the goal of phenomenology is to identify what matters to the participant as well as what the experience means to them. Willig and Billin (2012) noted that interpretative phenomenology

seeks to capture and portray the quality and texture of the participants' experience and to explore the meanings and significance, taking the view that interpretation is both desirable and inevitable. Phenomenology seeks to understand human experience by getting as close as possible to the participants' experience: "to step into their shoes and look at the world through their eyes- in other words, to enter their world" (p. 119). Since it is impossible to enter another person's lived experience, phenomenological researchers depend on the descriptive accounts of experience, either spoken or written.

Based on the purpose of this study, it made sense to use an interpretative phenomenological approach within a specific case study to better understand the experiences of teachers as they implemented a major reform. Merriam (2009) identified four categories of the epistemological approaches for qualitative research and gave examples of how a single research topic would be viewed in each perspective. Using this study as an example, an interpretative perspective would not test change theory, set up an experiment to see how people respond to change or measure if the change worked, but would be more interested in understanding the experiences of teachers as they implement change. In addition a researcher may be interested in discovering what issues differentiate those who adapted to the change more smoothly from those who felt that change was a major upheaval. A phenomenological study may also suggest challenges that leaders need to address if necessary change is to be implemented.

An additional feature of interpretative phenomenology is that ideally the subjects leave the interview "really feeling understood," which van Kaam described as "feeling understanding from a person; perceiving that a person co-experiences what things mean to subject; perceiving that the person accepts subject; feeling satisfaction; feeling relief from initial loneliness, feeling safe..." (Van Kaam, 1966; in Moustakas, 1994, p. 12). My goal for this study was to leave the

teachers feeling that I understood what their experiences were like as they navigated major change, and feeling safe in sharing their stories with me.

Research Design

I selected interpretative phenomenology within a single qualitative case study approach to explore teachers' experiences in River Canyon School District as a significant district-wide systemic change was implemented. A case study approach is often used when a unique phenomenon can be identified, and real-life situations can be used to create stories for the reader in order to clarify and provide an in-depth understanding of a situation (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In addition case study can be a powerful tool to illuminate the process of change through the meticulous description of a specific case (Gillham, 2000). Case study provided insights and illuminated meanings that will expand the reader's understanding of a particular experience (Merriam, 2009) and is chosen when the research question to be answered is "how" or "why" (Yin, 2003). Case study research methodology is an appropriate pragmatic research tool in order to understand the complexity of a given problem and to support decision making (Scholz & Tietje, 2005). All of these explanations suggested that the purpose of this study would be fulfilled through using a case study approach. The stories of the teachers were told to provide an in-depth understanding of their experiences with change, and the process of the change was illuminated through the descriptions. In addition, this study was rooted in pragmatism and sought to create understanding of what people experienced when faced with major change, focusing on the practical implications of the research (Creswell, 2007). In the pragmatic tradition, I asked the questions about implementation and the lived experiences in order to understand how teachers experienced change.

The study was a single case bounded by time and by a particular school district as a district wide reform was implemented over a two year period. Consistent with interpretative phenomenological case study design, the primary method of data collection was the interview (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Scholz & Tietje, 2005). In this study I used open-ended interview questions beginning with several neutral introductory questions to lay the foundation for questions that would help me get at the participant's perceptions, opinions, values, and emotions around the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

A key feature of phenomenology is the ability of the researcher to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being studied, a process described by Moustakes (1994) as *epoche*. As I was familiar with the reform being implemented in RCSD and knew many of the key players, I made a conscious effort to practice *epoche* and bracket any preconceived ideas of what I would see or what I would discover.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand how teachers experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. The following research questions guided this study.

1. How did teachers experience the process of change in the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum?
2. How did the teachers feel about the process and the results of the reform?
3. How did continual change affect teachers' motivation, desire to teach, and their own personal motivation to teach?

Site

In order to protect participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout this study. River Canyons School District (RCSD) is a large suburban school district in a western state that enrolls over 22,000 students in a county that covers over 3,341 sq miles, with a population of 147,000 residents. The district encompasses one city with a population of 58,000, and seven small rural outlying communities. There are 25 elementary schools, eight middle schools, and four high schools, plus several alternative schools.

RCSD was selected for this study as they have recently undertaken a large district-wide reform: the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum which affected every teacher in the district. RCSD was also selected as a convenience factor since I spent much of my career as a teacher and administrator in this district. This not only allowed me to have contacts to access participants, but I was interested in hearing the stories of those with whom I once worked, and those whom I have not met previously on how significant change impacted them.

The demographic profile of the district is not ethnically diverse, with 73% White, 23% Hispanic, and less than 1% Asian, Black, or Native American. This is typical of rural communities in the west, but like other similar communities, the ethnic diversity is changing rapidly (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

Participants

Merriam suggested that purposeful sampling is appropriate for case study research after the “case” is selected (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants to “discover, understand, and gain insight,” and thus a sample must be selected that will yield the richest information (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Willig and Billin (2012) recommended that participants must be recruited on the basis of their ability to provide accounts that will

“illuminate the quality, texture, and meaning of that experience.” (p. 121). This fit my goals in the study, as I wanted to understand the experiences of the teachers, and gain insight into how they experienced major change. This type of sampling reflected the purpose of the study and described the criteria and the importance of the criteria.

Participants in this study included teachers from multiple grade levels, different disciplines, from a cross-section of the district, and with at least five years of teaching experience. The rationale for including multiple grade levels, locations, and discipline areas was to view the same phenomenon from different angles, a process that constitutes one form of triangulation (Willig, 2001). I also included teachers with different levels of teaching experience. The literature identified veteran teachers as those with ten or more years of experience; seasoned teachers as those with four to nine years; and novice teachers as those with less than four years (Rulison, 2012). I interviewed seasoned and veteran teachers because they were more likely to have been through changes and reform over their careers than beginning teachers. Another assumption I had in using teachers with more experience is that they were committed to teaching, believing in what they are doing, or they most likely would have left the teaching profession by this time (Franklin & Snow-Gerono, 2007).

Teachers were recruited based on having the necessary experience to describe the phenomenon. Creswell (2007) described this strategy as criterion sampling, when all the participants studied met the criterion of having experienced the phenomenon. Each teacher selected worked in RCSD before the GVCIA and stayed through the years of implementation. I selected thirteen educators from different grade levels (elementary, middle school and high school) and from different schools in the district. The participants included eight high school teachers, four middle school teachers and two elementary teachers. One teacher changed from

elementary to middle school during this study, so I included her experience in both levels. Teachers from all four feeder systems in RCSD were included as well as two alternative schools. Their academic disciplines included English, math, science, and social studies. This variety of backgrounds provided the thick, rich data I was looking for (Merriam, 2009). Selection of participants utilized criterion sampling to ensure that the participants met the criteria of at least five years of teaching experience and were from the various locations in the community. Nominated sampling was also used to gain representation from diverse cases in order to fully describe multiple perspectives about the phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). I asked former colleagues to “nominate” teachers from their school from each core discipline area who were involved with the GVCIA implementation. During the interviews, participants suggested other colleagues who would provide a different perspective, providing a snowball sampling. I interviewed the nominated teachers to determine who was interested in participating in the study, and selected the teachers to create a pool of participants to provide the cross section described for the interviews. I chose the participants based on their ability to provide full descriptions of their lived experience of the implementation of the GVCIA (Moustakes, 1994). I had a pool of more than twenty teachers who were willing to participate, but after the thirteenth interview, I began to hear similar experiences with the phenomenon and felt that I had reached saturation.

I prepared a list of potential interview questions to provide a framework, but allowed the participants the opportunity to respond as their story unfolded (Merriam, 2009). I designed the questions to be open-ended and non-directive, in order to provide each participant with an opportunity to share their experiences (Willig, 2001). The initial list of questions can be found in Appendix C.

Data Collection

Interviews

The first step was to secure permission from the Institutional Review Board from Colorado State University and then a letter of support from RCSD to begin to gather data. Once the requisite permissions were place, I set up interviews with each participant. Interviews were selected as the primary instrument for data collection in order to truly understand each teacher's experience. Kvale (1996) defined the research interview as an attempt to "understand the world from the subject's points of view, to unfold the meanings of people's experience, [and] to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 1). Yin (2003) described the strength of an interview as insightful, targeted, and focused directly on the case study topic.

Initially I conducted ninety minute tape-recorded interviews. I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after the meeting. Upon completion of the transcription and analysis, the transcripts and textural descriptions were emailed to the participants to allow them the opportunity to respond and clarify any confusing or misrepresented statements. All changes and suggestions were noted and taken into consideration in the final analysis.

I kept field notes during each interview to capture any details that might not be recorded in the interview transcription. This included body language, emotional responses, or other telling characteristics that might provide additional insight along with the actual spoken words for data collection.

In addition to field notes I kept a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process. Weekly entries reflected on thoughts, perceptions, and biases that were emerging, and aided in the analysis of the interview data. My journal allowed me to reflect on my emotional response to

each participant and to record my initial ideas about themes that were emerging (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

Document Analysis

An important distinction in case study research is the use of multiple methods of data collection. In addition to interviews I analyzed documents that pertained to this study to provide context for the change that has been implemented and to confirm or disconfirm what I learned in my interviews. Documents that were publically available on the district website and others provided by the chief academic officer and the director for curriculum and assessment were examined for background information. Documents available on the website included assessment data and results of standardized tests, growth model data, and performance data, which substantiated the need for the reform. Other documents included data from principals from walk-through observations, both before and after the implementation of the GVCIA and information from the Assessment Plan to Improve Districts (APID) report which was the report that initiated the reform. The purpose of these data quantified the teaching practices of the teachers before and after the implementation. The website also included the resources provided to the teachers for adoption of the guaranteed curriculum, with the pacing guides, lesson plans, and numerous additional resources, such as video streaming, lesson ideas, etc. A matrix of the sources of document analysis can be found in Appendix D.

Observation

Another source of data included observations. Observations differ from interviews in that first, observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs, and secondly, observations are a firsthand account of the phenomenon, rather than a secondhand account from an interview (Merriam, 2009). In this case observations were used, as

was the document analysis, to provide the context for the change in RCSD and to confirm or disconfirm the information from interviews.

There are inherent issues in observing as a source of data collection, however, and my role must be clearly defined (Creswell, 2007; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). An observer can be either an insider by participating in the event or an “outsider” as a complete observer. Lofland and Lofland (1995) believed that in order to collect the richest possible data, the researcher must earn “intimate familiarity” through face-to-face contact with, and “prolonged immersion” in the setting (p.16). On the other hand, Creswell (2007) preferred the role of outsider first, while becoming an insider over time.

In this case study I assumed two stances (Merriam, 2009). First I was an “observer as participant” in a professional learning community (PLC) of teachers who were implementing the new curriculum. Secondly I was a “participant as observer” in administrative meetings as both groups experienced the first two years of implementation. There were special considerations for both roles; my observer activities were known to the group in both cases, but in the “observer as participant” role participation was secondary to the role of information gatherer, and in the “participant as observer role” the observer activities were secondary to the role as participant (Merriam, 2009). The more difficult role to navigate was the observer as participant role because the professional learning communities are designed as opportunities for teachers to lead and guide the work of the PLC and to work collaboratively with each other. As a result it was natural for there to be some guardedness and potential for my presence to change the situation being studied (Merriam, 2009). Lofland and Lofland (1995) discussed the importance of “connections,” stating that gaining entry to a setting or getting permission to do an interview is greatly expedited. As a long time teacher and coach in the district, finding connections with a

PLC to become an observer was readily accomplished, and although the potential for my presence to change the situation was possible, it did not appear to be the case (Merriam, 2009, p. 127). While at first my presence may have created more polite and stilted behaviors, the social setting soon returned to its normal functioning (Merriam, 2009).

In all three situations, (interviews, document analysis, and observation), narrative structure was used to describe details, incorporating quotes from informants, and beginning the interpretations of the process (Creswell, 2007). Gillham (2000) suggested interpretation should take place throughout the progression, as waiting and analyzing the data after all information has been collected is a formidable task. I began the analysis process even during the initial data collection, and as soon as possible after transcribing the interviews began the coding and deeper analysis. Although the timing of the interviews prevented me from doing each transcription and analysis before moving on to the next, I frequently and continually analyzed the data by writing in my researcher journal.

Data Analysis

Following the guidelines for qualitative analysis outlined by Merriam (2009) the first step after the first interview was to gather the transcript of the interview or the field notes of the observation, read over the purpose of the study, then read and re-read the data, making comments in the margins (Merriam, 2009). Most prominent researchers suggest that data should be collected and analyzed simultaneously as waiting until all interviews are completed is an overwhelming task (Merriam, 2009; Gillham, 2000). In accordance with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) I conducted an initial “free-coding” in order to get all preliminary ideas and reactions recorded, writing everything that came to mind in the margins,

capturing thoughts, reflections, tentative themes, and possible ideas to pursue in the next round of data collection (Willig, 2001; Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

In the next stage of analysis I identified and labeled the conceptual themes that captured the essential quality of what was represented from each section of the text. These thoughts were recorded in the right margins. I chose to use large sheets of paper for each interview, giving me space and lines to record my thoughts. After completing the second round of data collection and analysis, I compared the two interviews. I repeated the process with each new set of data. This process allowed the data to be organized and refined when all the interviews were completed rather than beginning the process of analysis after the totality of the data had been collected. The third stage of IPA was to begin to introduce structure into the analysis or what Merriam (2009) called “making sense of the data” (p. 175). I listed the themes that I identified in the last stage and began to see how they clustered together to share meanings or references and gave each cluster of themes a label that captured the essence. I continued this with each interview until it was apparent that the sources were exhausted or saturated, and there was an “emergence of regularities” (Merriam, 2009, p. 177) or that the new information being unearthed was veering away from the clusters identified thus far (Willig, 2001). The final stage of analysis was to create a summary table of the structured themes. I included brief quotations or key words that illustrated each theme, trying only to include the themes that captured something about the quality of the participant’s experiences with change.

One way I worked to prevent my own projections from tainting my interpretation was to stick close to the raw data while I was developing themes and codes (Boyatzis, 1998). I also eventually shifted to a more “deductive” mode, comparing my findings to what was found in the literature (Merriam, 2009). Thirdly, I tried as much as possible to heed the caution of Boyatzis

(1998) that because qualitative research is subjective, the interpretation can be vastly affected by the researcher's mood and style. He recommended the following considerations: to be rested and not preoccupied when conducting thematic analysis; to develop a clear code; to establish consistency of judgment; to have the self-control to stop coding when preoccupied or worried about something else, and return at a later date; and finally, to suspend judgment. Knowing myself, I had to be continually aware of my tendency to push too long and too hard, so I included this as part of my data analysis plan, and I forced myself to heed the advice of my advisor and my family when it was apparent that I needed to step back for a time.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research requires a different set of concepts for establishing validity and reliability than quantitative research. The terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability substitute for terms common to quantitative research; internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). All four areas were addressed in this study.

Credibility

Internal validity or credibility deals with the question of "how research findings match reality" (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Credibility can be demonstrated through triangulation, which includes the use of multiple methods, sources of data, investigators, or theories (Denzin, 1989). The use of multiple methods in this case included interviews, document search or observations, so what a participant tells me in an interview was checked against what I observed in a PLC or administrators meeting, or read in documents. In order to establish trustworthiness I verified the description and interpretation of the transcriptions through member-checks, and allowed the informants to provide feedback on the initial draft by answering the following questions: Was the

description of the implementation accurate? Were the themes identified consistent with your experiences? Were any important themes missing? Do the suggestions for improvement seem reasonable? Is there anything else you would like to include? A third strategy contributed to the integrity of the research is the use of my reflexive journal that I used to capture any potential areas of bias throughout the process (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as the degree to which the findings of a study can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the current project. One strategy to enhance transferability is “to give careful attention to selecting the study sample” (Merriam, 1009, p. 227). I included maximum variation in my sample through my selection process which allowed for greater applicability for my readers. Although reform projects will differ greatly across school districts and institutions, it is my desire that the findings of this study will transfer to other educational settings as change and reform are implemented.

Dependability

Dependability or reliability refers to the extent to which a study would yield the same results if it were replicated (Merriam, 2009). Because a qualitative study deals with human behavior, replicability is more challenging than in a quantitative study because no two human experiences are the same but the method is replicable. In order to achieve replicability, I kept an audit trail in my researcher journal that described in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and decisions that were made throughout the journey, and recorded memos on the process of conducting the research while I was in the process, including reflections, questions, and the decisions made along the way.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the research findings are derived from the research data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The findings of this study have been evaluated by my advisor and faculty and staff in RCSD throughout the process to ensure confirmability.

Summary

Interpretative phenomenological case study was used to explore the “lived” experiences of teachers as they moved through a major reform in RCSD. Interviews were the primary source of data collection, and data was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in order to explore the phenomenon of how teachers experience a district-wide curricular change.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter four presents the findings of *How teachers experience change: A phenomenological case study of a district-wide curricular reform*. This study examined the experiences of teachers who have participated in a district-wide reform to adopt and implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVCIA). As I began listening to the voices of the participants, it became apparent that the implementation of the GVCIA was impacted by the number of other changes happening in the district at the same time, so the original focus of the study expanded to include other changes. The participants tell the stories of their experiences through this substantial change as it fits into the context of other changes they have experienced over their careers.

The chapter is organized in four parts. In Part 1 the research site is described. The teachers are introduced in Part 2 with a brief biography to describe their background in teaching and then a summary of other changes in which they have been involved. Part 3 presents the structures that describe how the phenomenon was experienced. Through analyzing the transcripts of the participants, the structures emerged to describe the participants' experiences in the form of three continua. The first structure describes the actual case study on the continuum of "*I like it... but.*" The second structure describes the leadership styles during the implementation on the continuum of *Leadership: Empowering through Demoralizing*. The third structure describes the attitudes toward change in general on the continuum of *Attitudes toward change: A Grand Adventure through Don't they trust me?* (Figure 1). Part 4 synthesizes the three structures that describe the phenomenon. The chapter concludes in part five with the meaning and the essence of the phenomenon, *Hearts in the Game*. Their stories will show the range of

experiences as they moved through the implementation of the GVCIA in River Canyons School District and what contributed to keeping their *hearts in the game*.

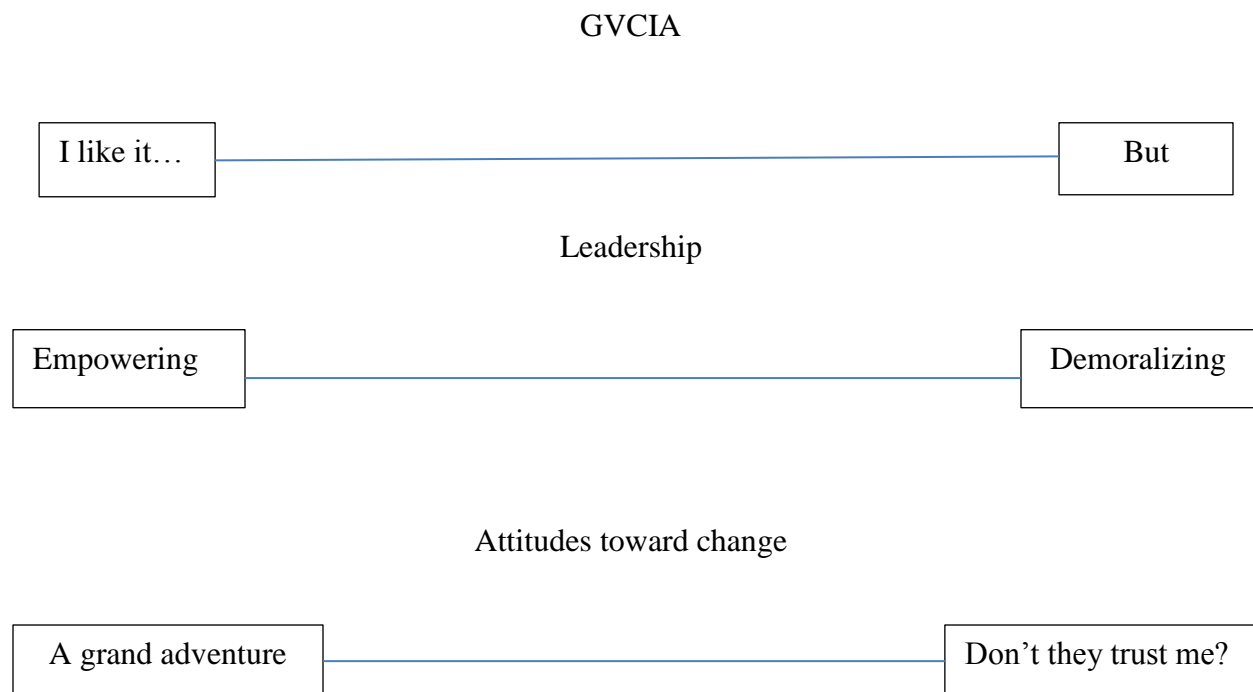


Figure 1: Continua depicting range of experiences

Part 1: The Site

River Canyons School District (RCSD) is a large suburban school district in a western state that enrolls over 22,000 students. There are 25 elementary schools, eight middle schools, and four high schools, plus several alternative schools. The district is structured so that each high school represents a quadrant of the district, with elementary schools and middle schools feeding into the local high school. The alternative schools are schools of choice, meaning that students from those schools can come from any one of the feeder systems. RCSD implemented a guaranteed and viable curriculum in answer to several years of low test scores among its students, and every school was included in the process.

Part 2: The Participants

The phenomenon of how teachers experience change is explored through the stories of teachers from River Canyons School District who participated in the implementation of the GVCIA. In order to better understand their experiences as the phenomena are explored, a brief introduction of each teacher in the study is presented. Participants included eight high school teachers from each of the area high schools and alternative schools, three middle school teachers from different feeder systems, and two elementary teachers. Participants are introduced in the order in which they were interviewed.

Rachel

Rachel is a high school English teacher who has been teaching for eight years total and seven years at her current school. She originally worked in an alternative high school in what she described as a “hands-on therapy school” for students who had been expelled from their home high school. That experience was her “hardest and craziest year of teaching,” in part because there was no curriculum, she was teaching science instead of her own field of English, and she had to create every lesson from scratch as a first year teacher. The fact that Rachel, as a novice teacher, worked with the most difficult students in district made her “go home crying every day.” As difficult as that experience was, Rachel decisively stated that the experience created who she was going to become as an educator- “someone who would not give up on kids.”

When she moved to RCSD and began teaching high school English, she experienced multiple changes in leadership. Her current principal initially implemented the GVCIA very strictly, but has since allowed teachers to make some adjustments. Rachel appreciated the GVCIA because it raised the standards of what students are expected to know and be able to do,

but she struggles with the speed at which it was implemented, and the lack of training provided to teach the new curriculum.

Brian

Brian is a high school teacher who has been teaching for 34 years in three different departments. He described himself as someone who adapted to whatever he was asked to do and who “won’t rock the boat.” He insisted that he would find a way to make the best of whatever he was asked to do whether he completely agreed with the change or not. He believed that teachers can find what works for them even within the unified curriculum. He “loves the kids, loves teaching and loves teaching math,” and he wanted to still feel that way as long as he taught. His advice for new teachers was to “remember why you got into teaching in the first place, that the classroom is your world and those kids sitting there, that is what you focus on, and you give them your best.” He also urged all teachers to not worry about potential changes before they actually happen and reminded them:

When a problem comes up, then you problem solve, you troubleshoot and you solve it... Take it as it comes, deal with it when it gets here, and in the meantime, just go in and do what you got into education to do and enjoy it.

Pam

Pam is an elementary teacher who has been in education for 24 years. Because most of the teachers in her building have been teaching for many years, there has been considerable resistance to the GVCIA. Pam embraced the implementation, saying “as teachers, we need to all be learning and growing.” When she first started teaching, she spent hours going through books, using sticky notes to mark ideas, creating every lesson from scratch, and trying to align with the state standards. She believed the GVCIA provided a structure that is aligned to the standards and

would have helped her through her early years. She also appreciated the professional development that is available to any teachers willing to participate.

Pam chose to respect her leaders as she stated, “You don’t tell your boss ‘no’.” She acknowledged that it is often not the building principal who brings change but that change many times came from other sources. She freely admitted her need for help, to collaborate with others, and to have consistency in the curriculum. She suggested that some teachers are resistant to the GVCIA because they were asked to change their way of teaching even though they had good test scores, and parents requested them to teach their children over and over.

Tom

Tom is a high school English teacher who had been teaching for 24 years. He has taught in several schools in RCSD and had been at his current school for eight years. Tom felt that his mission as a teacher was to empower his students to “want to change themselves, and move in the direction they need to, and in so doing, to change the world.” He believed that was his calling, and that clear vision enabled him to adapt to changes that come his way. Although he didn’t believe that standardization would improve education, he did understand that the GVCIA was implemented so that there would be consistency throughout the district. He discovered that the only way he could maintain his integrity as a teacher was to find what he was passionate about as an educator and adapt those critical elements to the GVCIA. Tom believed his ability to adapt to numerous changes was related to the fact that he has other career choices available to him, and if he ever felt that he wasn’t able to teach effectively, he would have the opportunity to make a change.

Ruthie

Ruthie came into teaching after a previous career in business, which gave her a unique perspective on many of the changes that took place in RCSD. After the banking industry experienced an extreme recession, she realized that it was time to find a new career. She made a list of all of her interests and passions, and on her lists teaching kept coming up. So after raising her children, she returned to college and earned a Master of Arts degree in English literature and a teaching certificate. She had currently been teaching for nine years, two at middle school and seven at her current high school. Ruthie's background in business and the banking industry made her much more willing to accept the idea that there should be consistency across the district so that all students are equally prepared. She also supported the notion of raising the rigor of the curriculum, and even in her mixed ability classroom, she felt the increased rigor raised the levels of all the students. Her principal allowed some choices in the implementation of the GVCIA and she felt that approach allowed her to adjust to the changes.

Pete

Pete has been an educator for almost 30 years. He had another career before returning to college for a teaching certificate. He taught high school and worked for more than five principals in 15 years. He was an active participant in numerous district committees and stayed very involved in continuous change initiatives. He embraced the implementation of the GVCIA because he believed that the consistency across the district was best for students. He especially liked the emphasis on nonfiction writing for 11th graders and felt that essential American documents were more useful for students to read and write about than literature. He felt like education in the district needed to change because teachers had been complacent about their work.

Lindy

Lindy has been teaching for more than 20 years at both the middle school and elementary level. She changed from elementary school to middle school after the first year of the GVCIA implementation and so was able to provide perspective from multiple backgrounds. She had been through numerous whole scale changes in her teaching career, citing earlier versions of unified curriculums, basal readers to whole language, and the beginnings of data-driven decision-making. She worked under seven principals before moving to RCSD and has had two different principals since then. There was a difference in how both of her RCSD administrators view their roles; her first principal was very rigid about implementation of the GVCIA, and the second principal was more easy-going in his expectations.

Lindy chose to view change as a “grand adventure,” but had many stories to tell of colleagues who felt quite differently. She believed the GVCIA provided consistency and in fact gave her a tremendous feeling of relief, knowing that her own children would receive the same education in their schools that she was providing in her school. Another reason for her relief was the fact that researched best practices were used to write the curriculum meant she didn’t have to depend on her own idea of what was right.

Sarah

Sarah has been a teacher for 23 years, all at the high school level. She worked as an administrator for several years and recently returned to the classroom. She willingly returned to teaching because she felt that teachers are asked to do so much through continuous reforms, and if the leaders can’t do the same work themselves, they have no right to ask teachers to do it. She believed that it is easy to forget the day in and day out of planning when working in administrative positions. She brought a unique viewpoint to this study as she had been both a

classroom teacher and a teacher leader and was able to see change from multiple perspectives. Although she appreciated the increased rigor of the GVCIA, she had serious concerns about the implementation. She felt the process moved too fast and the final product was less satisfactory than it might have been if more time was spent on the creation.

Jack

Jack had been teaching math for 21 years and had been in the same building for his entire career. He coached various sports over the years in addition to teaching. His attitude about change was very pragmatic and he said several times, “Your boss is your boss, so you just make it work.” The building where he taught had been through numerous changes including scheduling changes and principal changes, and Jack noted that the teachers in his building had gotten numb to change. Jack recognized that the fear of the unknown will cause people to have a mentality of “the sky is falling,” but in the end, when they discovered that they had lived through a major change, they didn’t fear the next change as much.

Jack commented on the difference between his colleagues in the math department and other departments, saying, “ maybe it’s because as math teachers we are more task-oriented, but we just said, ‘let’s do this’ and cranked it out.” He described other departments as being more likely to argue and discuss for weeks about one issue, whereas his department focused on just getting it done.

Janie

Janie was the youngest teacher I interviewed, with five years of experience. She had an interesting perspective as she came from another school district who had already implemented some of the changes happening in RCSD. She believed that the GVCIA was a necessary change but felt that the time frame was rushed and that there were not enough voices included in the

development. Her experience in the district was that only a few voices are ever heard, even though she had volunteered to serve on a number of committees. In her building she felt the “cream-of-the-crop” teachers really embraced the GVCIA because they believed in rigor. Janie described the school culture as believing that education should not be “comfortable” or “easy” but that the role of the teachers is to push the buttons of the students and make them stretch. She believed that the GVCIA encouraged that to happen but that there was still a great deal of work to be done.

Daisy

Daisy has been in education for ten years, but left the field after her first two years, feeling like teaching left her feeling emotionally drained. She noted that when she started teaching she was exceptionally young, and that teaching high school wasn’t a good fit for her at that time. After working for two years in a completely unrelated field, she had the realization that although she didn’t leave work every day feeling completely drained, she also left feeling completely empty by the fact that she hadn’t “made a difference.” She felt that her years away from teaching helped her remember why she had gone into teaching in the first place.

Daisy originally felt that the GVCIA was a positive move and in fact worked on the committee that created the curriculum, but she felt strongly that the emphasis was in the wrong place. Although education “changes and changes and changes” she believed that until what happens outside the classroom changes and society begins to value education, lasting change will never happen.

Todd

Todd has been teaching for 17 years, and has taught science and math at elementary, middle school and high school. He absolutely believed in the concept of the GVCIA, but didn't agree with all of the implementation, and felt that some administrators misinterpreted the intent of the unified curriculum. He thought that there was a lack of trust in the administration by the teachers that hindered the implementation of the GVCIA. Another reason for the concern regarding the implementation was that there were so many other significant changes happening at the same time that seemed to him to be a high level of stress in the district. He loved teaching and turned down opportunities to be in leadership because he preferred to work with students in the classroom.

This study examined the experiences of seasoned and veteran teachers ranging from five years of experience to thirty-four years. The majority of the participants were veteran teachers with the average span of their careers numbering more than 19 years of experience.

Section one provided a brief introduction of each participant in order to give a face to the voices as they describe their experiences with change. The next section will introduce the structures that emerged as their stories were analyzed.

Part 2: Introduction to the structures

Teachers in public education today find themselves in a continuous cycle of change. For some teachers, change can be seen as an adventure and necessary both to improve public education and to personally keep learning and growing as well. For others, continuous change can be disheartening. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand how teachers experience the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Although the focus of this case study was the implementation of the GVCIA, it was impossible to ignore the other changes swirling around. In fact, the story might have been very different if participants were only focused on implementing the new curriculum, when in reality the GVCIA was only one of countless other changes. For example, among the changes included the drastic budget cuts the district had been dealing with over the last three years, resulting in loss of services, programs, support, and even jobs. Secondly, almost every participant worked in a building where at least one administrator had changed, and most schools had experienced changes in administration year after year. In addition, middle schools were going through multiple changes as they adopted standards based grading and writing across the curriculum. Every school was getting prepared for a new student information system, the math curriculum had recently been completely overhauled, a new teaching technique called graduated release of responsibility was being implemented in every building, and looming on the horizon was a new teacher evaluation system that would evaluate teachers based on the test scores of their students. As if all those changes weren't enough, some schools were on turn-around status, meaning that the test scores of their students had remained low for several years, requiring a massive amount of change mandated by the state, in addition to all the RCSD and building level changes. The GVCIA was implemented slightly ahead of the new common core curriculum from the state, and even though the curriculum had been created using the common core standards, there were still major changes predicted. Along with the common core standards, the state will be implementing an entirely new assessment system, requiring additional technology, student preparation, and thoughtful curricular timing. These changes were all happening in RCSD at the time of this study, yet the veteran teachers had experienced so many other changes over their careers that, as Jack put it, "you do get numb after awhile." Janie, even as the youngest teacher in the study,

observed that the veteran teachers in her building just ignored many of the mandates, believing that they, too, would soon go away. Daisy spoke for many of the participants when she lamented:

It changes so often and the consistency is gone... I mean every year, it's something different. It changes and changes and changes, and teachers are trying to catch up with it and kids will never catch up with it.

The experiences of this group of educators, selected for their diversity from various disciplines, grade levels, years of experience, and areas within the district, did not fall into neat, formal structures, but rather, were better expressed on a continuum. As I analyzed each interview, a structure would start to form, but then with the next participant, the structure no longer fit. Even within each participant's story, it became apparent that his or her experience was actually more of a continuum than a structure. A continuum suggested that a range of possibilities existed with each element varying slightly from each other. Once I began looking at the data with the idea that there were actually many elements which described their experiences, three continua emerged. The first continuum illustrated the content and the process of the case study as teachers described the GVCIA as *I like it...but*. The second continuum describes how each participant experienced the leadership involved in the implementation, which range from *Empowering* to *Demoralizing*. The final continuum describes each participant's attitudes towards continuous change, which fall between "*Change as a grand adventure*" and change as a feeling of "*Don't they trust me?*" This section develops how participants experienced each continuum.

Introduction to GVCIA: I like it... but

Educators are professionals. Because they are professionals, they are often reluctant to reveal negative aspects of their jobs, so they speak respectfully about their schools, their

principals, their colleagues and the district. Because of that outlook, when I asked questions that would lead them to talk about their experiences with the implementation of the GVCIA, they were initially quite positive and wanting to leave the best impression of their worlds. It was only through lengthy discussion that reservations began to come out. This led to a continuum of experience titled *GVCIA: I like it...but*. The word *but* was an appropriate way to describe those reservations. The word *but* can be used to introduce a statement that adds something to a previous statement and usually contrasts with it in some way. People often use *but* to describe an exception or contradiction. The Old English definition for *but* is “Behold the ultimate truth.” Often what came out later in the interview after the initial polite comments were the true feelings of the participants- the feelings after the *but* described the “ultimate truth.”

I like it...

Without exception, every teacher in the study felt that there were positive aspects to the GVCIA. On one end of the continuum, almost every participant in the study understood why a unified curriculum was necessary. Daisy echoed the sentiments of most of the participants when she said that, “in the beginning a district-wide curriculum seemed like a good idea, to get everyone going in the same direction.” Pete was aware of the change early on due to serving on numerous committees in the district, and he embraced the concept of a unified curriculum. He felt that both his department specifically but also the other English departments in the district needed the direction provided by the GVCIA because they had been getting complacent about how they taught. As the experiences of the participants were analyzed, three elements emerged on the positive end of the continuum: feelings of relief, appreciation of the rigor, and appreciation for the consistency of the curriculum.

The opinions of the participants about the GVCIA varied, but most of the participants did understand why standardizing the curriculum had merit, and many appreciated the security of knowing that the curriculum was created by those they believed were experts. On the other end of the continuum, many participants felt that standardizing the curriculum would not have the results that were anticipated by the administration. The following section describes those feelings in detail.

Feelings of relief. Some teachers felt relief in the beginning at the idea of having a unified curriculum. Others, while not initially excited about the idea, were relieved when they discovered there was flexibility in the ways that the GVCIA could be implemented. In addition, teachers liked the idea of a unified curriculum because of the fact that they didn't have to rely solely on their own ideas, as they believed the GVCIA was created using sound researched educational theory. Finally, almost all of the participants felt that the curriculum would be helpful to new teachers, as this would give them a framework to help them through their initial years of teaching.

Relief that experts created the curriculum. Lindy recalled feeling a sense of relief that teachers would be getting a curriculum that was well-researched and not just "somebody's good idea" of what students should be learning. She emphasized the notion that students from every school would be getting the same education, and observed:

It took some of the weight off of my shoulders of having to be the almighty one, to try and figure out what's best for kids at this point in time, because it's been studied and it's been researched...I didn't have to be that one saying "I know what's best" because I don't always!

Lindy also spoke from a parent's point of view, and was relieved knowing that ideally her own children would have the same quality of education in their schools that she was providing to her students:

You just worry so much about your own kids and their education. I just wanted the best for them and therefore the best for my own students! But I guess that is more selfish than anything...but I just felt relief that they would be getting, not just someone's idea of what they should be learning, but something that was well planned, and they would be getting the same thing at Lincoln that they would be getting at Jefferson that they would be getting at Washington, and when they went on to high school, they would be getting the same thing at every high school.

These teachers *liked* the new curriculum because they didn't have to rely on their own ideas of what was best for students. They were relieved that they could trust in the work of experts for what to teach.

Relief to know what to teach. Reflecting back to her early years of teaching with no curriculum, when she went home every night crying because she had no idea of what she should be teaching, Rachel wished she would have had a plan that said this is what students should learn:

I wish when I was a teacher first coming in...I *wish* I would have had something that said, this is what we want kids to learn. I *wish* I would have had that. I felt so lost.

Pam recounted similar feelings, describing her early years of teaching when she would spend hours going through stacks of books, trying to decide which activities to teach for that standard:

If it was, let's see, standard #six, because I taught math and science, I would probably go through five or six books and put all these sticky notes, and I'd spend like two hours gleaning through all these books. And then I'm like, now which ones of these do I really want to use? Whereas now we have the GVCIA, it's much more directed.

Although Tom didn't agree in general with a unified curriculum, he did concede that first year teachers would find it refreshing to have an idea of what to teach, how long to spend on each unit, and have resources to help create units. Todd also felt the fact that the GVCIA was completely laid out with all the benchmarks, the standards, the formative and summative assessments and all the resources was a tremendous asset for new teachers.

Daisy also had mixed feelings about the GVCIA but felt like the curriculum worked really well for two demographics of teachers: very seasoned teachers, and for brand-new teachers. It was a relief for brand new teachers to have the guidance that the curriculum provided for what a student needed at each grade level, which could otherwise be a mystery to first time teachers. She also felt that seasoned teachers with years of experiencing in teaching and writing lesson plans could take the mandated content and then add their own personal style to make it their own, an idea that will be explored more in detail in a later section.

Appreciation of the rigor. Although Sarah had strong feelings about the process of the implementation, she was appreciative of the content. She conceded that:

As a language arts teacher who has taught AP English Language, I was actually kind of delighted by a lot of things in the common core because there was so much,...there were many standards that were connected to rhetoric, which had been a big part of what my teaching had been. So that part hadn't changed for me, but actually, I even liked it, that more kids would be invited to the table.

She understood the why of the implementation was because the state review from the APID committee had found that there was no consistency across the district in what was expected of students. She felt that their recommendations for a unified and more rigorous curriculum were solid. Rachel and Ruthie also appreciated the increased rigor, indicating that they liked what the curriculum was asking their students to do. Ruthie remembered feeling excited because she believed that raising the expectations for all students was a necessary and positive step. Like Lindy she was able to assess the value of the GVCIA from a parent's perspective, appreciating the unified curriculum across the district as well as the increased rigor of the content. She felt that most parents would be happy to see that teachers were being held accountable to the stricter standards and ensuring that more academic activities were happening in classrooms.

Pete also approved of the increased rigor of the common core, believing that it was “well-intended, and will prepare students for what’s out there in the future.” Even though many of his language arts colleagues felt the non-fiction documents were too dry and difficult to read and sadly missed the classical literature that had been the core of the curriculum in the past, he appreciated the emphasis on essential American documents and the more non-fiction approach.

All of these teachers appreciated the content and the increased rigor of the curriculum. They felt that this would allow all students an opportunity to access higher levels of thinking and learning who would not have been able to participate in the more rigorous course work. In the past, this opportunity was reserved for only the brightest students.

Appreciation of the consistency. Rachel felt that there was power in consistency by having a curriculum that aligned with the standards instead of allowing each teacher to create lessons just based on what they liked and wanted to teach. Before the GVCIA, she thought the standards were unclear and overwhelming because there were so many of them and she felt the common core standards that drove the GVCIA were clearer. Pam agreed, appreciating that the new curriculum was aligned with the standards and ensured that everyone would know what to teach and in what order.

Janie noted that she liked how the standards were broken down and that it was now evident what was essential for them to teach in each unit and grade level. Ruthie agreed, pointing out that if there is too much choice for teachers, there is no consistency across the district. Pete also expressed approval for the consistency and higher expectations, stating that teachers had become complacent in how they were presenting lessons. He felt that the curriculum gave veracity from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher which he felt had been lacking previously.

Todd recalled that when he first taught science in the district, teachers could choose when to teach the different units, and he remembered students who moved in from another school who had already spent a month on the chapter he was teaching or who completely missed what he had already taught. The intended outcome of the GVCIA would prevent students from missing whole units, or repeating subjects they had already mastered.

Another reason Rachel liked the consistency was that she knew that if she wanted to get ideas for how to present a lesson, or was struggling with a particular concept, that she could ask any of her colleagues because now they would be teaching the same lesson. The consistency of the curriculum meant that she could collaborate with other teachers around the district. She also believed:

Literacy is the key to success in our world, so if we are putting into place expectations that students can read difficult texts and write for a variety of purposes, then this makes sense in helping ensure that we are all on the same page, and all in agreement, that this is what a diploma from this district means. I think that's really important and valuable.

Rachel felt although she always got the “what and the why” in her teaching, the consistency of the GVCIA gave her the “how,” and that was freeing to her. She understood the standards and why they were important, but the GVCIA gave her the framework to be able to actually implement them well.

In general, teachers understood the stated goals driving the GVCIA, and believed that many components were effective. Although initially there were many concerns that a unified curriculum would take away the art of teaching, they were relieved to find out that in most cases, teachers would still be able to be creative and be themselves. They appreciated the increased rigor of the curriculum, and were relieved that there would be consistency across the district. The way the curriculum was implemented in some buildings gave a sense of relief *but* in every case,

there were concerns. The following section will explore those concerns by moving across the continuum.

But...

Although from a curriculum standpoint, most teachers could see the value in having consistency throughout the district, there were some real concerns as well. Ruthie noted:

The best way for change to be implemented is when everybody's happy and things are going smoothly, and the GVCIA was implemented at a period of high stress in the district...every single layer that you could look at to cause stress is happening right now.

Almost every participant alluded in some way to the financial crisis the district was facing, with programs, positions and resources cut across the board as a result of more than 30% of the district budget slashed over the prior three years. In addition to the financial stress, which as Ruthie pointed out “makes people the most unhappy,” administrative changes were taking place in nearly every building, and new state standards, a major new state-mandated high stakes assessment, and a new teacher evaluation system were looming. All of these changes contributed to increased anxiety, which was apparent at faculty meetings and professional learning community meetings.

One of the most significant criticisms that emerged from this structure had to do with timing. This included both the speed of the implementation and the timing of the implementation in the context of all the other changes going on in the district. In addition to the lack of time, the lack of other resources also contributed to the dissatisfaction with the implementation. Another major concern was whether standardizing the curriculum was even the right solution to raise the achievement of all students. Although as noted in the previous section although most could see that there were valid reasons for creating a curriculum that everyone would follow, not all of the participants believed that the GVCIA would have the desired effect of raising the level of

performance for everyone. These criticisms will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Not enough time

Although every participant commented that the lack of critical resources including time, money, textbooks, training and supplies hampered the implementation of the GVCIA, the time frame for the implementation appeared to be the most significant concern for most.

The speed of the implementation was brought up over and over as one of the most distressing aspects of the GVCIA. The APID report suggested that a change of this magnitude would take from three to five years to implement, yet it was implemented in less than six months in RCSD. Rachel believed that “we could have created a sense of success if we had moved in more slowly.” She felt like the difficulty of the curriculum would not have been an issue if there had been several years to build the background for the students rather than just suddenly increasing the rigor in the junior year. Sarah echoed her concerns and unequivocally stated that administration should have followed the guidelines from APID and taken more time to create the curriculum. Doing so would also allow the district to take advantage of the curriculum that would be created by the state in the next few years. In addition, since the district was going through a time of serious budget cuts, the curriculum was created not only in a very short time frame, but with a reduced staff and no money to purchase additional resources or to provide professional development. Taking more time might have allowed for the possibility of new resources.

Rachel said the pacing guides didn’t allow teachers to scaffold the curriculum for the struggling students, which is an instructional strategy used to provide the learning support students needed to master a task or concept. She mourned:

What they expect kids to do with no time...there's no time to scaffold, and kids don't have the base, so they are learning all these terms for the first time...and I watched kids feel like failures.

She felt that more time for training could have helped teachers create a feeling of success for their students.

Although Daisy initially thought that the idea of the GVCIA was the right approach, she also agreed that the time frame made the implementation ineffective. In her mind there were too many changes happening simultaneously which left no time between each change to gather data to see if what they had done was even working before changing yet again. There was no time for teachers to process or create or think. She noted that even though most of the changes might have been good ideas, if teachers don't have time to process or implement the ideas or make needed adjustments, then they just end up in a dusty notebook full of ideas, rather than being used to achieve goals. She felt strongly that the district needed to slow down and gather data to see if a change was working before moving on to the next change.

Although most teachers agreed that the timing to implement the GVCIA was too fast, it is important to note that several of the participants did not necessarily agree that the district should have taken more time. There was a sense of urgency in the district because research suggested that having all students able to access the same curriculum across the district would benefit every student. Ruthie stated that if a unified curriculum was right for students to help level the playing field by insuring that all students had access to the same education, as the research suggested, then it would be unfair to them to wait for three to five years to allow them to benefit from alignment. She thought that to roll it in one grade at a time as several participants suggested would be like "slowly pulling a tooth."

Jack agreed, but acknowledged that maybe the math-oriented personalities might cause them to be more efficient than other departments. His department just said, “we’ll take them down, break them down, crank it out, we’ll just do it.” He added:

We might sit around on a Monday morning and bitch about it and grumble about common assessment, but that never stopped us from actually doing it you know...literally we’d be done with our essential learnings months ahead of the other departments.

Jack felt that the speed was good for their team because, as he phrased it, “We started it before anyone else did.”

Not enough voices

Many teachers felt that the rushed time frame of implementation also prevented more participants from contributing to the curriculum. Sarah felt that it was really important to take the time to get something so significant right and to do it well. She reiterated that “it just seems awfully fast to get a curriculum wound up in four months without voices at the table.” Without enough resources or manpower, she believed that the final product was shallow, rather than a “product of beauty and elegance...that allows students to have a deep and complex learning.” She felt like true collaboration in creating the documents required that the process be slowed down, and have teams of people working together to go deeper and have conversations about what they were creating.

Although the implementation team of the GVCIA publicized that they would gather input on the district website from teachers who were utilizing it in order to make changes every year, several participants did not feel that all the voices were listened to in that process. Sarah believed that the team who wrote the GVCIA was very proud of their work, and wasn’t willing to listen to the suggestions for change. She overheard comments from team members referring to some of the feedback received like “we don’t need to listen to her, because she’s just trying to stop the

forward progress.” She felt that voices were not being heard at any level. Todd agreed, stating that “There are some, like I said, that have a personal stake in the development of the GVCIA, and feel like we did it this way and that’s the way it’s going to stay.” Janie and Lindy felt the same way, both having heard that no changes would be made for three years, even though they were being urged to give feedback on the website. Even when there were obvious errors, like misrepresenting that Shakespeare wrote a particular sonnet, many of the participants felt that no changes would be made immediately. Janie said that her biggest frustration was that the curriculum was not done and still needed a lot of change:

It’s not perfect, and it’s ok to not be perfect...so let’s take our time with it and make it the best. My biggest frustration is with the limited involvement, that lets all teachers have...if they are willing to come, to really voice their opinions. I think for me, that’s the biggest frustration, I really wanted to be on GVCIA, to work with it and figure it out, but I was constantly being told no, that there’s too many 8th grade teachers.

She felt that the same voices were heard over and over. “There’s so many different opinions of how things need to be done, and I feel like the same opinions get taken every single time.”

Lack of other resources

Although timing and limited participation caused the most frustration, the lack of many other resources factored into the negative side of the continuum. Todd felt that the reason for the accelerated pace of the implementation was because the district knew they would be facing even more drastic budget cuts in the future and so needed to take advantage of the existing team before the positions were cut, but there was still a great deal of angst about the lack of resources. The next section will describe other resources that might have improved the implementation of the GVCIA if they were available.

Texts. Before the curriculum was created, each school was asked to inventory all of the existing text books, novels, and other resources that were available in the building. The

curriculum was then written to utilize the resources rather than choosing and purchasing resources to best meet the developmental needs of the students. One example was in eleventh grade literature. The novel in greatest supply was *The Crucible*, so the 11th grade curriculum was written around that book. The first look at the curriculum “incited fear and panic,” according to Sarah, because it was so difficult. Rachel agreed, saying that the curriculum was modeled from Advanced Placement curriculum yet was expected to be implemented with students of all abilities. Although she liked the curriculum and liked what they were asking kids to do, she also noted that the expectations for what students were supposed to be able to achieve was exceptionally hard and almost unreachable. She liked the increased expectations but felt the transition was too abrupt. All of the high school English teachers initially feared for their struggling students, particularly when the GVCIA was introduced as a strictly enforced pacing guide.

Another example of not having adequate resources for implementation was in the middle school science curriculum. In this case, the curriculum was written to provide a more integrated approach for students, incorporating earth science and physical science in each grade, rather than one subject per grade. However with no funds for new text books, the books had to be shared across each grade level throughout the year. Janie felt that this practice resulted in a loss of focus for teachers because they had to share the books across the grade levels. Although having the curriculum text book-driven is not considered best practice, the speed of the implementation didn’t allow teachers to develop new practices and teaching styles with which to deliver the new curriculum. Additionally, Sarah felt that rushing the implementation meant that they would not be taking advantage of documents that were being created at the state based on the common core standards over the next three years.

Professional development. Sarah also believed that moving more slowly could have provided the time needed for professional development. The new curriculum looked very much like an Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum and AP teachers had in the past been provided two weeks of professional development by the AP council every summer. In the traditional AP coursework, only the most advanced students were invited to participate. With the advent of the GVCIA, every teacher was suddenly expected to increase the rigor of their teaching for all students, even the struggling students, without additional training. Every eleventh grade teacher recognized the difficulty of the content and noted the need for more training to feel adequate in delivering the material to all of their students.

In addition, Sarah noted that some change management theorists believe teachers should be provided up to 50 hours for professional development when implementing a significant change strategy. Although some professional development was provided, it was during the summer and optional for teachers.

Over and over again, teachers mentioned that the implementation of the new curriculum was hindered because of the lack of resources. But an even more disturbing theme emerged about the content of the GVCIA. The next section will discuss participants' reservations about the curriculum.

The Wrong Solution to the Problem

Although most of the teachers could see some value in a standardized curriculum, a number of participants questioned whether standardizing the curriculum would truly be the answer to the problems of low test scores among the students. Tom believed that standardization was designed to compensate for poor teachers but instead he thought there would be an unanticipated outcome:

I don't think that making everyone teach the same thing at the same time ensures quality [or] that kids progress. I don't think that's really true, but I *do* think that standardizing instruction...I think that what it does do is that it ensures mediocrity....that it creates drones!

He recognized that administrators want all teachers to teach at a certain level and students to perform at a certain level, but he asked somewhat ironically why they couldn't just get rid of the poor teachers rather than standardize everyone, although he acknowledged that politically such a solution would be impossible.

Along the same lines, Pam was incredulous when her principal told her that the main reason behind the GVCIA was because there were teachers in the building who were really not teaching when he told her:

Yes, Pam, coloring sheets all the time. I'm like, come on Mr. Clark, how boring, I mean you get bored, I can't go there and stay there five days a week for x number of hours and do nothing. And if I'm bored, the kids are obviously bored.

Many teachers resented that standardizing the curriculum in order to improve a few poor teachers was the selected solution to the problem. They felt it was not fair to those who were providing deep and rich opportunities for their students.

Process over relationship

Another major concern Tom voiced was that the pacing guide raised the stress levels of teachers to the point where they were so concerned with getting through the curriculum that there was no time for building relationships with students. He described those teachers as:

Teaching all those things that are on the GVCIA, and they are going through everything, and kids are taking tests and they may even be passing the tests, and that's great, but...but they might not have any connection with their kids, and they are so consumed with getting through the work and getting through the things that now there is no relationship.

He talked about the teachers he remembered from his school days, and what he remembered was that they cared about him and were interested in what was going on and went

beyond just what was required in the curriculum. He was quick to point out that following the GVCIA doesn't mean that caring and concern can't exist, but that focusing only on the pacing guide can marginalize those important components of teaching. He felt that the "busy-ness" around all the changes had caused the big picture to be lost. The RCSD mission on which the GVCIA was founded highlights rigor, relevance and relationship, but Tom felt that the GVCIA had those elements out of balance. The emphasis on rigor above relevance and relationship encouraged some teachers to take pride in the difficulty of their curriculum and how hard they pushed their students, but Tom argued that the order should be reversed. He emphatically stated that if teachers built relationships first, and showed students the relevance and purpose of the skills being taught, then students will do whatever it takes to master those skills and the rigor won't even matter.

Rigor without support

Tom was not the only teacher to have concerns about the rigor of the new curriculum. Almost every participant was initially concerned about the increased rigor without, as Daisy put it, including the necessary stepping stones along the way. Rachel was concerned that the pacing guide moved so fast they could not take the time to scaffold the curriculum so that students with lower abilities could access the major concepts. Daisy said that her students would not be able to pass the test if she stuck with the pacing guide. Janie noted that the skills that were required did not seem to be developmentally appropriate for her grade-level and wondered why the curricular benchmarks didn't match the state standards. Brian felt that the emphasis was on coverage rather than mastery, which in his mind meant that the students could pass the test but three weeks later would have forgotten what they learned.

Lost the “art” of teaching

There were other curricular concerns as well. Again, Tom articulated the fear that the GVCIA has caused creativity and the art of teaching to be less valued than getting through the curriculum and taking state-mandated tests. Daisy voiced a similar concern, fearing that new teachers, even though she believed they would benefit greatly from some aspects of the GVCIA, would never have a chance to find their own art and style as a teacher. Janie also mourned that the focus of the curriculum had changed at each grade level, and now she and her teaching partner were not teaching what they were passionate about. Although one advantage of not teaching their preferred subject was that they could easily keep to the pacing guide since they didn't have favorite projects to do, she felt it was a disadvantage to her students. As she put it:

We are able to say, here's the essential knowledge, there we go, we can teach that within these two weeks, but it's not a re-enactment of the Renaissance Fair, which is kind of a disadvantage to the kids. A lot of teachers like the middle ages, it's a fun age, and I hear of teaching a month on that, where I do it in two weeks! So, it's just finding that balance...how to make thousands of years interesting to them.

Losing the ability to teach with creativity and flair was a major concern about implementing a standardized curriculum.

Disregarded the experience of the teachers

Another concern was that many veteran teachers felt like their expertise and professionalism were being questioned by the mandate to follow a standardized curriculum. Those teachers maintained that they were professionals and knew what they were doing. They knew what a fifth grader needed, and didn't appreciate that someone higher up was telling them that what they were teaching was no longer valid. As Lindy put it, there are teachers who are in education because:

There is an element of independence, because when they are in their classroom, there is nobody really telling you how to do it, and they don't want anyone else in that classroom

telling them how to do it. They want to remain independent and therefore it's... it's... it still goes back to 'I'm a smart person and I am educated and I know the right way to do this and nobody's going to tell me what to do.' And I just think that it's fairly rampant in the whole district.

Pam also voiced concerns from the veteran teachers in her building:

They are comfortable doing what they've always done. Their parents are happy, they feel that they're good teachers because they are requested teachers, so obviously they are doing something right...when they've spent 30 something years, being a highly successful highly requested teacher, how come all of a sudden you are telling me what I've done all these years is no good?

Sarah felt that to create everything from scratch and not take into consideration the good work that had already been done in the district might have worked if the district planned to hire 90% new teachers the next year. But she just thought that ignoring the previous work that many others had done and starting from scratch caused a lack of trust and belief.

Summary of “I like it... but”

There was an element in every teacher's story of *I like it... but*. Most could see why a unified curriculum had merit, helping to ensure that every student received the same education across the district. Most of the participants liked the idea of consistency across the district, and others believed the increased rigor of the curriculum was in the best interest of students, to give them the opportunity to access higher levels of learning. But almost every participant had concerns as well. Even the least experienced teacher reflected that there were just too many changes and they were happening too fast and they came at an already tumultuous time in the district. There was one factor, however, that appeared to have an effect on how every one of the participants adapted to change, and that was how the GVCIA was specifically implemented in each building. The next section will describe through the stories of the participants how they experienced those changes in their own buildings.

Leadership: From Empowering to Demoralizing

I did not set out to study leadership, rather the experiences of teachers through continuous change, but their stories all reflected back to the leaders they served under and how their leadership practices impacted each experience with change. And even though the district leadership had a significant impact, it was the direct leader – the building principal- who appeared to have the greatest impact on each participant’s experience. The literature on leadership is extensive and this study did not delve into characteristics of leaders or leadership styles, but rather highlighted how the actions and communication of each of the leaders impacted the participants and their experience with change.

The change leadership characteristics as described by the participants fell on a continuum from *Empowering Leadership* to *Demoralizing Leadership*. The idea of presenting the findings on a continuum rather than as isolated structures first originated within the theme of leadership. Although I had first identified the two extremes of leadership in change, it became apparent as I was writing up the stories that most leaders weren’t necessarily only empowering or only demoralizing, but rather had elements that fell somewhere within that range. This section will describe those elements as they appeared in the stories of the teachers.

Ruthie, coming out of the corporate world into education, appreciated the difficulty of the job of the principal in change leadership as she quipped, “A high school principal should make a million bucks!” Tom agreed, commenting that as much as his administrators intended to spend time helping teachers improve their art of teaching during the implementation of the GVCIA, they had to be more concerned with the immediate and serious discipline issues such as “little Johnny bringing a gun to school.” Brian also recognized that those urgent priorities had to come before philosophical priorities, as he commented that the main job of high school principals often

had to be keeping the staff calm such as when they were dealing with major crises that required the police to be in their offices. Recognizing that principals had many other obligations and concerns, the teachers were clear on what their principals did that helped or hindered the change process.

Empowering Leadership

There were variations in how each principal implemented the GVCIA across the district. Even though the expectation of the implementation team was that there would be absolute fidelity in the process, among the 44 different schools there were bound to be differences among principals. Some implemented the curriculum in such a way that each teacher was expected to be on the same unit on the same day in every classroom. Other principals treated the pacing guide just as an outline, which recommended the time frame for getting from point A to point B, but allowed each teacher to choose how to get there. How that process varied made a tremendous difference in how each teacher experienced the implementation in general. The principals who allowed their teachers to make reasonable choices, who had previously earned the respect of their teachers, and who honored the past accomplishments of their teachers were the ones who empowered their teachers during change.

Allowing choices within the curriculum. A year after the curriculum was implemented, teachers who initially worried about what it would mean to have a unified curriculum expressed feelings of relief when they realized that they could add their own touches to the curriculum and make it their own. As Daisy noted, highly seasoned teachers could look at the curriculum and take the benchmarks and teach those benchmarks in their own way, making the necessary adjustments as they went. Lindy said that she and her colleagues felt greatly relieved after the first year that the curriculum wasn't as "strangling" as they had initially feared, because they

realized, “We had the freedom to teach the way we want to present things... We just have to make sure we are dealing with the same content and covering the same content.”

Tom realized early on that he could not teach the curriculum exactly as written and still be who he was and be the kind of teacher he wanted to be, but that he would have to find connections within the curriculum that he loved or:

I would be insane, I would be crazy, I would be a horrible teacher, I won't love what I am doing, kids would know that, my class will not be dynamic and I will lose them.

Once he realized that he could find what he loved within the GVCIA, he was relieved that he could still maintain his integrity as a teacher while adhering to the prescribed curriculum.

In addition to having the choice to keep their own personal flair in teaching, teachers were relieved when they could adjust the curriculum if necessary to help their students be more successful. When Rachel first evaluated the success of the curriculum for her 11th graders she was devastated, thinking that she had to stick with the mandated pacing guide even though half of her students were failing at the end of the first semester. She said that when she watched her students feel like failures she couldn't help but feel like she was a failure too. She recalled asking the district team how they should choose what to cover if they didn't have the time to cover everything and the answer was, “There is no choosing. You have to do it all.” But her principal listened to the concerns of the teachers in the department, and when he realized that all of the benchmarks were not going to be tested on the state-mandated testing, at least for several more years, he made the decision to let his teachers back off of the pacing guide and adjust the material to meet the needs of their students. She felt relieved when her principal gave her some freedom to take the extra time necessary to provide the learning support her struggling students needed so that they could master a task or concept, an instructional process known as

scaffolding. He allowed teachers to adjust the curriculum to make sure their students were able to experience some success:

He's, I feel like, given us the ok to adjust, and that has shifted my feelings this semester compared to last semester, because I'm just like, if I don't get through everything, it's okay... I'm not going to deem myself a failure. I'm going to try and make sure they do something really well out of this, but that's not the message the district gives at all.

Rachel said that his decision to allow them some choice shifted her feelings and created a great sense of relief. His decision gave the teachers an opportunity to support their students by allowing them to have a transition period and provide the scaffolding they needed.

Ruthie agreed with the fact that some leeway given by her principal in the implementation made the process much more positive. He chose to allow his teachers some flexibility because it was best for the students in his building, even though the implementation team had insisted on absolute fidelity in following the pacing guide.

Building Trust and Respect. Brian indicated that the foundation had been laid at his school long before this change that they were a school that depended on grassroots leadership, and his principal had the reputation for acknowledging the strengths of his staff and openly sharing the data, and thus had built loyalty in his building. He encouraged staff-driven grassroots interventions for students that had completely changed the success of all students in their school, winning numerous awards over the years. Because of this approach and their past successes, Brian emphatically stated the faculty knew hard work paid off and were willing to give up lunches, planning periods, and their own time to carry out the positive changes they had created for their school. He believed the effectiveness of the previous changes was due in part to the fact that the staff had buy-in. They had data to know the interventions were working, so they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices. He noted:

When you are in an environment like that...and your leader tells you, you guys can do anything... so when they present change, we go, ok, we'll do it. And there's other schools where people are miserable and they don't like their principal...it goes back to what I was saying about relationships...if that principal says here's what you gotta do and you're gonna do it, and the state's requiring it, they're going to rebel against it.

Brian and his colleagues didn't feel that their principal really believed in the philosophy behind the GVCIA. He noted:

He put the monkey off their back onto someone else's and told us this is what's coming, it's not going to go away, you're gonna have to do this, we're required to do this...and we'll make it work.

This approach helped Brian's principal keep the respect of his teachers and at the same time get the cooperation needed for implementation. With that approach, Brian said "You just don't have the griping and complaining" that there would be in a building where the principal had not built trust and respect. He strongly believed:

When you're just told this is what's coming down and you are going to do it and they tell you what to do instead of ask you and encourage you with it, you know people immediately put up a defensive wall...

He felt this tactic was utilized elsewhere in the district. Instead his principal built on past successes, acknowledged that there was no choice in implementing the GVCIA, and asked for their cooperation.

Other reports of empowering leadership followed a similar theme of respect; Pam said her principal really wanted his staff to be happy and that he was open to listening to ideas and plans that they had, as long as their ideas were data-driven and they had good test scores to prove the effectiveness. The teachers in his building had the confidence to create interventions for their students but knew that they needed the data to back their ideas.

Honoring Past Accomplishments. Over and over, the theme reverberated that honoring what had been done in the past was the key to moving forward with change. If teachers

felt like they were acknowledged for their successes in the past, and they were allowed to bring what had worked into the new paradigm, then they were more willing to look at what might be an even better approach.

On the other side of the continuum, however, if their past attainments were marginalized, and they were left feeling like everything that they had accomplished in the past was not even considered in the new approach, they were far less likely to be enthusiastic or even compliant with the proposed change. The next section will go into more detail on demoralizing leadership.

Demoralizing leadership

Besides marginalizing past successes, there were other examples of leadership that were considered demoralizing. One theme mentioned over and over again was the number of changes and the speed with which they occurred. Most participants lamented that there were too many changes at one time. While there were many changes which were district mandates, most buildings were also involved in a continuous change process. Many participants expressed it would be far better to choose a few areas to change, take time to implement, gather data on the effects, and then subsequently adjust it to be more effective.

No time to collaborate. Although Sarah acknowledged the difficulty of leading a staff that was reluctant to change, she maintained the implementation of the GVCIA would have gone much smoother if they had been allowed time to collaborate and create a good product. She recounted being told by the central administration team (when she told them that the process was moving too fast) that she was “stopping the forward march.” Although she acknowledged that she could never have accomplished what the team did in such a short time, she described the office as “a madhouse place to be” during the time of writing the curriculum. She wanted to slow the process down and focus on fewer changes at one time.

Daisy agreed that the changes needed to slow down, commenting:

There is no data to show that the curriculum works, or the standards-based grading works, or the GRR [Gradual Release of Responsibility] works, because it changes before you even have a cohort of kids to even look at and say “Wow, that made a huge difference.” Our scores have not like shot through the roof, ever, in a year to prove that anything is working, and so if everything just changes and changes and changes, you are never going to have a group of kids to ever look at and say, yeah, we’ve followed these kids through, they’ve all been on this, this worked...because it’ll change, it’ll change and change.

Too many changes. While Tom believes his principal is very supportive and has “a heart for kids,” he feels that overall, the leadership style within RCSD to bring in major change every few years has been very difficult for teachers, and that so many changes at once created uncertainty, cynicism, and resignation. The uncertainty of what was going to happen from year to year was one of the major stressors of teaching in RCSD. Although he acknowledged:

Next year they will change and teachers are kind of ... in the public school system... you have to be pretty...elastic, you have to be able to bend and stretch and fold, and go with the... you get to a place where you are really good off the cuff, you can just go with it, just do what you need to do.

Tom felt that to have to continually change without support was demoralizing. He described the timeline for learning about the GVCIA, recalling that he first heard about it through the rumor mill, and the initial feelings were very negative. The teachers’ union called special meetings to plan how to best represent teachers and keep up morale, but the implementation timeline of presenting the GVCIA less than a week before school starting--while at the same time giving the message that it would still be changing over the next year-- was very demoralizing for teachers.

Out of all the participants, Pete was the most frustrated with how his principal implemented change. Although he did think education should be continuously changing, and supported change when it was well researched and thought out, he described his principal as very random and “scatter shot.” His school had been assigned turn-around status from the state due to

several years of low test score performance. As a result of No Child Left Behind, schools who achieved this status were allocated additional resources for intensive and sustained support. This meant that many changes were mandated by the state, the district and the principal. He thought the changes would have gone better if they had focused on two or three main objectives, rather than trying to change everything at once. “Just give me three things, focus on them, we’ll measure them at the end of the year, we’ll see how we did and stop...stop all the other stuff.”

Lack of trust and respect. Pete advocated that administration in a time of change needs to trust in the teacher leadership. His principal often micromanaged not only the teachers, but the support staff in the building, and he suggested the principal needed to delegate to his assistant principal and the teacher leadership, and then back their decisions. He felt people would have done their jobs more efficiently if inefficiencies were addressed. Several examples he gave included the flow of the office, the line of authority, and interrupted meetings. The most frustrating issue for him, however, was being increasingly accountable for results, yet not having the power to make the changes he felt were needed in order get those results. He believed that leaders should understand that they are leading a group of professionals and trust them to do their jobs, rather than micromanage them. He revealed after the last year that “I was about as angry and discouraged as I’ve ever been.” He felt that the previous micro-management style of his leader made the implementation of the GVCIA even more difficult than it normally would have been.

Although Todd acknowledged that the district didn’t take on the implementation of the GVCIA of its own volition, because he knew that it was mandated by the state, he felt that there was a lot of mistrust between the staff and the administration:

When people were told they have to do this, there is a mistrust, well, the district is doing this to us, as opposed the district is responding to mandates from the state. And they

don't want to be told what to do on what day. It takes away their... academic freedom, there are many teachers, older teachers, more experienced teachers who don't want to, who feel that what they are doing is the right way to do things. There are others with a lot of experience, who feel like change is not bad, and they are willing to say, you know, I'll check this out and I will adapt to what I have to do. And there are principals who allow them to do that. And there are other principals who don't.

He felt that the satisfaction of the implementation depended on whether principals were willing to trust each teacher to adapt their own personal teaching flair to the curriculum. Although he agreed completely with the concept of the unified curriculum, he felt that the implementation was unfair to teachers:

I don't agree with the ways it's been implemented. Because... we have some people who have taken very personal ownership, who don't want to change it once it's been established, which to me, it has to be malleable, it has to be able to change with the needs of the students, and the needs of the teachers, because the teachers are the ones who have to put it in place. They are the ones who have to do the teaching. And if you are dictating to a teacher what to do and it doesn't work, whether it doesn't work because of the personality of the teacher, because we all have personalities, just like the kids have personalities, why are you making me do it that way? Expecting a kid to be an artist and they draw stick figures. If that's the way they can draw, then that's the way they draw. And I don't feel like the rigidity of the implementation has been fair to teachers.

The way some principals and leaders implemented changes eroded the trust between leaders and teachers and was experienced as demoralizing.

Failure to create a collaborative vision. Sarah contrasted past leaders she worked with to the current leadership in change management. She insisted that change requires leaders not only have vision and skills and knowledge, but they must have the ability to create a collaborative vision, one that she describes as “bringing people to the altar, so that they are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to create change.” One issue Sarah identified was that many leaders believe that just providing training will prepare teachers for change. As she put it:

When [some leaders] want someone to change, you just give them training, it's all about training and training works really well when they are finite numbers and skills you are using, probably perfect with factory line work. But in a profession with as many complexities as language arts, or teaching or math, you name it, anything you've taught,

where you want students to have deep and complex and rich learning, training is not adequate, and then it needs to be a roll out plan with beauty and elegance, that brings in the voices, that gets people excited.

Although she acknowledged that collaboration takes longer, she believed that the time spent is worth it for the product that is created.

Lost touch with the reality of the classroom. Sarah also struggled with the leaders who had lost touch with what it is like to be in the classroom day after day, and noted:

A lot of colleagues kept saying that they could never go back to the classroom, which I think is kind of an interesting stance to take, because we ask teachers to do a lot of things, and if we don't keep that connection with what it really means to be in a classroom, we don't understand that.

She wondered how they could ask teachers to change so much with the new curriculum when they wouldn't even be willing to do it themselves. She didn't think that leaders had the right to command others to do something that they refused to do themselves.

Drawing battle lines. Sarah stated that throughout the implementation of the GVCIA, some of the leaders used bully tactics, describing how one individual treated every situation as if it was a war, someone had to be the enemy, and battle lines had to be drawn. She recounted meetings where this leader "pounded in that we had failed," and early on, she and other long-time leaders had the feeling that they were "in the rifle sights," and would soon be eliminated from the decision-making team. Additionally, although the first year of the GVCIA implementation had been presented as a work in progress and that feedback would be taken all year from the participants, Sarah believed many respondents' comments were marginalized, and the committee members were told to ignore comments from certain teachers because they were "trying to take us down." Sarah also felt the creators were very proud of the product they had created, and had the attitude of "it's done, don't change anything," even though there were obvious errors. Sarah made the observation that there is a difference between leading

professionals and commanding them to do something, and her belief was that this leadership used the command approach. One example she gave was the term non-negotiables. The district used this term to describe specific elements that administrators would be looking for as they observed as part of the evaluation process. She maintained such phrases created an atmosphere of resentment and sourness.

Failure to honor past accomplishments. Sarah was clear that the leaders implementing the curriculum moved too fast and ignored work that had been done before. She continually referred to the timeframe suggested by the APID review and maintained that the district leaders lost the opportunity to take advantage of curriculum that would be created at the state level by rushing so fast. Additionally, she noted they didn't honor the work that had been done before by "throwing everything off of the foundation" to start from scratch. She felt that they could have looked at what others were doing that was really good and done some research so everyone understood what needed to happen.

Lindy had the perspective of working for two very different leaders in the presentation of the GVCIA. The principal of her first school was very harsh and rigid in her expectations. She expected absolute fidelity in the implementation, demanding that every teacher be on the same page each and every day. In contrast the principal of her second school was more relaxed in his expectations of what he expected to see when he walked into each classroom. Lindy suggested that one reason for the difference could be the fact that the first principal had very little teaching experience, having gone immediately into administration, whereas the second principal taught for many years and thus had more empathy for the actual teaching process. The first staff felt she didn't really know best practice strategies since she had not been a teacher and they didn't have confidence in her leadership. Lindy described how she presented the GVCIA:

She was really adamant about nobody questioning or anything out loud. If you questioned it out loud, you could see her temper start to rise in her face, because she really believed in the GVCIA, and that's, that's cool, except for the fact that you have to accept the fact... that you have to understand the fact that people don't like to change, and they don't like to change if they don't understand why they are having to change. And so, if it was presented in maybe a softer way at that school, in a way that...that was really appreciative of the skills that teachers already were using and already were doing that were great, and that this is just this is education, it's leaning this way, this is what we would like to do ...so it did come across as more of a mandate from um, somebody who really wanted the control than it did a soft, boy you guys are doing such an excellent job, we hope this helps you and please give us your feedback on what you think and we'll work with you, we'll work with you. It just, I don't think felt that way to some of those people who had been in the district for a long time.

Both Sarah and Lindy described working for leaders who implemented change by first honoring what had been done previously, and contrasted that style with a more controlling and demanding style. Both of them were clear that leaders must honor what had been done before as they implemented future changes.

Another characteristic Sarah gave of demoralizing leadership is leaders who constantly change direction, without giving previous change strategies a chance to work. Sarah used a metaphor of a healthy river to describe change. A healthy river needs white water to oxygenate the water, but the river also needs the still water in order to allow for growth. She described her principal as someone who loved change, changed constantly, and liked white water. Sarah acknowledged that white water is good and necessary, but felt that the district started with "Niagara Falls" in this particular change.

On the other hand, Sarah noted she had some very supportive leaders and she felt she understood what it was like to "be in the balcony seat." She knew it was easier said than done to lead a reluctant staff who still used what she described as ancient strategies.

She appreciated leaders who trusted teachers as professionals, and told their faculties "Make some changes! Change it up!" She thought those in leadership should be experts on managing change. Her vision of a change leader is one who is visionary, who can get people to

believe and understand, and who have a sense of being onboard. Her overarching point in change leadership is that leaders must honor the past work that had been accomplished instead of throwing everything off of the foundation and starting from scratch. Although she acknowledged that collaboration takes time, she maintained that moving ahead in a command sort of way meant that in the end, “you lose something, you lose climate, you lose...belief.” In another vivid metaphor, she said in good facilitation of change, “you don’t find the fingerprints on the necks of your participants that you are trying to bring into understanding.”

In the middle

The two previous sections described leadership traits on opposite ends of the continuum of empowering to demoralizing leadership, but far more common are the leadership characteristics that fall between the two extremes.

Just get the job done. One example is found in Jack’s story, who appreciated the approach of his principal because it was similar to his in that they both just wanted to get the job done. Jack believed strongly that “your boss is your boss.” He acknowledged that many found her style off-putting, but his belief was that she was a good leader, stating at least you always knew where you stood with her. He reiterated, “You liked it, you didn’t like it, that’s not the point, it’s not personal, let’s do this.” He valued the fact that she was very interested in getting feedback and that even though she was strong, he always felt that she listened.

He contrasted her strong yet flexible leadership style with other leaders he had worked under, giving the example of one administrator in particular who had the expectations that the lesson plans would be on the desk when he walked in the room and teachers were written up for not being exactly where the pacing guide indicated. Jack preferred her more forthright and honest style, because there was no doubt where you stood with her.

Listening to teachers. Ruthie also noted that across the district some principals used the GVCIA in a punitive manner, writing up teachers who were not where they were expected to be. In her understanding of the expectations, she believed, having “read the fine print,” that the pacing guide was intended to be a framework that gave a suggested window for the different topics but was not a “lock-step” mandate.” Her principal had originally questioned her pacing, mentioning that he saw the same lesson in one teacher’s classroom three weeks earlier, and another the previous week, and asked her if she was behind or if they were ahead. She informed him that nowhere in the GVCIA did it say they had to teach a subject on a certain day, and he accepted her explanation.

Ruthie felt that good leaders should look at the good of the whole versus the good of the individual, and accept the fact that they can’t make everyone happy all the time. Because she believed that the unified curriculum was critical to the success of students, she applauded the approach of forging ahead with the implementation instead of waiting for everyone to come on board.

Lack of follow-through. Another reoccurring theme in the change leadership in RCSD was dictatorial mandates without follow-through. Janie observed that although her administrator had set the bar high, insisting on detailed lesson plans, he then never asked to see them. She said the rumor mill in the district had reported that a principal should be able to walk into the room and tell the teacher take the day off, and be able to teach from the plans on the desk, and she wrote her plans with that in mind until it was evident that he never even looked at them. After weeks of not being asked to show the plans, she scaled back the effort she had been putting into writing up the lessons, and instead put her energies back into creating extraordinary lessons.

Veteran teachers reported similar experiences over the years and used lack of follow-through as a reason for not embracing the current changes with any enthusiasm. Janie felt that the veteran teachers essentially gave up and made the decision that they wouldn't even try to change and would not worry about adopting the GVCIA. One teacher in Janie's building believed that spending any effort on changing was just a waste of time since there had never been any follow through on mandates. He believed this, as so many previous changes, would just go away.

Daisy made a similar comment:

I've put about this much consideration on [the next change] and all those things, because I just feel like it's on the pendulum. I mean, I always have extremely high growth scores, so I'm not really worried about it, and even if I have a year where I couldn't get kids...there's never going to be any follow-through on that. Ever. They couldn't fire everyone, and they couldn't afford the law suits that will go into that.

The lack of follow-through led to some teachers experiencing a sense of passivity, believing that it was futile to expend the effort to change. They believed that nothing would stay around long enough to make it worth their time to gain mastery so they chose to not participate. This will be explored more in a later section.

There is no way that this paper can fully address the topic of leadership, except to present the stories of how the leadership styles utilized in each specific situations affected the participants experiences with change, both in the implementation of the GVCIA and through continuous change. Their experiences fall on a wide range of experience, somewhere on the continuum of Leadership: From Empowering to Demoralizing. The next section will discuss the general experience with continuous change.

Attitudes Toward Change: “A grand adventure!” to “Don’t they trust us?”

The topic of change has been particularly popular in the last decade, and there has been much literature previously written on the subject. This study simply recounts the stories of the participants in one school district, and how they experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum in the midst of continuous change. A reoccurring refrain among the participants was that continuous change was one of the stressors of teaching in RCSD. Daisy described education as being like a giant pendulum, where the popular theory of the day began to swing education in one direction, so everyone ran to catch up with it, and as soon as they got close, it started to swing back the opposite direction. Indeed, the number of changes described by the participants is astounding; Sarah crystallized the feelings of many of the participants when she said “if it’s another meeting that just seems like it’s overall about changes or suggestions for new change, people feel like they get whiplash.”

The attitudes of the participants to the continuous changes in education fell on a continuum of “a grand adventure!” to “don’t they trust us?” There were a number of factors that contributed to what attitudes prevailed for the participants, some of which were described in the section on leadership. When leaders allowed some choices, the participants had more positive attitudes. Other choices available to the participants made a difference as well, and they will be discussed in this section. In between the two extremes of attitudes, some participants agreed that change was necessary, while others simply determined to make the best of it, or they experienced resignation, or they just felt frustration.

A Grand Adventure

Lindy was enthusiastic about change in general, stating that professionally, she has always looked at change as an adventure. She tends to take every change and just say, “Let’s see

where this takes us!” Pam agreed, saying that she liked change and that teachers need to be learning and growing and staying open and willing to change. She felt that teachers who attend workshops and trainings to enhance their learning stay interested and motivated and are more likely to be willing to make necessary changes. Pete and Ruthie also said they embraced change, as evidenced in Ruthie’s statement, “Look how much kids have changed, and so we need to change.” These teachers all liked the challenge of change and needed to keep moving and growing to improve their art of teaching. The following section illustrates the specific attitudes of each teacher as they described how they adapted to the GVCIA and other changes in RCSD.

Find your passion within the curriculum. Teachers who could find their passion within the GVCIA were much more likely to have positive attitudes about the change. Although Tom was not generally in favor of the standardization of the curriculum, he was quick to declare that the GVCIA doesn’t mean that joy in teaching can’t exist. He just felt that teachers had to be intentional about finding their passion within the GVCIA. He described his philosophy as “bringing *you* into the classroom; if you’re not passionate about ...what you are doing, the kids aren’t going to love what you are teaching.”

Tom felt very strongly that teachers need to find what they love, even if it is within a structure that they may not fully agree with, and he did not feel that option was communicated in the implementation. He suggested that teachers should write down everything they love about their job, and then find out how to make what they love work within the GVCIA. If that doesn’t work for them, he recommended that it was probably time to find a different job, because, as he put it “you have to love what you do.” He advocated that teachers have to do the best they can with what they are being asked to do. For him, finding what he loved within the GVCIA was the only way he could maintain his integrity, be who he was, and practice what he valued.

Look beyond your own classroom. Ruthie and Pam both noted that teachers need to look at the whole picture beyond their own classrooms to the good of the entire district, an attitude that helped each of them to avoid taking each change personally. Pam suggested that:

You have to look at the whole picture...you have to learn to not just look at what goes on in your classroom in your year. You have to look at all grades, all staff, the whole building. And it requires a lot of change, and you can't always do it the way you want to.

Pam adapted to change by understanding that improving education was bigger than protecting her own personal preferences.

Todd agreed, stating:

And so we have to remember, we're here for kids, and if we keep that in mind, it's so important that we don't get focused on...this is my classroom, it's not your classroom, and it's really hard for people who have been teaching for a really long time, it was their classroom, they closed their doors and did what they wanted.

Like Pam, Todd felt that teachers need to look at the whole picture and realize that changes were implemented to improve schools for all students. He noted that the GVCIA:

Was developed by several hundred teachers who had input on it, but there were a few on the team who did the actual writing, and revamping, and there were a lot of ...strong feelings that their ideas about the implementation of the GVCIA or the way it was written, that their concerns were not addressed... and of course, the ones who are more experienced and spoke the loudest felt like what they thought should have been changed should have been changed completely, and should have been their way, as opposed to ok, that is a concern that should have been addressed but we can't do all of those things. That's called compromise, and a lot of people have trouble with that!

Jack and his team were aware that personal issues could not drive the district curriculum, an issue that surfaced when it became evident that one of the teachers on their content curriculum development team was avoiding a certain topic in the standards. When they realized that the teacher had a religious bias about the topic, they were soon able to clear the air and continue to develop a curriculum for the rest of the district. Jack was adamant that teachers must avoid the "favorite unit trap" and look at the entire district. He felt that one reason teachers resist change

so much is that they become “me-ish,” thinking only of their own needs rather than looking at the big picture. When teachers realized that change was more about meeting the needs of the entire district and not simply about inconveniencing them personally, they were better able to adapt.

Choice to find another career. It must be noted that teachers who had other career options besides teaching appeared to be more likely to have positive attitudes towards implementing the GVCIA. Tom acknowledged the fact that he has other options if he could no longer feel fulfilled as a teacher, which helps him accept changes, and he understood that a lack of choices for some people leads to feelings of hopelessness and despair. He recalled a union meeting early in the implementation of the GVCIA where budget cuts were also being discussed and described it as the saddest meeting he had ever been to. He said so many of the people there were distraught and hopeless because they were trapped, with no options to do anything else. He firmly believed that everyone should have other options and more than one solution to a problem. He was confident enough in his mission to tell his evaluator:

I know why I’m here and I know what I’m called to do and I’m going to just keep doing it. I’m going to keep doing it. And if it comes to a point where I can’t do it any more you just have to let me know and I’m gonna go.

If he’s ever told he can’t continue to teach the way in a way that matches his passion, he has other career options. If he didn’t have those choices, the continuous change would be much more demoralizing. Tom knew that having a choice to do something else besides teaching has helped him to continue to carry out his mission.

Ruthie also believed her ability to adapt to district mandated changes was because she had the freedom to change careers if she needed to. She conceded that it would be a “terrible mindset to be in...to be waiting there for 30 years,” and gritting her teeth and saying “I only have

to tough it out five more years.” She felt very fortunate that she could make a change after 10 years if she wanted to, and that she was still capable of finding another career.

Daisy did leave the field of teaching after her first two initial years because her early experiences in education were so frustrating. But after working for two years in a completely unrelated field, she came to the realization that although she didn’t leave work every day feeling completely drained, she did leave completely empty because of the fact that she hadn’t “made a difference today at all.” Daisy came back into teaching in a school where over 90% of the students were on free and reduced lunch, and the local neighborhood was considered very tough and transient, but she felt that working with her particular students was exactly what she was meant to be doing, and how she imagined herself when she first decided to teach. She described her mission as “inspiring students” and that even though her students came from such difficult and crazy lives, she explained that “my job now is what I always thought my job would be.” Contrasting how unfulfilled her life was when she wasn’t teaching with the satisfaction she gets from knowing she is making a difference in the lives of so many students helps her persist and thrive in spite of all the frustrating changes. She felt that her years away from teaching were the best thing for her, to help her remember why she had gone into teaching in the first place: “I’m trying to help a couple; I’m trying to help a few.”

Change is necessary. Daisy, when discussing a major change that had been received positively by her colleagues, suggested that the reason for acceptance might have been because the necessary resources were provided for them and they believed the project had purpose. She did note that the change didn’t require any additional work on the part of the teachers, because they had been provided the necessary time, and a complete curriculum to teach. They also understood the problem they were trying to solve, and they believed this was the right step to

solve the problem. Rachel agreed, further commenting if projects caused more work or created additional problems, they would lose purpose and meaning for teachers.

Brian felt that the reason the dramatic changes they had made in their school were so enthusiastically endorsed is because the teachers were part of the process. They knew the needs, they were allowed to brainstorm ways to solve the problems, and they were given the power to make the changes they had suggested.

Just do it and don't worry about it. Moving across the continuum, some of the participants felt that grumbling and complaining were not productive and those participants tried to find ways to work within the changes. Lindy and Jack both felt if something was inevitable anyway, they might as well get to work and make it the best they could. Jack just didn't tune into griping, but instead said "roll up your sleeves and get 'er done." His first response was likely to be "Okay, boss." His school was often the first to pilot new projects because as Jack quipped, "they want to see how we are going to screw it up before they let the rest of the district try it," but he felt that he and his colleagues got numb after awhile to change. Jack's attitude was that change was not the end of the world, and if something they were doing didn't make sense, it should be changed. He tended to not worry in advance of the possibility of change, saying, "When I see it, I'll deal with it." He believed that teachers worry about change because they fear the unknown, and worry that "the sky is falling," but in his own department, when they realized later that they "lived through some major changes", they were less worried about the next change. They were pragmatic enough to realize, "We have no choice, we don't get to vote, it's coming, we dealt with it, and the next year, we were like, you know, we lived."

Brian also urged his colleagues to not worry about potential changes before they actually happen, reminding them:

When a problem comes up, then you problem solve, you troubleshoot and you solve it...Take it as it comes, deal with it when it gets here, and in the meantime, just go in and do what you got into education to do and enjoy it.

In the same vein, Ruthie also made the choice to not worry in advance of the actual events, and she dealt with the potential of a future significant change by remembering:

You know what? When it all comes down to it, we have 30 kids in our classroom, and that's where the stress comes from. I mean, how much can we worry about what's in the future. We have kids to teach. Those kind of details I find almost laughable. I mean, I'm glad it's someone else's problem!"

Another approach that Jack said his department used was what he described as a coaching model when evaluating what needed to be changed, which included looking at the data, identifying," What's our worst five, what's our best five, don't screw them up, and our worst five, let's figure it out, let's really work on that." He conceded, "I don't tune into a lot of griping, you know that doesn't come in on my radar that much, or I try to keep it that way!"

Brian, much like Jack, also chose to take the approach of:

I adapt, I don't care if they want me to do whatever, I'll do it, and there's other people who just say there's no way I'm changing...what I've done works. I just don't rock the boat. I'll find a way to make what they're telling me to do if I don't agree with it to make it work. So that's kind of the approach I've had.

He too believed that he could find his own way within the GVCIA and he chose to make the best of it. Brian had been teaching for long enough that he believed that he could teach whatever he was told to teach and still make it work within his beliefs and mission. He had been through numerous changes over his career, and that attitude helped him adapt to each one. Brian asserted that he is the type that will do what he's told and the specific curriculum didn't matter. He found a way to make whatever he was asked to do work out, even if he didn't agree with it, so that he gave the best to his students.

Like Brian, Pete was willing to teach any curriculum because he was in education to work with students. He affirmed:

It's more fun to watch them get their lives together, get productive jobs, coming back later and tell me, man, I was having a hard time, you were the constant, you helped me get my life together, you know, so that's been the reward for me all along, so we've got to get over the fact that you know, I'm in it because I love the content but I'm really in it because I love working with kids. Content's kind of coincidental and it needs to be coincidental, if someone agreed that I need to teach great literature, then I'll teach it, I'll put *Infinite Just* on my reading list for this summer.

Lindy also prefers, instead of grumbling, to just do what is required and at the same time, try to make the job fun. Her view is that change should be considered as an adventure, because in her mind, there is still so much to be done, so many ways that teachers can present the lessons and so much that she doesn't even know about. She proposed that teachers should look at change with an adventurous attitude, compared to the defensive, "they are questioning me again, they are looking over my shoulder" response. Grumbling, in her mind, is unproductive.

Ruthie felt that it was in her best interest to jump into the GVCIA and have a year to experiment with the curriculum and then have the opportunity to provide feedback. She felt that even if the GVCIA "went away" after a year, it was still an opportunity to learn different things. She noted that some veteran teachers who had been teaching for 30 years saw "curriculum A become curriculum B become curriculum C," but as Ruthie observed, "you know what, see how much kids have changed! Yeah, yeah! Things need to change! You can't keep teaching the way you did 27 years ago. I can't teach the way I did last year."

Ruthie adapts to change because she "enjoys the challenge of change, and needs to keep moving around." In the same way, Janie's joy in teaching comes from the opportunity to create interactive, play-type learning experiences for her students, and she said although it was a challenge to find ways to make thousands of years of history exciting, she thought it was fun to

scrap what she had done before and find new things to get eighth graders interested. Moving forward on the continuum from ‘finding a way to make it work’ leads to the next identified step: resignation.

Resignation. One common theme among those who have experienced continuous change is the sense of resignation that just as they start to adjust to something new, then it will inevitably change again. Although veteran teachers have unsurprisingly experienced more change than their less seasoned colleagues, even younger teachers lament that too many changes at one time make it hard to do anything well. Daisy and Tom both commented that the newest teachers didn’t really realize that what they were expected to do now was any different from what was required in the past, but that the ones with some experience never really found their own art as a teacher. They might start to adopt the current change but they didn’t have the experience to know how to make it their own, so they either muddled along in confusion or ignored the change all together. Veteran teachers commented that they had little faith that new changes would be around very long or that there would be any accountability, so many of them just ignored the mandates until they were forced to change.

Janie said the general attitude in her building has been that some of the changes are “just a waste of time, that they are going to put all this work into it and they won’t do anything with it anyway... that’s the biggest grumbling with everything...Why am I doing that?” Sarah quipped, “So what are you going to do. You keep moving forward, you keep changing.”

Frustration. Janie complained that too many changes at the same time left her feeling like she couldn’t do anything really well, as she pointed out:

It was quite the transition. Because at the middle school level, in the same year, we got GVCIA and standards based grading, so middle schools are kind of a mess! ...we are trying to learn how to grade our kids, and not really having any kind of model to know,

so all in all, it's been very frustrating...I think it would have been less stressful if we had got one and really got to learn that...one change at a time.

Daisy agreed, noting the struggle to figure out how to make all the changes work together was a daunting task:

I feel like if I were a new teacher, it would just be so overwhelming, and I don't think you would be able to do any part of it really well. How would you ever have time to do a really cool unit when you were trying to make it work and understand GVCIA, but then how do you break it down into four parts, and how are you going to grade it because the third part of GRR [Gradual Release of Responsibility] has to be reported out as a learning behavior and not as an academic. You know we were mandated to do two formative assessments before summative, so in that we were trying to figure out how to collect data. Before you can put in any grades that matter, you have to put two in that don't matter. And how do you convince a child that this is formative...yeah, yeah...It's just overwhelming!

Don't they trust me?

The furthest end of the continuum reflects the feelings of the teachers who felt the continually changing curriculum made them feel they weren't trusted. Lindy reported that some of her colleagues felt, "They don't trust me to be professional enough to know what students need. They don't trust me enough with my education to know what students need at a fifth grade level literacy-wise, or math-wise or science-wise," an attitude she felt was very pervasive in the district.

Todd also heard his colleagues expressing their feelings of lack of trust as he described the necessity of the feedback system and hearing from teachers:

When it first rolled out, the district was adamant to teachers that they could do revisions and send in things anonymously. Well, there's no trust, [so they said] they can be tracking my computer, and knowing I sent these messages in, and they are going to go back...

And nobody was happy... So that's why we really worked on collaboration. And yes, it did roll out in 6 months. And that's why it was too bad, that when it rolled out that people didn't trust that they would give that feedback. Because that was so necessary to fine tune it. And people were afraid to give feedback because they were afraid of retribution.

The continuum of attitudes toward change ranged from the sentiment that change is a grand adventure all the way to the feeling that change must mean they couldn't be trusted. The feelings move through the idea that change is exhilarating, exciting, and necessary to keep growing and changing, and to frustration with the sheer number of changes, and resignation that this was just one more change that wouldn't last. Finally, the end of the continuum reflects the feelings of teachers who took the changes personally, feeling like being told what to teach and when just meant that they couldn't be trusted to know what their students needed.

Part 2: Summary

The voices of the participants formed three structures that defined their lived experiences through the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum in RCSD. The three structures, of *GVCIA: I like it...but*; *Leadership: From Empowering to Demoralizing*; and *Attitudes towards Change: A grand adventure to don't they trust us?* emerged in the form of continua that defined the range of their experiences. A synthesis follows to show how these three structures framed the experience of change to form the meaning and essence of the phenomenon.

Part 3: Textural Structural Synthesis

The first structure is the continuum of *GVCIA: I like it ...but*. The continuum described the range of emotions that teachers experienced when implementing the unified curriculum in RCSD. On one side of the continuum, most of the teachers really could understand the reasoning behind the creation of the unified curriculum and liked the curricular aspects, while on the other side, teachers described their reservations about the content and the process. The term *but* is used to add something to what was previously said; for example a contradiction or an exception.

I like it...

Teachers liked the consistency of knowing that students would be receiving the same education, no matter what school they went to or who their teacher was. Before the GVCIA, teachers were free to teach the units whenever they wanted to, and many teachers reported having students transfer from other schools mid-year, often resulting in those students either missing whole units or repeating something they had already learned. They *liked* that the curriculum was aligned with the standards, showing them what was essential. Others saw the advantage for new teachers to have whole units, complete with pacing guides, resources, benchmarks and assessments, completely created for them.

Beyond merely understanding, there were many other elements that teachers *liked*. They appreciated the collaboration that was possible when everyone was teaching the same units at the same time, and others were relieved that students would be getting the same quality of education, no matter who their teacher was or what school they went to. They were relieved that what they were teaching what was based on researched best practice, rather than depending on their own ideas. They also reported liking the rigor of the curriculum and the opportunity that many more students would have to participate in higher level education. They liked what the curriculum was asking students to do. Many teachers felt that it was time for more accountability from teachers and that they should be expected to teach specific standards and bring their students up to a certain level...*but* there were many aspects of the GVCIA that teachers didn't like, both in process and content, which reluctantly came out in the interviews.

But...

Although the participants in my study were professional and mostly positive, they did reveal some of their concerns about the implementation of the GVCIA through the course of the

interview. The number one concern appeared to be the speed of the implementation, and the fact that it happened in the midst of serious budget cuts and the myriad of other changes whirling around RCSD at the same time. The overwhelming feeling was that so many changes were implemented at one time and they could not be successful at any one of them.

The GVCIA was also implemented in a very short time frame, which went against the advice of the state, and reduced the available resources, professional development, and time available to create the curriculum. Many of the participants also felt that the hastened time frame prevented enough voices from being heard, which resulted in some resentment.

Some of the participants did not believe that standardizing the curriculum would bring the desired results of raising the outcomes for all students, but would instead lower the expectations and create mediocrity. Many of the participants felt that standardization would take away the art of teaching, and were worried that the strict pacing guide would not allow them to use their professional judgment to scaffold the curriculum for their struggling students. Many teachers mourned that they could no longer teach their favorite units and were in fact teaching units that they didn't like or even feel qualified to teach.

Although the participants liked many components of the GVCIA, the exception, or the *but* came out in further discussion. Many of the initial fears expressed by the participants were alleviated by the leadership in their buildings and the way the GVCIA was implemented in their buildings. The factors that contributed to whether teachers liked the GVCIA or had reservations depended on the leadership and how each leader implemented the curriculum in their building, resulting in feelings somewhere on the continuum of empowering to demoralizing.

Leadership: From Empowering to Demoralizing

Leaders who acknowledged the strengths and past accomplishments of their teachers were much more *empowering* than those who marginalized their previous achievements as educators. One way that successful leaders helped teachers feel empowered was to bring in more voices to contribute to the process. Leaders who allowed their teachers to have choices also allowed them to feel *empowered*. *Demoralizing* leaders, on the other hand, implemented changes without gaining buy-in or respect. They tended to micro-manage every detail of their schools, not trusting their teachers to be professional. They didn't acknowledge the positive things that had happened previously. Participants mentioned that the same voices tended to be heard over and over, which resulted in a *demoralizing* workplace.

Change: A Grand Adventure vs. Don't They Trust Us?

The final structure, *Attitudes towards Change: A grand adventure through don't they trust us* describes the range of feelings the teachers expressed about the change process. Some of the participants embraced change, and chose to think of new opportunities as an adventure, while others were more pragmatic and even disillusioned. Those who saw change as an *adventure* believed that teachers need to grow and change because students and society as a whole have changed, so how can they not change as well? They looked beyond their own classroom and considered the needs of all students. On the other end of the continuum, teachers saw the move to change as an expression of *not being trusted* that they knew what to do for students. In the middle were more neutral feelings of "your boss is your boss, just do it" and feelings of frustration that they couldn't do anything well because there were too many changes happening at once.

Part 3: Summary

The three structures of *I like it...but; from empowering to demoralizing*; and *A grand adventure through don't they trust us* framed the experiences of the participants in this study on change. Their experiences as they responded to the implementation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum in RCSD created a foundation that determined why they survived or even thrived in the climate of continuous change.

Part 4: The Essence

The teachers in this study entered into the teaching profession with idealistic dreams of empowering students, lighting fires within them to love learning, and helping them find meaning in their lives. They chose the profession believing in their hearts that teaching was their way to change the world. But over and over they found themselves caught up in far-reaching and continuous changes initiated by politicians, superintendents, principals and society in general that might have extinguished those ideals. As a result of these changes many teachers leave the field, citing high stress and low respect environments. Nevertheless, the teachers in this study remained in the profession. Why do they still teach, even amidst the almost daily reports of teachers leaving the field in high numbers? How have these teachers assimilated their passion and mission for teaching with the mandated changes that come their way? This study suggested that the essence of their experience was keeping their *hearts in the game*.

The *heart* is so important. I selected the word because it describes the caring and emotional center of an individual. If the heart is not involved then we are not emotionally involved, we are just going through the motions. Heart is what is needed in this sometimes very dry world of educational pedagogy, and we can't afford to lose it.

A phrase often used in sports, when participants have their *hearts in the game* they are willing to persist through the exciting, the challenging, the sad, the victorious, the exhilarating, and the heart wrenching times. *Hearts in the game* refers to those who have goals and a sense of mission, and outcomes they want with all their *hearts*. Their *hearts are in the game*.

Having their *hearts in the game* is the critical element that makes leaders and teachers alike willing to embrace change. Having our *hearts in the game* means that we care. It may seem so intuitive that people will be willing to do what they are asked to do if they care in some way, but sometimes, the people's hearts get lost in the urgency to make necessary changes and to do whatever it takes to improve outcomes.

The participants in this study found a way to keep their *hearts in the game* and continued to teach in a climate of continuous change. Going back to their bios in the beginning of the chapter, the years of longevity are evident. The median number of years that these teachers have been teaching is almost 20 years. They have kept their *hearts in the game* for a very long time. They outlasted superintendents, principals, and the current "flavor of the day" in education because they kept their *hearts in the game* by daily remembering their mission and their reason for teaching in the first place. *Hearts in the game* describes how the participants experienced the phenomenon in this study of implementing change.

On the continuum of *GVCLA: I like it...but*, participants kept their *hearts in the game* because they remembered why they became teachers and that was utmost in their hearts every day. They were intentional about finding their passion within the structure of the GVCIA. Even if they didn't necessarily like every aspect of the curriculum or the implementation, or ever feel like change was easy, they chose to *keep their hearts in the game* by coming back to their mission, which was to help kids find a purpose and a reason to live. They believed firmly in the

“art of teaching,” which meant providing relevance so that education came to life for students. They continually strived to create relational opportunities so that their students would be fully engaged. In the minds of those teachers, teaching is “all about kids.” They felt strongly that this generation is desperately seeking a reason to live, and that teachers could tie the GVCIA’s content to ways to relate to the students and their dreams. Their *hearts were in the game*.

For some, keeping their *hearts in the game* was a matter of choosing their attitude as was revealed on the continuum of *Change: “A grand adventure”* through “*don’t they trust me?*” Whether it was just a matter of being grateful everyday for the opportunity to be in a field where they knew they were making a difference, or choosing to view each day and each change as an adventure, they chose to *keep their hearts in the game*. They thought about how unfulfilled their lives would be if they weren’t teaching, and so kept their *hearts in the game*.

For others, keeping their *hearts in the game* was more pragmatic. On the continuum of *Leadership: Empowering through demoralizing*, their *hearts stayed in the game* through continuous changes because they respected their leaders. They chose to follow those in authority, not in a legalistic or dogmatic way, but because they believed in their leaders and trusted them. Their *hearts were in the game* because their leaders had earned their trust and respect. Understanding the need for the change even if they didn’t fully agree also kept the hearts of the participants in the game. Because of their commitment to their students and their allegiance to their leaders, they found the way to keep their *hearts in the game*.

In some cases, the leaders themselves encouraged and helped the teachers navigate the changes. They treated the teachers as professionals and allowed some choice even in the midst of the mandated changes. Teachers were able to make adjustments they felt were necessary to help

their students be successful, and they were allowed to bring their own art into their teaching. The leaders helped keep the *hearts* of the teachers *in the game*.

Losing heart. The shadow side of *hearts in the game* is reflected in those teachers who lost *heart* after endless changes. Even amongst the passionate and mission-driven teachers in this study, hints of the shadow came through. Meeting after meeting about change, feelings that change meant they weren't good enough, no matter how hard they had been working, throwing out everything that had been done previously all contributed to teachers *losing heart*.

The teachers whose *hearts* were *in the game* were the ones who continually reflected on their reasons for teaching in the first place. Their *hearts were in the game*. The lessons learned from their stories can help leaders implement future changes. If leaders want to implement successful change, perhaps finding ways to engage the *hearts* of their teachers will prevent future change from being so daunting. Recommendations for how leaders can get the *hearts* of the teachers *in the game* will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The essence of the lived experiences of teachers in RCSD as they implemented a major curricular change was *hearts in the game*. As the structures of *GVCIA: I like it... but, Leadership: Empowering through Demoralizing, and Change: a Grand Adventure through Don't They Trust Us?* came together, the essence of their experience was *hearts in the game*.

A phenomenological research design allowed the voices of thirteen participants to share how they experienced a major curricular reform. This chapter introduced the participants, shared their collective experiences across a continuum, and finally, presented the essence of the study, *hearts in the game*. Chapter five follows to show how these findings address the research questions and how the results of the study can apply to practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW

Chapter 5 presents a summary of how teachers experienced change as a guaranteed and viable curriculum was implemented in their school district. Through my study I examined the lived experiences of teachers who not only experienced this major district-wide curricular change, but had also experienced numerous changes over their careers. Listening to their stories provided insight to the following research questions that guided this study:

1. How did teachers experience the process of change in a major educational reform?
2. How did the teachers feel about the process and the results of the reform?
3. How does continual change affect teachers' motivation, desire to teach, and their own personal motivation to teach?

To address these research questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with thirteen teachers in River Canyons School District who had been part of the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. These teachers had been teaching for at least five years and were representative of different feeder systems and grade levels in the district. Their stories were analyzed according to the Van Kaam method outlined by Moustakes (1994). The stories of the participants formed into three structures that defined their common lived experience. These structures each formed a continuum illustrating the range of experiences through the changes. The first continuum *GVCIA: I like it...but*, represents how the participants felt about both the content and the process of the implementation. The range of leadership styles experienced in the implementation is reflected on the continuum from *Empowering* through *Demoralizing*; and the final continuum shows the range of attitudes toward change: *A grand adventure* through *Don't*

they trust me? From these three structures emerged the essence of their experience, which is *hearts in the game*.

Chapter five is organized into four sections. Part one provides a discussion to address biases and assumptions that were part of this study that might have been inherent in the research questions. Part two revisits the literature review and compares the findings of this study to the literature on this topic. Part three offers a personal perspective on the outcomes of this study including implications for practice and recommendations for future research. Part four concludes with my final reflections on the dissertation.

Part 1: Response to the research questions

The overarching question that guided this research study was “What are the lived experiences of teachers as they implemented a guaranteed and viable curriculum?” The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand how teachers experienced the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

To begin the discussion of how the findings relate to these questions, it is necessary to first reflect on how my biases and assumptions interacted with the research study.

Researcher Assumptions and Biases

In phenomenological research, the researcher is the instrument through which data are collected. It is therefore important to note the biases and assumptions of the human instrument that conducts the research and generates the findings. Although I addressed my biases and assumptions in Chapter one, other biases revealed themselves as I collected, analyzed, and presented the data. As I acknowledged in Chapter one, I have a positive bias towards change as a necessary and positive process, but I also recognized through the analysis of the data that even as a leader, I tended to be more biased in favor of the teachers in the implementations. I have

been in both roles, but I have a great deal of empathy for teachers, possibly because I see them as having less power in situations of change. I also was expecting to find differences in how teachers experienced change based on different areas of the school district or the grade level of the teachers, so I had to be careful to bracket those assumptions so that I could hear what the participants were telling me. Another assumption I had as I prepared to research was that a majority of teachers were extremely unhappy about the implementation of the GVCIA. With those biases acknowledged, the data analysis process moved to the emergence of three continua which provided the framework for this study. These structures began to provide insight to the research questions.

Findings: How teachers experienced the implementation of the GVCIA

In the initial stages of the implementation of the GVCIA in River Canyons School District, there was a great deal of concern and trepidation on the parts of the teachers about what it would mean to adopt a common curriculum instead of planning their own lessons and teaching favorite units. This was reflected in the vignette in the introduction chapter, which described the feelings of the teachers as they first heard about the proposed curriculum. The GVCIA was a topic of discussion in every venue, it seemed: at book club, at sporting events, and in the aisle of the grocery store. Teachers flocked to union meetings and school board meetings, worrying about what this would mean to their practice, and if there was anything they could do. I wanted to find out how teachers personally experienced a change of this magnitude, what they thought about the results, and how this change affected their motivation to teach.

The first continuum of *GVCIA: I like it...but* provided insight to the first question. This continuum reflected not only that each teacher experienced the GVCIA in a different manner than other participants in the study, but that they had mixed feelings in their own minds.

As we discussed their experiences with the GVCIA, their thoughts began to sort into two components. The first was content, which refers to the curriculum itself. This consisted of lesson plans, the pacing guide, and resources provided on the website, which included videos, Power Points, supplemental readings and numerous other resources. The other components of content included the rigor of the curriculum and the consistency which meant that every student would be learning the same curriculum. When they first discussed what they *liked* about the GVCIA, it was primarily the content. As they moved across the continuum towards *but*, the reservations appeared to be more about the process of the implementation. Process refers to how the curriculum was implemented, including the presentation and announcement, the time lines, pacing guides, and assessment. The feelings that were expressed revealed angst that the mandated curriculum and pacing guide would take away the art of teaching, as well as apprehension about the speed of the implementation. They felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of other changes happening at the same time as the GVCIA. Although there was a great deal of concern that the new curriculum was too difficult, several of the participants liked the increased rigor. They believed that allowing all students to participate in the more challenging curriculum once reserved for the brightest students really would benefit students who had once been left out of that opportunity.

Further illustrating how their experiences were a continuum, all of the participants understood why the district was implementing the unified curriculum, but many were reluctant to change what had been comfortable and even rewarding for them. They liked it, but...

Another example of the range of feelings was the relief that some teachers felt because all students in the district were guaranteed to be learning the same content. In addition, they were relieved that exactly what they were expected to teach and when to teach it was clearly

articulated, and that the curriculum was well researched. It made sense to them that teachers weren't just allowed to teach what they liked, or what they felt like on a particular day. As Ruthie wryly mentioned, if teachers are allowed too much freedom, some teachers will show movies every day and say it meets the standards. At the same time, they worried that they would lose their ability to bring their own personality into their teaching. They were afraid that rather than raising the standards for all students, the level of expectation would be lowered to allow all students to reach the goal.

The continuum of leadership also provided insight into the first research question. How teachers experienced the process of the GVCIA was greatly influenced by the fidelity with which each leader presented and followed through on the implementation. Those leaders who allowed some latitude in the pacing guide empowered their teachers to feel like competent professionals, capable of knowing what their students needed. Another way that leaders helped the teachers feel empowered was when they acknowledged their strengths and past successes. The mandate to change their lesson plans and the way they taught didn't sting quite so much when their principals and leaders noted their accomplishments and expertise in teaching, and even allowed them to make professional decisions about the pacing.

On the demoralizing side of that continuum, the leaders who continually mandated change without gaining input and support, without listening to the teachers, and without acknowledging the good work that teachers were already doing were very demoralizing. It was also demoralizing when multiple changes were implemented at the same time, not allowing teachers to gain mastery of any new skills.

Every participant initially responded positively when asked about the GVCIA. Even the participants with the most negative experiences started the interviews with what they liked.

There is a time-honored pride that teachers and students alike have in their schools, and this was reflected in the reluctance to bring up negative feelings. *But* there were concerns that emerged over deeper discussion.

Findings: How continuous change affects the motivation and desire to teach

Although the intent of this study was originally planned to be a case study of the implementation of the GVCIA, the reality of the experiences of each participant was that RCSD was going through numerous other changes and stressors at the same time. These included drastic budget cuts, administrative changes, and a new evaluation system. Because of the anxiety expressed early in the implementation, as described in the vignette in chapter one, I expected to find that teachers would be more demoralized than I found them to be. In reality the fear of what the implementation of the GVCIA would mean appeared to be more daunting than the process actually was. I discovered a resilience and sense of mission among the teachers in this study that carried them through this and the multitude of other changes that they were facing. There were, however, some instances where the continuous change did affect their motivation. The continuum shows how their attitudes ranged from change is *a grand adventure!* to change means *don't they trust me?*

One of the most revealing findings to come out of this study was the effect continuous change had on the motivation of some of the participants. While the GVCIA itself was disheartening to many of the participants, the most passionate teachers soon discovered ways that they could find their art again and were able to adapt. *But* the issue was that the GVCIA was not the only change that was happening, and the cumulative effect of the never ending changes was that even the most energetic, vibrant teachers found themselves feeling like they were no longer capable of being good teachers. They lost their sense of efficacy, and their ability to be the

professionals that they wanted to be. Every new change that came along was one more area where they were once more beginners, novices, struggling to gain mastery, and that eventually took a toll. Those feelings echo in statements like Jack's: "After awhile, we just got numb to change;" or Janie's: "After a while we just felt like we couldn't do anything well." Daisy made a similar point when she said: "It just changes and changes and changes, and the teachers keep trying to catch up with it, and the kids never will catch up with it." These are veteran teachers, many of whom have won numerous awards, who have been leaders in their fields, and have been chosen over and over as favorite teachers by students, who now doubted their ability to do what they love.

In addition to losing their sense of efficacy, another very distressing result of the continuous change was seeing how teachers eventually lost their passion and almost gave up. Pete, a veteran teacher who has willingly served on dozens and dozens of committees over the years, and who described himself as loving change and knowing that change was needed, described a teacher's meeting at the end of a tumultuous year. By that time, he said "I was about as angry and discouraged as I've ever been," and he just showed up late to the meeting, a behavior that in itself was completely out of character for him. At the end of the meeting, two colleagues complained to him that they had never been more confused, and he just shrugged and said, "Well, you should have just come in late and not paid attention! The results would have been the same." That someone who has been passionate for more than 30 years of teaching and who served on the committees to implement change could become so passive as a result of change after change after change is a finding that must be noted.

Part Two: Relevance to the Literature

There was no shortage of literature about change and how people respond to change. The following section will tie in the literature with the findings from the study and then discuss the findings that weren't in the literature.

Findings confirmed in the literature

One thing that has remained consistent in the world of education is that there has always been change. Since the initiation of public schools there has been a sense of urgency to continually change schools to ensure that students are well-prepared for their future, and River Canyons School District is no different. The needs that drove the implementation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum can be traced clearly through the literature of the history of education. Thomas Jefferson stated that a well-educated citizenry was essential to protect liberty and the general welfare of the people, and if the people of the nation were ignorant, the nation would soon perish (Tyler, 1996). This very notion from the beginning of public education and the increased emphasis over the years of ensuring that all children were educated equally, from *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) through *No Child Left Behind* (2001), was the driving force behind the GVCIA. The public demand for increased rigor, driven by fears after Sputnik was launched in 1957 that America was falling behind other countries is still being heard today. This historical outcry was still a factor driving the GVCIA. The same message that reverberated in 1983 which led to major reforms at that time is the message RCSD heard in 2009: "Something is seriously remiss in our education system" (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983, p. 1).

Beyond the historic need for change, other issues from the past continue to plague our education system today. Although Daisy poured her heart into every one of her students every day, she believed strongly that merely changing what happened in the classroom was not

enough; that until there was a way to change society and the communities where the students returned after their short hours at school, teachers could only do so much to improve their lives. The Coleman report stated in 1966 exactly what Daisy experienced in her classroom daily in 2013: “schools bring little to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his background.” Daisy is not the only teacher to feel that she can’t fully overcome the background of students who come in unprepared and lacking support from home (Gorski, 2008). Socio-economic factors have been well-documented as seriously impacting a student’s ability to benefit from education (Borman & Dowling, 2010; Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972; Van der Berg, 2008). Nonetheless, there has been a great deal of additional research in recent years to suggest that effective schools can make a dramatic difference in student achievement (Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2009). RCSD utilized the research of Marzano (2003) to create the guaranteed and viable curriculum, which Marzano concluded was the school level factor with the strongest correlation to student achievement. This included identifying the most important standards and then sequencing and organizing the content in a way intended to optimize the learning experience for students. The final step in implementing the GVCIA was to ensure that teachers address the essential content.

Although research suggested that the GVCIA would solve issues that have been identified in the literature since the advent of public education, the implementation meant dramatic change for the teachers involved. The findings from this study on how the teachers experienced those changes will be compared to literature on change management.

It is no secret that change can be disorienting. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) described change as the feeling of stepping into unknown space and disturbing the equilibrium. This is how many of the participants described feeling in the initial phase of the GVCIA. Just

the prospect of adopting the new curriculum filled many teachers with dread and anxiety. Kanter (1983) noted that the threat of change can bring feelings of loss of control, powerlessness, and helplessness even before the change has become reality, which was precisely how many of the teachers in this study initially felt. She went on to suggest that because there are still so many possibilities open and the participants cannot yet see themselves in the change, they are more likely to be resistant. This makes perfect sense in the context of the how the participants felt as the implementation unfolded. There were so many rumors and fears about what exactly was going to be expected. At the countless union meetings and early staff meetings in the schools, rumors fed the fear that the teaching profession as they had known it would become obsolete, and concerns were voiced like “why don’t we just put a TV in every classroom? We won’t be necessary anymore.”

A common theme in much of the literature is that it is not so much change that people fear, but the loss that comes with change (Bridges and Bridges, 2009; Heifetz, et al, 2009; Kanter, 1983; Franklin & Snow-Gerano, 2007). When change involves real or potential loss, Heifetz and his colleagues wrote, people try to hold on to what they have and resist the change (2009). Kanter (1983) perfectly stated what was also reported in my study when she wrote that change implies loss when a person’s current fund of assets and skills become obsolete. Bridges and Bridges (2009) reminded us that change triggers thousands of smaller changes, all of which require people to stop doing things the old way, a way which may have earned rewards, feelings of satisfaction and results and now requires new and unfamiliar behaviors. For some of the veteran teachers in this study, the implementation of a total new curriculum felt like a loss. It was as if everything that they had done and worked for no longer mattered. In many cases, teachers had been teaching for 30 or more years and been considered highly successful

educators. Continuous change made them feel like they were beginners all over again, unsure of how to proceed. Although they reacted by becoming angry and appeared to be resistant, according to the work of these researchers, they may actually have been experiencing deep loss.

Besides the real loss that the participants felt in adopting the new curriculum, the speed of the implementation came up repeatedly. This common concern of rushing through the change process was frequently found in the literature. Changing the culture of the workplace does take time (Kotter, 2012). Lewin suggested in his early seminal work on change management that there are three stages that must be followed in order to bring about effective change: unfreezing the present level, moving to the next level, and re-freezing at the new level (Burnes, 2001). The three phases in William Bridges' (2009) model of managing transitions similarly suggest that moving through each stage is critical to the success of a change. The first phase in his model involves letting go of the old ways and the old identity. Change means there is an ending, and people need to be helped through the loss. He suggested that celebrating the endings will help followers move to the new beginning. The second phase of change is the neutral zone, the in-between time when the old isn't completely gone but the new isn't fully operational. This time is critical as those involved in change seek to discover what their roles will be in the new paradigm. The final phase is coming out of transition and making a new beginning. There is no rushing through this process, and when a change happens quickly without acknowledging these important phases, the initiative may fail.

Bridges emphatically states that change may fail when leaders fail to celebrate the endings or acknowledge the neutral zone and simply start with the final stage of change. Kotter (2012) also noted that leaders can get impatient, rush implementation, and either overestimate how much change can be imposed on people or underestimate how hard it is to move people out

of their comfort zones. If leaders don't take time to ensure that they have adequately communicated the urgency of a reform, there will likely be resistance. The feelings of the participants in RCSD expressed through the interviews certainly suggest that the speed of the implementation did not allow them to move through the stages that would allow a change to be grounded in their existing culture. Even given the research suggesting that a guaranteed and viable curriculum would have dramatic effects on student achievement (Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2009), the disequilibrium caused by skipping these stages may contribute to preventing the positive change from taking root. The vision driving the change needs to be communicated often to re-freeze the new behavior and ensure that it is anchored in the corporate culture (Kotter, 2012; Lewin, 1939). This also speaks to the frustration with lack of follow through that some of the participants reported. This research suggests that possibly the reason for that frustration was that the new behaviors were never "re-frozen" and had never become part of the corporate culture. This led many participants to believe that this change would soon go away and there would be yet another change.

Many teachers described that there were so many changes that they no longer felt like they could ever learn how to do anything well. They lost their sense of efficacy in the field where they had once been so successful. Kanter (1983) spoke to that as well, describing the loss that people may feel when their current fund of assets and skills become obsolete. Even minor changes can lead to a feeling of helplessness, and requiring the teachers to completely change everything contributed to their feelings of loss.

Kanter's (1983) statement that people experience loss in change when there are no resources available to help with transition was also confirmed in the study. Even through the historical timeline, the objection to major reforms such as No Child Left Behind was that no

additional resources were provided with which to carry out the mandates. The study participants reported that the lack of resources due to the extreme budget cuts in the district at the time of the implementation contributed to their sense of disruption. The GVCIA was created based on existing district resources, instead of being able to identify and then purchase developmentally appropriate texts. In addition, there was not adequate time for the teachers to feel confident in their abilities to implement the new curriculum. Although there were opportunities to participate in professional development to gain knowledge of the changes and the resources available to help them through implementation, the fact that it happened two weeks before school started contributed to the feelings of disequilibrium.

In contrast, Kanter (1983) emphasized that there is an upside of change as well, stating that change can exhilarate, refresh, and provide a chance for a new beginning. According to her work, change can be seen as an opportunity if people are prepared for it and have been planning for it. Many of the participants in this study reported those exact feelings, referring to change as an adventure, believing that teachers need to be learning and growing. Others said that change was necessary because they were aware of complacency in the district or because they saw the need for what was being proposed and they embraced the opportunity to improve. This connects clearly to Schmoker's (2006) admonition that teachers need to see the clear purpose in what they are being asked to do. Sinek (2009) agreed, calling this the "Why behind the what." He has labeled his model "the Golden Circle," and maintained that if followers can understand the "why" behind a reform, then they will be motivated to follow. The teachers who understood the reasons for the change in RCSD were much more positive and willing to go along with the change.

The literature suggested ways for leaders to increase the sense of purpose and mission in reform. Through a meta-analysis of successful principals, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) identified the most important characteristics needed to implement change. Of those nine characteristics identified, the critical characteristics that were confirmed in this study were the ability to inspire faculty to operate at the edge of their competence and the ability to communicate to all stakeholders. Kanter (1983) similarly stated that allowing workers to challenge their limitations and operate at the edge of their competence helped them embrace change. The empowering leadership characteristics identified by the participants in my study confirmed these findings. Those leaders who continually reminded their teachers of past accomplishments, appreciating the hard work they had invested inspired their teachers to push themselves out of their comfort zones to work at the edge of their competence. Another characteristic they noted was the ability to communicate the vision so that the teachers were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to accomplish the goal. Darling-Hammond (1997) reiterated that it is essential for leaders to have a clear and compelling vision, remain steadfast to the vision, and be able to continue to communicate that vision to their followers. Communicating the vision consistently will help “re-freeze” the new behavior (Kotter, 2012; Lewin, 1936). So much of the literature on change discusses communicating the vision in order to get people on board with a change, and the experiences of the teachers in RCSD bear witness to that concept.

An additional concern voiced in the study was that the confines of the GVCIA made some teachers feel their professional judgment was no longer trusted, especially as to what to teach and at what level, in order to help students succeed. This goes back to Kanter (1983) when she noted that change can be perceived as loss of control, powerlessness and helplessness,

especially when the proposed change is seen as a threat. This helps explain why teachers were able to embrace the change when they were allowed some choice, whether it was in the pacing or the ability to adjust the curriculum for their students. The sense of powerlessness was dissipated when they could make some decisions.

The relief that came with the understanding that they were allowed to keep their own personal flair and art of teaching within the GVCIA is addressed by Heifetz and his colleagues when they noted “What elements are essential and must be preserved into the future or we will lose precious values, core competencies and lose who we are?”(2009, p. 23). The leaders who made clear that the teachers would still indeed be allowed to bring their own flair and teaching style into the curriculum helped preserve those critical elements.

The essence of this study, *hearts in the game*, can be confirmed in a number of references in the literature review. Heifetz and his associates (2009) remind us how important it is for leaders to connect to the values, beliefs and anxieties of the people they are trying to move, and they continue on to suggest that being present in that way is difficult if the heart of the leader is not part of the mix as well. In addition, they tell us that the loss that comes with change must be acknowledged, and Kanter (1983) urges leaders to have compassion for those losses.

Helping followers to understand the urgency for the change, and bringing them into understanding of the “why” behind the change will also serve to engage the hearts (Kotter, 2012; Sinek, 2009). Similarly, Schmoker (2006) believed that teachers must have a compelling reason to commit to initiatives, which could be accomplished by presenting a thorough, evidence-based case for effective instruction. If teachers understand the sense of urgency and have an understanding of the “why,” their hearts will more likely be engaged.

The teachers in this study made it very clear that they stayed in the teaching profession because they had a deep sense of purpose and remembered daily what that purpose was. Their leaders who connected with those values and beliefs were able to help the hearts of the teachers stay in the game (Heifetz, et al, 2009). The teachers were also clear about the “why” behind the “what” and were able to adjust their particular passions to fit into the goals of the unified curriculum (Sinek, 2009). They understood the need behind the change which enabled the new curriculum to become part of their culture (Lewin, 1936).

The shadow side of *hearts in the game* also showed up in the literature. A quantitative research study suggested that teachers in an atmosphere of high stakes testing experience lower morale, higher instances of cheating, and negative psychological and physical effects (Franklin & Snow-Gerono, 2007). Although the teachers interviewed in my study have not left the field, as this study concluded, they did admit to some of the feelings that came out of the research. The finding that the joy of teaching and the love of learning have been lost in the environment of high stakes testing was reported in my study as well. Their stories confirmed the emphasis on test scores was taking away the joy and wonder of education. Although the teachers in my study found the way to find their joy, even within the confines of the GVCIA, they all knew and worked with those who did leave, or who were miserably waiting out their time before they could retire.

Findings not found in current literature

One very intriguing finding from the analysis that was never directly connected in the literature was why continuous change eventually resulted in the loss of the sense of efficacy, as well as their passion for teaching. Although Heifetz and his associates (2009), Kanter (1983), Sinek (2009), Fullan (2006), and others discussed why change caused feelings of loss and

disequilibrium, and Franklin and Snow-Gerano (2007) reported that the job satisfaction and joy of teaching has been lost in an environment of high stakes testing, and have caused teachers to leave the field, there does not appear to be anything in the literature that ties the two ideas together. For sure, the environment of high stakes testing and the new teacher evaluation systems are causing teachers to leave the field. However it is unlikely that those conditions will change anytime soon, and it will be a tremendous loss if veteran teachers continue to leave teaching and a new generation is scared away from becoming teachers. This study connected the research of how people experience change to why teachers were leaving the field of teaching. Utilizing the research of Kanter (1983) and Heifetz and his colleagues (2009) to relate specifically to the issue of the changes that teachers are experiencing and acknowledging that they are experiencing loss goes beyond the criticisms of teachers that the mandates are taking away their joy of teaching. Their feelings can be explained more clearly using the change theories in this study. What this study suggests these teachers are really feeling is a loss of control, powerlessness, and helplessness, and they see their skills and assets becoming obsolete. What implications these findings have for future practice will be discussed in the next section.

Another finding from the study that wasn't connected in the literature is the frustration with the speed of the implementation. Again, when the research of Lewin (in Burnes, 2001) and Bridges and Bridges (2009) is applied to the criticisms of the teachers in this study, the reason that the speed of the change resulted in the feelings "here we go again" and the sense that the change "wouldn't be around very long" made sense. Both Lewin and Bridges insisted that there had to be time to unfreeze or celebrate the endings, and time for the new change to become part of the culture, or the chances of the change being successful were diminished. In a climate of

continuous change, these phases are not always completed, resulting in the frustrations that were expressed in this study.

Implications for practice

Change in education is not going to go away. As the history of education clearly reveals, education has sought the best way to meet the needs of all students and prepare them for productive and satisfying futures across the decades. This is as it should be. We cannot be content with where we are now and not try to educate all children in the best possible way. On the other hand, this study revealed how continuous change can be disheartening, wearing down even the most passionate teachers over time. Integrating the findings in this study with the research on change has suggested several recommendations for practice.

Leaders planning to implement major changes in the future would do well to consider both sides of the issue as posed by Heifetz and his associates (2009). “Of all that we care about, what must be given up to survive and thrive going forward?” and also, “of all that we care about, what elements are essential and must be preserved into the future, or we will lose precious values, core competencies, and lose who we are?” (p.23). These two thoughts suggest the notion that there will be give and take on the parts of both the teachers involved and the leaders implementing change. Being mindful of this compromise will help the leaders engage the hearts of the teachers and help them connect to their mission and passions.

The only way that this can happen, as the literature has revealed, is that the change process can’t be rushed. This doesn’t necessarily mean that the implementation should have been slowed down; there were compelling reasons for implementing as soon as they reasonably could, not the least of which were student achievement, state mandates and even deeper future budget cuts. But in that process, time could have been taken to celebrate the endings, to

acknowledge that there would be loss in the process and to ensure that teachers who did voice concerns were not made to feel marginalized. One way that could have happened is to have the team creating the curriculum attend the professional learning communities in each school, report what was happening throughout the process, and gather input while it was being created, not just in the end after it was completed. They could have listened rather than just explained and directed. The website could have been operational throughout the process to allow teachers to contribute their ideas to add to the learning resources so they didn't have the feeling that everything they had done before was thrown off of the foundation to allow for the new curriculum to come in. This would have invited more voices to be involved yet still allowed for a reasonably sized decision making group.

A reoccurring theme in change management is the idea that communication is critical. Although RCSD created a communication plan to ensure that the implementation was presented exactly the same in every school so that everyone would have the same understanding, there was no two-way communication until after the implementation. Again, the district website could have been utilized earlier in the process to allow more voices to be heard. This would not have slowed down the process, but would have allowed more time for teachers to adjust to the change and move through the neutral zone towards acceptance.

A third recommendation concerns change in general. Leaders need to be aware of how much change is being implemented at one time, and be very certain that it is in the best interest of all the stakeholders to implement a proposed change at a particular time, rather than waiting and letting people adjust to other changes that are already in process. There would be a greater sense of success and a better chance that previous changes were becoming part of the corporate culture if there were less changes happening at any given time.

Recommendations for the followers also came out of this research. Successful change is not solely the responsibility of the leaders. The data from the school district, the mandates from the state, and the even the very heart of public education itself all make it clear that education can't stay the same, that there needs to be real and significant change. If that is true, then it means that teachers can't continue to do what they've always done. My recommendation for teachers is to stay current with the research. They should look beyond their classroom and be aware of what the district, school and classroom data are indicating. They should attend what professional development is offered so they don't feel their skills are becoming obsolete. They should take the initiative to communicate in a positive and collaborative way with colleagues, principals and district leadership. Finally, and most importantly, teachers must be intentional about remembering the mission that led them to teach in the first place, and to find ways to bring that passion into every day and every lesson.

If both leaders and followers practiced these recommendations, there is a possibility that future change would be less disruptive and would have the desired effect of improving student achievement.

Recommendations for future research

The topic of change was very hard to narrow down to a manageable proportion for a dissertation study, which meant that a number of other topics for future research emerged.

1. I recommend a mixed methods study on this topic that would allow for a broader population of teachers to be heard. An initial survey would reach more teachers and allow them to speak anonymously. Follow-up interviews would then build on the information acquired in the survey.

2. I recommend expanding this study to look at the experiences of educators as they move through change at the higher education level. Since community colleges are going through major course redesign at the time of this writing, it would be interesting to see how the different leadership styles influence how they experience the change.
3. Although several of the leaders were interviewed to gain their perspective to provide background, their voices and experiences were not part of this study. In order to gain a broader perspective, a future study should include their experiences. For instance, why did the principals decide to allow flexibility rather than follow the mandate to have everyone follow the pacing guide?
4. It would be interesting to do a longitudinal study of changes over the years to determine which changes were sustained and what contributed to the sustainability.
5. This study included only the voices of the teachers who stayed in the profession. It is extremely critical to listen to the voices of those who did leave. A future study should study the lived experiences of the ones who maintain that they still love teaching but can't continue in the midst of the changes happening around them.

Although the use of continua in describing structures was an unusual twist for a dissertation, the range of my teacher's experiences did not lend themselves to a one word theme. Using the continua did make the writing more awkward as there is no grammatical precedence for using the continua in a sentence, but it was the only way to adequately show how each teacher experienced the phenomenon, and to show the differences in experiences among the

participants. Additionally, the use of the word *but* was also awkward, but it was very effective to show how there is almost always another side to an issue.

Final reflections

The topic of change has been fascinating to study. Early in this dissertation journey, when I first started thinking about exploring change in education, it became clear that I really wanted to understand how teachers experienced change. I wanted to go beyond the data and hear their stories. I didn't have the language to express myself at that time, and in fact I resisted the whole mystical-sounding approach of phenomenology, but now I realize that understanding the lived experiences of people is what really fascinates me. I now believe that understanding the human side of the complexities of change will not only help me become a better leader but will inform others who are in a position to lead their people through change. I also hope that those involved in change from a follower's perspective will find ways to keep their passion throughout the turmoil of change.

I chose to study the experiences of teachers as they moved through the implementation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum because everywhere I went, the GVCIA was the main topic of conversation. Once I made up my mind to research this particular topic, it became evident that change and how people experience change was a timely topic. By that time, I had moved from the school district to a local community college and we were facing the same magnitude of change as developmental education was being redesigned across the country. The level of anxiety around the changes at both the school district and at the community college level intrigued me, and I wanted to learn more. As I have already alluded to, I am a person who likes change and I have been quick to implement change in the past, but realize now that I want to be the kind of leader who demonstrates respect and caring for the people who look to me for

leadership so that I can help them better navigate change and keep their *hearts in the game*. At the same time, I want to be a follower who can support my leaders and my institution and keep my *heart in the game*, even if I don't fully agree with changes and how they are implemented.

I was just reminded recently of the disruptive nature of change. The literature I reviewed and the stories I analyzed suddenly rang true in my daily life. One very minor change, combined with a difficult personal change brought my findings from the study to life. The first change involved switching to a completely new email system at my institution. This is a very minor change compared to the magnitude of the implementation of the GVCIA, but it served to reveal a bit of the disequilibrium that change can cause. Suddenly, the way I was used to operating without even thinking about it, the shortcuts I had grown used to using, the easy familiarity that made routine tasks something I could do without thinking changed and I was an inept beginner again. My flow of creativity stopped and I had to learn something I once knew well in a new way in order to continue to do my job. I truly felt disoriented even with this minor disruption. Another change at the same time was the retirement of a longtime colleague. He has been my stabilizer, my wingman, my go-to person I can depend on; he is leaving and I feel disoriented. My world has been disrupted.

After a year of listening to the stories of my participants and living with them in the midst of change, experiencing these two small changes have even deeper meaning to me than before. I can understand that loss of efficacy just by changing how a simple task is done; how much more so would it have felt if the very foundation of what I believed in and had done for my entire career had changed. I can understand the loss of passion when changes come one on top of another and I can't yet see myself in the new paradigm. At the same time, there is the sense of possibility that comes with change. This new email system is much more effective and efficient.

There are many more tools that we will have access to use. Once we move through this period of disequilibrium, we will once again be efficacious; we will easily navigate the system. In the same way, my friend is so excited about retiring. He and his wife have great plans and he is ready. I will hire someone new and we will get to create more opportunities for students together. I will move through this change and my passion will be restored. But the bottom line is that we can't ignore the neutral time, when we are moving to that place of passion and efficacy again. Getting through the neutral time requires me to continue to remember that I am here to help students discover and unlock their potential. I am here to empower teachers to desire and be able to make a difference for their students. Remembering my mission in the midst of change will help keep my *heart in the game*.

The willingness of the participants to share the ups and downs of their experiences will add to the research on implementing change in education. Reflecting back to the vignette at the beginning of the story, and observing how the teachers then moved through the last year has much to offer leaders who plan to implement change. From the earliest trepidation through the final stages, decisions and choices made by both leaders and the followers affected the outcome of the implementation. The potential changes on the horizon may continue to be on the minds of everyone, but perhaps implementing the findings from this study will help others in education move through these changes to keep their *hearts in the game*.

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APPENDIX A

Sample letter to RCSD teachers:

Dear former colleagues,

I was a teacher and administrator in District #51 for almost 20 years, and I am now working on my PhD through Colorado State University. My dissertation is studying how teachers experience change in the face of continuous reform and I am asking for your help.

I would like to interview up to 30 teachers who have been teaching for at least seven years. My goal is to have a good representation from each high school and feeder system, as well as a mix of disciplines. The interviews would be about an hour each, and I might need to call back and clarify information at least one or two additional times. I would like to begin setting interviews as soon as possible, although the actual interviews can take place when school is out for summer. The interviews will take place wherever you are comfortable- a coffee shop or restaurant or a room at Colorado Mesa University (and I'll buy the coffee!) I will ensure complete confidentiality, both through using pseudonyms in my final report, and masking any identifiable information in all my transcripts.

I hope that you'll be willing to share your experiences in educational reform, particularly the implementation of the GVC in MCVSD#51. If you are interested in participating in my study, or would just like more information, please respond to this email with the best number to reach you, so we can further discuss this study.

Thank you! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sherry Schreiner, Doctoral candidate, Colorado State University

APPENDIX B

Interview questions

1. What problem were you trying to solve? How did you identify and substantiate the problem for the teachers affected? What were your goals?
2. What was the philosophical undergirding that drove the change?
 - a. What research directed your efforts?
3. Please describe your change process
 - a. What issues did you face to begin with?
 - b. How long did you plan before implementation?
 - c. Who was affected by the change? In what ways? Who was in favor of the change? Who was against it?
4. What changes were required- staff, facility, scheduling? Who was involved?
5. What has the impact of the reform been as measured against your own stated goals for making the change?

Additional questions for teachers:

1. How were you informed about the change?
2. How did leaders/policymakers, administrators, etc communicate the data and research ideas to you?
3. How much input did you have in the reform?
4. What were your initial thoughts and feelings and ideas? How did you experience the change?
5. How did these changes impact you?

APPENDIX C

Data Collection Matrix

Information/Information	Interviews	Observations	Documents	AV
Central administration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Website			Yes	Yes
Local newspapers			Yes	
State reports			Yes	