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## Implementation of Common Core State Standards and South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards: Successes and Struggles

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**Implementation of Common Core State Standards and South  
Carolina College and Career Ready Standards: Successes and  
Struggles**

by

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## DEDICATION

To Danielle

I could not have done this without your love and support!

I know it was rough at times, but you kept me going.

You're finally married to a Doctor!

To Don & Georgia

Thank you for instilling in me the desire to never quit, no

matter how difficult it was!

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I would like to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Edward Cox for keeping me going throughout this journey. Your call to me a few years back "jump started" this process. I truly appreciate your patience and time as I at times mired through this. I would also like to thank the members of my committee for seeing me through this. I know at times it was frustrating, but I truly appreciate your willingness to give of your time to enable me to complete this journey.

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Finally, to my loving wife Danielle, words cannot express how much your love and support has meant to me. Your encouragement kept me going, especially when it was rough! I am truly thankful for you! Now you can say, I'm married to a doctor.

## ABSTRACT

In 2009 the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative was introduced to the nation's education systems. The CCSS initiative compelled schools and districts to re-evaluate instructional programs to better meet the instructional needs of students as well as the professional development needs of teachers and administrators.

On May 30, 2014, South Carolina became the second state to withdraw from the CCSS initiative. South Carolina developed its own statewide set of standards to replace the Common Core for the 2015-2016 school year. Titled the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS), these standards are heavily influenced by the Common Core. The purpose of this research is to examine School Administrators' attitudes towards CCSS/SCCCRS and their effects on the school level implementation of the Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards.

The researcher surveyed the school principals of five school districts in South Carolina on their understanding of SCCCRS and the degree of their involvement in the school wide implementation as well as the degree of involvement in professional development relating to the implementation of SCCCRS. Based on the survey data, the researcher visited five schools to discuss the struggles and successes of the school's implementation.

The results of the study indicate that administrator attitude and administrator involvement in the planning and implementation had a significant impact upon the implementation of the SCCCRS. However, administrator involvement is only one component in the implementation process. School districts face a myriad of challenges with their implementation. These challenges come in the forms of adequate staff development time as well as the availability of training resources, including materials and instructional coaches. In addition, the collective attitude of the school's faculty and staff also impact the effectiveness of the school level implementation.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
Chapter I: Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Significance .....	6
Research Questions .....	7
Summary of Methodology .....	8
Delimitations .....	10
Definition of Terms .....	11
Chapter II: Review of the Related Literature .....	14
Common Core Background and Development .....	15
Common Core State Standards for ELA and Mathematics .	20
Assessing Common Core and a History of Testing .....	29
Specific Common Core Assessments .....	38
Role of the Principal .....	47
State Adoption/Implementation of Common Core .....	56
Backlash & Controversies .....	63

South Carolina's Response to Common Core .....	68
South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards ...	69
Chapter III: Research and Design Procedures .....	73
Conceptual Frameworks .....	73
Statement of Positionality .....	75
Instrumentation .....	76
Population and Sample .....	80
Validity .....	83
Data Collection .....	85
Limitations .....	89
Chapter IV: Analysis and Results .....	91
Analysis .....	92
Survey Results .....	97
Interview Results .....	104
Chapter V: Summary and Conclusions .....	141
Re-Statement of the Problem .....	141
Interpretation of the Findings .....	144
Implications .....	149
Conclusions .....	152
Final Thoughts .....	156
References .....	158
Appendix A-Principal's Survey .....	170
Appendix B-Survey Data .....	173
Appendix C-Superintendent Permission Letter .....	175

Appendix D-Principal Survey Letter .....	176
Appendix E-Interview Questions .....	177

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Development Indicators and Elements .....	18
Table 2.2	Areas of need in State ELA and Mathematics Assessments .....	19
Table 2.3	Grade Level Lexile and Stretch Lexile Bands ....	24
Table 2.4	PARCC and Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment Goals .....	41
Table 2.5	PARCC and Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment Goals .....	42
Table 2.6	DOK Questioning Levels, Criteria, and Examples .....	43
Table 2.7	Mean Percentage of DOK Level Questions For Smarter Balanced Assessment Series .....	45
Table 2.8	Explanation of CEP Study Findings .....	59
Table 4.1	Principal Survey Responses Received .....	98
Table 4.2	Survey Results of Schools with High Principal Understanding and Involvement .....	102
Table 4.3	Survey Results of Schools with Low Principal Understanding and Involvement .....	102
Table 4.4	School Implementation Teams Interviewed by the Researcher .....	103
Table 4.5	Second Grade Math Unit 1, Unpacked Standards ..	133
Table 5.1	Elements of Success and Challenges .....	155

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

The United States is experiencing a fundamental shift in education. In 2009 the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative was introduced to the nation's systems of education. The CCSS initiative compelled schools and districts to re-evaluate instructional programs to better meet the instructional needs of students as well as the professional development needs of teachers and administrators.

On May 30, 2014, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, a Common Core opponent, signed into law a measure for South Carolina to become the second state to withdraw from the CCSS initiative. She perceived the CCSS as a Federal overreach in state education, and was concerned with the developmental appropriateness of the standardized tests in regards to primary age students (Strauss, 2014). The measure indicated that CCSS would be utilized during the 2014-2015 school year. It would be replaced by the South Carolina College and Career Ready

Standards (SCCCRS), which were heavily influenced by the Common Core Standards, for the 2015-2016 year.

A member of the College and Career Ready Standards committee remarked that there is a 97% correlation between the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards and Common Core Standards in both English Language Arts, and Mathematics. In addition, the South Carolina Department of Education has published comparative documents for the SCCCRS ELA and SCCCRS Math standards. These documents dissect each of the SCCCRC Standards and their corresponding CCSS standards in side-by-side tables.

The South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards have been referred to as Common Core “warmed over” (Cassidy, 2015). The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee identified the standards as more challenging than the Common Core indicating that 15% of the Math and 18% of the English Language Arts standards demand more of the students than the corresponding Common Core Standards. These standards were approved in March 2015 and were implemented during the 2015-2016 school year.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is an effort to establish a set of common expectations or benchmarks for students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. All

students are expected to learn and demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) of their grade level and apply these KSA's in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics with an additional literacy component for all content areas. This initiative has been coordinated through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The Common Core Standards were initially published in 2010. At its peak in 2013, there were 45 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories that adopted, planned to implement, and assess the CCSS, (Anderson, Harrison, & Lewis, 2012). Lucy Calkins (2012) stated that the CCSS are a "big deal." The standards represented the most sweeping reform of K-12 curriculum that has ever occurred in this country (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, Pathways to the common core: Accelerating achievement, 2012).

According to Douglas Reeves (2000), the key to higher achievement lies in a focused, multidisciplinary requirement for students to think, reason, and write in a clear, accurate, and persuasive manner. Reeves goes on to state that critical thinking rather than memorization may lead to increased student achievement (Reeves, 2000).

The implementation of the CCSS represented a fundamental shift from an institutional and an instructional educational environment of the past. Nancy Kober, (2011) explains that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring student mastery of knowledge and skills in the CCSS rests with districts and schools, as well as their administrators and teachers (Kober & Rentner, 2011). Kober and Rentner identified several key findings about the CCSS:

- Almost three-fifths (60%) of the districts in the states that have adopted the CCSS viewed these standards as more rigorous than those they were replacing. The expectation was that the CCSS would improve student learning.
- Two-thirds (66%) of the districts in CCSS-adopting states had begun to develop a comprehensive plan and time-line for implementing the standards or intended to do so in the 2011-2012 school term; 61% of the districts are developing and/or purchasing curriculum materials.
- Adequate funding is a major challenge: In those districts of the states that had adopted CCSS, approximately two-thirds (66%) of the districts



cited inadequate and/or unclear guidance from their respective state's education department.

- School-level staff participated in various state, regional, or district activities in school year 2010-2011 to become informed about the CCSS.

CCSS in essence, requires that all teachers become experts in both their content areas and literacy. For the purposes of this study, literacy is defined as reading, writing, communicating, thinking critically, and performing in meaningful, relevant ways within and across disciplines are essential practices for accessing and deeply understanding content. Immersion in the language and thinking processes of each discipline guides students to develop and cultivate a deeper understanding of particular disciplines. This requirement appears to be the most daunting expectation and has received the most resistance. Many teachers specializing in specific content and or subject area possess a wealth of knowledge in their area of expertise. However, these teachers often lack the necessary skills to teach the literacy component, and it is this aspect that is forcing the instructional shift. Since CCSS is so new, there is little research to support the effectiveness of the implementation of CCSS.

## **Significance**

Nancy Kober, (2011) explained that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring student mastery of knowledge and skills in the CCSS rests with districts and schools, as well as their administrators and teachers (Kober & Rentner, 2011).

It has been largely left up to the individual schools and districts to develop and implement their own, in-house comprehensive professional development plans to ensure that their teachers are able to successfully implement these standards. This lack of uniform consistency coupled with questions regarding the funding of the professional development and implementation has created much uncertainty, confusion, and frustration within the ranks of school administrators.

This study is significant in the nature of its concepts. With Common Core representing such a sweeping change in academic thoughts and methods, there is a sparse amount of information based on the implementation of the CCSS, and the roles that school administrators must assume in the development and implementation process. In addition, the study seeks to identify how the attitudes of school administrators factor into the success or struggles of

implementation. Furthermore, it seeks to identify real world implementation strategies that are being developed and deployed within the schools. This study seeks to fill those gaps.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine school administrators' attitudes towards the SCCCRS and their effects on the school level implementation of the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. In addition, it seeks to identify strategies and methods being utilized in schools that are successfully implementing the SCCCRS based on the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?
2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the South Carolina College & Career Ready Standards in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?
3. What is the relationship between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards SCCCRS and the effectiveness of the implementation of SCCCRS in the school?

## **Summary of Methodology**

The study explored a qualitative design involving five school districts in the Interstate 95 Corridor of South Carolina. These districts represent three counties and encompass both rural and urban areas. The districts studied are identified as the Alpha School District, Beta School District, Gamma School District, Delta School District, and Epsilon School District.

A researcher designed ten-question survey that was sent to all 70 of the school principals within the five studied districts (Appendix A). This survey was designed to ascertain the principal's knowledge and understanding of the CCSS/SCCCRS. In addition, it sought to understand the principal's degree of involvement in the planning and implementation of the CCSS/SCCCRS within the school. Based on that information, the researcher chose two schools with high principal understanding of the SCCCERS, and high principal involvement in the SCCCERS implementation. The researcher also chose two schools that indicated low principal understanding and low involvement in the planning and implementation of SCCCERS.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified the criteria for "High" based on the school principal's responses to survey question 6) "How strongly

do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either agree or strongly agree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" as either important or very important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either involved or highly involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either involved or very involved.

The criteria for "Low" was ascertained via the school principal's responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either strongly disagree or disagree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?," as either not important or somewhat important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either not involved or somewhat involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either not involved or somewhat involved.

Based on feedback received via the survey results, the researcher scheduled and conducted semi-structured

interviews (Appendix B) with the school level South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards implementation teams. These semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to develop and gain an understanding of the success and frustrations of the school level implementation of the standards. The goal was to present findings regarding the reasons for both success and frustrations of SCCCRS implementation, and how the teachers have embraced the changes and adapted to the challenges.

### **Delimitations**

This study is limited to five school districts. Since the study consists of only five districts the sample size is relatively small, therefore limiting larger generalizations regarding the results. The researcher chose these districts due to the sizes and locations. In addition, the researcher is familiar with the communities serviced by the schools within the study.

The possibility of researcher bias may also limit the results of this study. While the components of the survey were piloted with respondents outside of the intended districts, the possibility of design flaws in the survey may limit the results of the research.

## **Definition of Terms**

Administrators - Are local school level principals and assistant principals.

Administrative Involvement - The amount of time a principal has spent learning professionally about the CCSS/SCCCRS, the amount of time the principal has spent planning staff development sessions about the CCSS/SCCCRS, and the principal's level of participation in the CCSS/SCCCRS professional development.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) - A set of common expectations for what Kindergarten through twelfth grade students (K-12) are expected to know and apply in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

Effective Implementation - Schools that have high administrator support and understanding of CCSS/SCCCRS, high administrator involvement in developing instructional strategies, and high involvement with the planning and implementation of professional development relating to the implementation of the CCSS/SCCCRS result in high student achievement based on the South Carolina State Department of Education School Report Cards.

High Knowledge of Common Core/Involvement (Successful) - For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified the criteria for "High" based on the school principal's

responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either agree or strongly agree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" as either important or very important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either involved or highly involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either involved or very involved.

Low Knowledge of Common Core/Involvement (Struggling) - The criteria for "Low" was ascertained via the school principal's responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either strongly disagree or disagree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" as either not important or somewhat important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either not involved or somewhat involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either not involved or somewhat involved.



Literacy - The SCCCRS define Literacy as: Reading, writing, communicating, thinking critically, and performing in meaningful, relevant ways within and across disciplines are essential practices for accessing and deeply understanding content. Immersion in the language and thinking processes of each discipline guides students to develop and cultivate a deeper understanding of particular disciplines.

Literacy Teacher - A teacher possessing the necessary skills and strategies to teach students how to read, think, analyze, communicate and respond to various texts both orally and through writing.

South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS)- South Carolina's response to the CCSS Initiative after the state's withdrawal from the CCSS. These standards were implemented during the 2015-2016 school year and correlate closely to the CCSS.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Related Literature**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a national effort to establish a set of common expectations or benchmarks for students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. All Students are expected to learn and demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) of their grade level and apply these KSAs in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics with an additional literacy component for all content areas. This initiative has been coordinated through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The Common Core Standards were initially published in 2010. At its peak in 2013, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories adopted, planned to implement, and to assess the CCSS, (Anderson, Harrison, & Lewis, 2012). Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012), states that the CCSS is a "big deal." These standards represent the most sweeping reform of K-12 curriculum that

has ever occurred in this country (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012).

According to Douglas Reeves (2000), the key to higher achievement lies in a focused, multidisciplinary requirement for students to think, reason, and write in a clear, accurate, and persuasive manner. Reeves further asserts that critical thinking rather than memorization will lead to increased student achievement (Reeves, 2000).

This implementation is forcing both institutional and instructional changes. Nancy Kober (2011) explains that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring student mastery of knowledge and skills in the CCSS rests with districts and schools, their administrators and teachers (Kober & Rentner, 2011).

CCSS/SCCCRS in essence, requires that ALL teachers become experts in both their content areas as well as in literacy. This component is the most daunting. It is this aspect that is forcing a major mindset and instructional shift.

### **Common Core Background and Development**

According to the Common Core State Standards Webpage, [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org), the initiative was developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. These

organizations were comprised of state governors and state commissioners of education. The notion behind the CCSS was rooted in the belief that our students were in need of consistent, real world learning goals in a global society. According to the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, p. 7), students who meet the Common Core State Standards are expected to be able to:

- Demonstrate independence
- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

The need for a unified national set of standards arose from conversations and debates by leading academics in education based on the intentions and realities of standards based education (Watt M. G., 2011). Education

historian, Dianne Ravitch (2005), wrote that the prevailing situation of each state using its own standards and assessments revealed little if any improvement in student achievement. Ravitch (2006) asserted that national standards should be set by teachers and professors, brought together by college boards, and assessed by national tests.

Beatty (2008a:2008b), reported that a 2008 study by the James B. Hunt Jr., Institute for Educational Leadership identified four key indicators and the elements in which they are rooted in for the need to develop national standards. Table 2.1 identifies and explains the indicators and elements of the need for national standards in American Education.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed in 2009 by a large group of state and territorial representatives agreeing to develop the set of Common Core State Standards. Representatives from Alaska, Missouri, and Texas were initially reluctant to join. South Carolina did not join with the agreement, but later did so under then Governor Mark Sanford.

Table 2.1

*Development Indicators and Elements*

Development Indicators	Developmental Elements
Standards are an accepted part of the educational landscape and play multiple roles in public education.	The nature of quality in content standards must be defined.
Significant variance exists among states in the nature of their standards.	An effective developmental process must be established.
The existing system of standards-based education had failed to meet its intent.	The influence of assessment needs to be considered.
Assessment has become the principal driver in most states' standards-based reform efforts.	The influence of performance standards needs to be considered.
	The political feasibility and leadership in setting the Common Core State Standards need to be considered.

(Beatty, Assessing the role of K-12 academic standards in states: Workshop summary, 2008a)

The development of the CCSS was separated into two phases. Phase one involved the formation of work and feedback groups to develop and review various college and readiness standards. Phase two consisted of the formation of work groups and feedback groups whose purpose was to develop and review kindergarten through twelfth grade English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics standards. During this development, the committee identified five

consistent areas of need in state ELA and Mathematics standards. Table 2.2 outlines these five areas of need for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Watt, p.26).

Table 2.2

*Areas of need in State ELA and Mathematics Standards*

<b>ELA Standards</b>	<b>Mathematics Standards</b>
Sustained focus on metacognitive reading over mastery of essential reading content.	A General lack of priority in general arithmetic content.
Failure to delineate genre specific and grade specific expectations.	A lack of student mastery requirements pertaining to whole number multiplication.
A general failure to specifically address American Literature.	A General lack of strategies for solving fractions.
Inadequate guidance on texts through reading lists.	A lack of computer use in the mastery of basic computations.
A general failure to provide their students with the necessary writing expectations.	The introduction of functions before they are of mathematical use.

(Watt M. G., 2011)

An advisory group consisting of members of the testing companies Achieve, ACT, The College Board, The National Association of State Boards of Education, and State Higher Education Executive Officers provided guidance and feedback to the groups regarding both sets of standards (ELA and Mathematics). The overall goal of this advisory group was

the combination of the Readiness Standards and the kindergarten through twelfth grade standards into what we now know as the Common Core Standards.

### **Common Core State Standards for ELA and Mathematics**

A 2010 California Department of Education Report stated that the aim of the CCSS is to define what it means to be literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This report remarked that students mastering the CCSS will be fluent readers, critical thinkers, informative writers, effective speakers, and engaged listeners (California Department of Education, 2010).

The CCSS English Language Arts (ELA) standards are comprised of four strands, which are organized by grade level from kindergarten through eighth grade. The strands are by grade span for high school, and include Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

The reading strand is further subdivided into six additional sections pertaining to, Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Foundational Skills, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

The Common Core State Standards focus upon the means needed to achieve the results. Yet, even as the Standards emphasize achievements it is stated that room is left for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine



how these goals should be reached. Thus the standards do not mandate such things as a particular type of writing process or the full range of strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. This enables teachers to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge that the teachers identify most necessary for meeting the student goals (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, p. 4).

Foundational skills for grades kindergarten to fifth grade are designed to develop students' knowledge and comprehension of print, the alphabet, and the conventions of Standard English. To accomplish this, the grade level standards stress phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency (California Department of Education, 2010).

The CCSS ELA standards for grades sixth through twelfth provide for the application of reading and writing skills to subject area content (California Department of Education, 2010).

The Common Core State Standards document parallels the Balanced Literacy Model with its emphasis on addressing both literature and informational texts. The literary

element consists of introducing diversity of other cultures, periods, and genres, while informational texts consist of biographies, auto biographies, historical writings, science, the arts, social sciences, technical texts, and digital sources (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects).

The CCSS Reading Standards also focus on engaging the student in critical analysis of both fiction and non-fiction reading material. Students are required to analyze an author's perspective and purpose of each work, as well as to compare and contrast texts, and evaluate evidence used to support text thesis (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Writing standards balance narratives with informational expository writings. Such writing begins in kindergarten with students drawing, dictating, and writing. Students then progress to writing in different genres and writing for specific and varied purposes. In addition, they are taught publishing skills through the use of technology (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Vocabulary acquisition is utilized across the four identified strands. This is accomplished through the application of vocabulary skills embedded within the

standards, and through writing and collaborative conversations during instruction.

The standards also foster oral communication, collaboration, and listening skills. This is accomplished in the development of communication skills in the students learning process throughout the CCSS ELA standards.

Through this, students are able to express ideas, work together, and listen critically to integrate and evaluate information required of the standards. These learning skills are neither taught nor learned in isolation; rather they are achieved through connections with readings and analysis of grade level texts and topics (California Department of Education, 2010).

The ELA standards of CCSS also advocate for what is referred to as a "staircase" of text complexity, which begins in grade two. The purpose is to enable students at this grade level to develop their own reading skills and to apply them to more complex texts. The standards also state that at the lowest band in each grade level, students focus on reading texts within that text complexity band. In the subsequent grade or grades within the band, the students must "stretch" to read a certain proportion of texts from the neighboring band. This pattern repeats throughout the grades, which repetition enables students to both build

upon earlier gains as well as being able to challenge themselves toward more complex texts, a crucial part of their progress from primary to secondary level. (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects). Table 2.3 illustrates the grade level bands; their Lexile levels associated with the grade level, and recommended "Stretch" Lexile levels should be.

Table 2.3

*Grade Level Lexile and Stretch Lexile Bands*

<b>Grade Band</b>	<b>Current Lexile Band</b>	<b>Stretch Lexile Band</b>
K-1	N/A	N/A
2-3	450L-725L	450L-790L
4-5	645L-845L	770L-980L
6-8	860L-1010L	955L-1155L
9-10	960L-1115L	1080L-1305L
11-CCR	1070L-1220L	1215L-1355L

(Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010)

The mathematics standards for the Common Core State Standards define what students 'theoretically' should understand and be able to grasp in the study of mathematics. Students who master CCSS for mathematics are ultimately expected to be prepared for college-level courses and possess the skills necessary for success in today's workforce (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 3).

A key component to the mathematics standards is the question of student mastery and how this mastery is identified and assessed. In short, can the student justify his or her answer? Can the student explain how she or he came to the solution? Mastery also can be identified as the ability to justify why a mathematical expression is true or where a mathematical rule is derived (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 4).

These standards include a focused and coherent set of standards providing students the opportunity to achieve proficiency in key topics that are introduced in the primary grades and scaffold into the upper grades. By focusing upon central concepts necessary for the study of more advanced mathematics in later years the students gain a "greater depth" of understanding (California Department of Education, 2010).

The CCSS mathematics standards are grouped by grade levels in kindergarten through the eighth grade. In addition, they are organized into domains of slight variance by grade level. For example, every kindergarten through fifth grade class is to include "Operations and Algebraic Thinking" within the process, with each grade year building upon the information from the previous year's work. The secondary standards are organized into

conceptual categories, i.e. Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry, and Statistics and Probability. The standards provide for advanced placement courses such as eighth grade Algebra I, Calculus, and Advanced Placement Probability and Statistics (California Department of Education, 2010).

The CCSS mathematics Kindergarten through Eighth grade standards consists of eleven domains:

- Counting and Cardinality
- Operations and Algebraic Thinking
- Number and Operations in Base Ten
- Number and Operations-Fractions
- Ratios and Proportional Relationships
- The Number System
- Measurement and Data
- Expressions and Equations
- Functions
- Geometry
- Statistics and Probability

The CCSS mathematics secondary conceptual categories consist of:

- Number and Quantity
- Algebra
- Functions

- Modeling
- Geometry
- Statistics and Probability

The CCSS mathematics focuses on arithmetic and fluency with whole numbers during the early grades. The standards provide kindergarteners through fifth grade students with the necessary solid foundation in whole number arithmetic, fractions, and decimals. Educators understand the necessity of student mastery of these basics in order for the understanding of more advanced concepts and procedures, which students will experience in the upper grades. The intent of the standards is to assure that students will adequately master the progression of topics by providing procedural fluency and conceptual understanding. This in turn equips students with the necessary skills to understand and comprehend more complex skills and algorithms (California Department of Education, 2010).

Fluency with fractions is another key to CCSS Mathematics. The standards state that student mastery of conceptual and procedural knowledge of fractions is crucial to success in Algebra. Starting in third grade, students begin to develop their understanding of fractions as numbers and the representations of fractions on a number line. Fourth grade introduces the concepts of addition and

subtraction of fractions. Multiplication and division of fractions is studied in fifth grade. Grades six and seven consist of the development of the rational numbers concept and proportional relationships (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Algebra readiness begins during the eighth grade. One of the CCSS mathematics goals is that all students will succeed in Algebra I. The theory is that students who master all of the concepts and skills through grade seven will be adequately prepared for algebra by grade eight. The mastery of basic mathematical concepts and skills in the earlier grades drives the eighth grade standards, which is to prepare the students for learning, understanding, and application of higher level mathematics including Algebra I (California Department of Education, 2010).

The standards provide for real world applications through the concept of mathematical modeling. The students will apply the mathematical theories and operations that have been learned to solve real world problems that arise daily in life, workplace, and society. The standards emphasize this skill and provide specific modeling suggestions for real world situations that call for mathematics utilization (California Department of Education, 2010).



## **Assessing Common Core and a History of Testing**

As part of the Federal Government's *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (PL 107-110)*, as well as to satisfy the requirements of the Federal *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (PL 89-10)*, the Common Core Standards must be formally assessed. Two testing consortiums were chosen for this purpose, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) and the Partnership of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

To understand the necessity of formally assessing the Common Core State Standards via the Smarter Balanced and PARCC testing programs, one must understand the role and history of standardized testing in American education. The utilization of standardized testing in American education to measure student progress, student and school accountability and to evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement is not a recent phenomenon. It traces its roots to the mid nineteenth century.

In 1845 Horace Mann persuaded the Boston Public School Committee to allow him to administer written exams to the city's children in place of the traditional oral exams. Mann's purpose was to provide objective information about the quality of teaching and learning in urban schools,

monitor the quality of instruction, and compare schools and teachers within each school (Gallagher, pp. 84-85).

The results of these first examinations indicated wide gaps in the knowledge of Boston's schoolchildren. As a result of this, Mann proposed additional testing which were approved as a means of determining which students were prepared to move to the next academic level. Based on Mann's success, competitive written examinations were adopted by school systems in nearly all U.S. cities, and in 1865, The New York Regents Exams were developed based on Mann's assessment concepts (Gallagher, p. 85).

The onset of America's involvement in World War I brought about significant expansion in the utilization of standardized testing. In 1917 the United States Army in cooperation with the American Psychological Association (APA) developed group intelligence tests and group intelligence scales, the Army Alpha and Beta (Hanson, 1993).

The purpose of this intriguing marriage of the military and the APA was to quickly identify officer candidates and to place soldiers into positions where it was deemed that they would be the most effective. In addition, these tests were the first to utilize the concept of the multiple choice test questions. Again, this format

enabled the Army to rapidly evaluate and process potential officer candidates, and in doing so became the model for subsequent standardized tests.

According to Hanson (1993), the war changed the image of both the test and those tested. That is, the tests came to be regarded as a legitimate means of making decisions about the aptitude and achievements of so-called "normal people" (Hanson, p. 212).

Based on what was thought to be the successfulness of the Army testing experience, K-12 educators searched for new and more efficient ways to predict, diagnose, and explain learning differences. This led to the entrenchment of student classification based on standardized intelligence test scores. These tests were used to stratify students of different abilities into curricular paths, which also had the effect of restricting academic and social choices (Zanderland, 1998). By 1929, over five million standardized tests were administered annually to school students, with the purpose of segregating those "who learned" from those whom had not (Thorndike and Bregman, 1934).

In 1923, a consortium of college officials established the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) to streamline the admissions process for college entrance by developing a

common entrance examination (Walsh & Bentz, 1995). The CEEB also agreed to oversee the administration of the examination. By 1925 the CEEB examination was streamlined to that which has become known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which has been used to influence the nature and content for college preparatory instruction within secondary schools (Walsh and Bentz, 1995).

By 1929, The University of Iowa created what has become known as the Iowa Basic Skills, or Iowa test. Because of their scoring efficiency and relatively low cost, schools quickly adopted the Iowa test for their own use. As a result, the Iowa test remains the most frequently used achievement test in the nation (Gallagher, p. 88).

The post-World War II era marked the expansion of standardized testing as the nation itself became more standardized - and less regionalized - through the growth of national systems of transportation and communication. In 1947, as returning war veterans benefited from the so called "G.I. Bill of 1944", the Educational Testing Service (ETS) was established. The ETS provided oversight for the College Entrance Examination Board, for one thing, but in the passing of the years the influence of the Educational Testing Service has expanded to include related areas of

statistics as well as cognitive, developmental and social psychology measurements (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1992).

By 1957 another perceived international threat stirred educational emphasis when the Soviet Union orbited Sputnik 1, the first artificial Earth satellite. The so called "Sputnik Surprise" enhanced the larger Cold War and ushered in new developments in technology, the military and science, including the space race. Americans, and American education, had to react. This reaction shaped the course of education during the era of the researcher's parents. Anecdotally, the researcher's parents often commented about how much a twenty-three inch, polished metal sphere with four antennas so drastically changed and reshaped their schools, with the purposeful infusion of what we know today as STEM, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In short order, the National Merit Qualifying Tests (NMQT) was added to the ETS and by 1959 the American College Test (ACT) was introduced. The tests, which remain today the most widely accepted instruments for college admission, were aimed at college readiness assessment (Walsh and Bentz, 1995).

Throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's the results of standardized tests were used to determine student

promotion and/ or retention, identification for special education or remediation classes, academic honors, and the determination of student academic versus vocational placement (Gallagher, 2003).

In 1965, during another period of social and political upheaval with the Civil Rights Era, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; PL 89-10) was implemented as part of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society initiative and the War on Poverty." This act was said to have represented "the most far-reaching federal legislative acts affecting American Education" (Gallagher, 2003).

The ESEA or known as "Title I," required schools to administer standardized tests and to report their results to the Federal Department of Education in order to qualify for and access federal school funding (Gallagher, 2003). The rationale for this act was to provide equal access to education and to promote high standards of accountability. The ESEA has been reauthorized every five years since its original adoption in 1965, and has been refigured, as noted below, as George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001, and in 2015 as the "Every Child Succeeds Act" presented by President Barrack Obama.

The political and social activism of the 1960's and the 1970's also witnessed the addition on the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1969. The NAEP was aimed at testing samples of students from the individual states covering all subject areas in order to "view national academic progress" (Berlinger and Biddle, 1995).

In 1974, Congress restructured the Title I testing structure and recommended expanding standardized testing as a means of assessing a school's improvement process. By the 1980's thirty-three states had mandated forms of minimum competency testing with about 200 million standardized tests being administered annually to determine student IQ and academic readiness (Rothman, 1995).

During the Reagan Administration the National Commission on Excellence on Education was empowered in 1983 to develop a report titled, "A Nation at Risk". The report was issued to enhance the utilization of standardized testing in American schools, and ominously stated:

Our nation is at risk. Our once  
unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry,  
science, and technological innovation is being  
taken over by competitors throughout the world.  
The educational foundations of our society are  
presently being eroded by a rising tide of

mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and people (p.5).

Based on the above statement, schools and colleges were urged to adopt more rigorous standards and hold student performance to higher expectations. State administered standardized tests at key transition points in schooling were viewed as appropriate measures for getting American Education "back on track," (Rothman, 1995). By 1989, forty-seven states responded to the report's recommendation and expanded their state wide testing programs. In addition, many local school districts implemented plans to raise student achievement by allocating higher financial resources to testing budgets and aligning curriculum to a state administered test (Rothman, 1995).

President William Clinton's initiative, which was known as the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994," further emphasized the notion of higher student achievement. Those supporting this initiative believed that it would clarify the expectations of teachers and students toward standardized testing, and that clearer strategies could be employed to achieve higher scores (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).



The aforementioned, "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" (NCLB), initiated by President George W. Bush, further expanded the use of standardized tests to measure student and school progress as well as school district and state accountability and progress. Under this law, states are required to test students in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school. NCLB results were published annually in the form of school, school district, and state report cards.

It is noted in this brief historical outline that emphasis on testing and educational improvement has been a consistently emphasized theme by nearly every presidential administration throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. This is perhaps especially true during times of social and political unrest, as noted in the developments during and after the World Wars, the Cold War era, within the cultural turbulence of the Civil Rights era, and beyond.

It seems that each administration has theorized that national deficits can be addressed with better educational methods and these methods can be gauged and evaluated by various standardized methodologies. One wonders, however, if such theories have ever been adequately funded for success, or if national standards can ever totally bridge

the gaps of a pluralistic nation of regional and cultural preferences and diversity. This, however, is a discussion for another paper.

All of these instruments, while laudable in their desire to enhance American education, all have lacked a uniform assessment. That is, under all of these initiatives the assessments were written and scored by various states rather than a common evaluative process. The concept therefore of using Smarter Balanced and Partnership of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments were employed to provide a general continuity and alignment of rigor and expectation.

### **Specific Common Core Assessments**

As noted above, the goal of both Smarter Balanced and the PARCC assessments was to provide formative and summative comment to educators regarding student mastery of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Considerable attention has been placed on the summative aspect of these assessments; both consortia have developed measures that will create effective on-demand, technological-administered assessments. These assessments provide performance tasks in both English-Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The Smarter Balanced assessment includes an end of academic year assessment of both ELA and

Mathematics, while PARCC's performance tasks are administered in early spring. Student scores are then aggregated across both contexts and used to determine student understanding of the CCSS (Herman & Linn, p. 5). End of year assessments utilize computer adaptive testing, with algorithms used to customize items administered to each student based on each individual student's ability level, which is identified from prior item responses. In essence, the test tailors itself to the student (Herman & Linn, p. 5).

Both consortia assess students in third through eighth grades in ELA and Mathematics similar to the current South Carolina state assessments. The approach of each type of assessment differs for the high school students. Smarter Balance summarily assesses students in eleventh grade only. PARCC assesses all ninth through eleventh grade students in ELA but uses state developed End of Course (EOC) test results for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II.

Smarter Balance and PARCC utilized Evidenced-Centered Design (ECD) in their design and approach to summative assessment validation. Hermann and Lin (2013), describe this process as beginning with a clear delineation of the skills that are to be evaluated. These skills are entered into a domain model, which identifies specific evidence in

the form of assessment targets that can be used to evaluate student status. They go on to state that these items are used to guide assessment development. In addition, the models provide templates for creating task items that are aligned with assessment targets. These models are used to generate the actual test items, which are then subjected to content and bias reviews; field tested, and revised as needed (Herman & Linn, p. 6).

Hermann and Linn (2013), continue in stating that test drafts/ blueprints are then developed to guide the creation of test forms. These blueprints specify how many and what type of items and tasks are to be sampled. In addition, the blueprints also identify the targeted goals of the assessments (Herman & Linn, pp. 6-7). Tables 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate and explain these assessment goals for ELA and math for both assessment types.

This ECD framework is considerably different from the model described by Herman and Fox as the so called "Black Box" test development process, which is currently being employed in many state assessments. The "Black Box" method consists of standards and general test blueprints based on content coverage. These tests end with scores and proficiency levels that identify limited rationale about the development and content (Herman & Linn, p. 8).

Table 2.4

*PARCC & Smarter Balance ELA Assessment Goals*

	<b>PARCC ELA</b>	<b>Smarter Balance ELA</b>
<b>Reading</b>	Students read and comprehend a range of sufficiently complex texts independently.	Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
<b>Writing</b>	Students write effectively when using and/or analyzing sources.	Students can produce effective and well-grounded writings for a range of purposes and audiences.
<b>Research/Inquiry</b>	Students build and present knowledge through research and the integration, comparison, and synthesis of ideas.	Students can engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze, integrate, and present information.
<b>Speaking &amp; Listening</b>		Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.

Smarter Balanced and PARCC utilize higher order questioning and thinking in their assessments. This is done through the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) methodology which is delineated into four levels. Table 2.6 identifies the DOK levels, what their specific questioning criteria consists of, and examples of questions.

Table 2.5

*PARCC & Smarter Balance Mathematics Assessment Goals*

PARCC Mathematics	Smarter Balance Mathematics
<p><b>Major Concepts and Procedures:</b> Students solve problems involving the major content for grade level with connections to practices.</p>	<p><b>Concepts and Procedures:</b> Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.</p>
<p><b>Additional and Supporting Concepts and Procedures:</b> Students solve problems involving the additional and supporting content for their grade level with connections to practice.</p>	<p><b>Problem Solving:</b> Students can solve a range of complex well-posed problems in pure and applied mathematics, making productive use of knowledge and problem solving strategies.</p>
<p><b>Expressing Math Reasoning:</b> Students express mathematical reasoning by constructing mathematical arguments and critiques.</p>	<p><b>Communicating Reasoning:</b> Students can clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others.</p>
<p><b>Modeling Real World Problems:</b> Students solve real world problems engaging particularly in the modeling practice.</p>	<p><b>Modeling and Data Analysis:</b> Students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems.</p>
<p><b>Fluency:</b> Students demonstrate fluency in areas set forth in the Standards for Content in grades three through six.</p>	

(Herman & Linn, 2013)

Table 2.6:

*DOK Questioning Levels, Criteria, and Examples*

<b>Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Questioning</b>		
DOK 1	Recall of facts, terms, concepts, or procedures; basic comprehension.	<p>Can you recall _____?</p> <p>When did _____ happen?</p> <p>Who was _____?</p>
DOK 2	Application of concepts and/or procedures involving some mental processing.	<p>Can you explain how _____ affected _____?</p> <p>How would you apply what you learned to develop _____?</p> <p>How would you compare _____? Contrast _____?</p>
DOK 3	Applications requiring abstract thinking, reasoning, and/or more complex inferences.	<p>How is _____ related to _____?</p> <p>What conclusions can you draw _____?</p> <p>How would you adapt _____ to create a different _____?</p>
DOK 4	Extended analysis or investigation that requires synthesis and analysis across multiple contexts and non-routine applications.	<p>Write a thesis, drawing conclusions from multiple sources.</p> <p>Design and conduct an experiment. Gather information to develop alternative explanations for the results of an experiment.</p> <p>Apply information from one text to another text to develop a persuasive argument.</p>

(Herman & Linn, 2013)

A 2012 RAND Corporation study indicated that the majority of states' standardized tests consist of high numbers of DOK 1 and DOK 2 levels of questions. The RAND analysis of the state mathematics tests indicated that 100% of the cognitive questions were within the DOK 1 and DOK 2 levels. The majority of which were DOK 1. Open-ended mathematical responses indicated that 88% were in the DOK 1 and DOK 2, and 11% at DOK 3 (Yuan & Le, 2012). Similarly, the ELA and Reading results showed that the majority of the Reading items were within the DOK 1 to DOK 3 ranges. Of those, 14% were considered DOK 3. Open ended reading indicated some higher level questioning with 49% at DOK 3 and 11% DOK 4. States using separate writing tests resulted in 47% at DOK 1 and DOK 2, and 33% at DOK 3. Open-ended writing samples indicated 47% DOK 3 and 44% DOK 4 (Yuan & Le, 2012).

The RAND study astoundingly concluded that in the overall sample 0% of American students experienced a deep learning assessment on their current state mathematics tests. State reading tests showed that only 16% of students experienced deep reading assessments and only 2-3% of students experienced deep level writing assessments. The RAND study also concluded that overall only 3-10% of all United States elementary and secondary students were



assessed on deeper learning skills on at least one state mandated and developed assessment (Yuan & Le, 2012).

Conversely, Smarter Balance testing indicates high use of DOK 2-4 levels with their fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade assessments. Table 2.7 breaks down the DOK levels and mean percentages of these questions utilized with the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The increase in DOK levels, which both assessments are employing pose significant challenges to their implementation. The intentions are to provide the students with exposure to higher-level thinking and response questions. This, however, may also indicate a lack of preparedness by both students and teachers. As discussed, these tests are a major shift from the current state mandated assessments.

Table 2.7:

*Mean Percentage of DOK Level Questions for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Series*

<b>Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Level</b>	<b>Smarter Balanced English-Language Arts Mean</b>	<b>Smarter Balanced Mathematics Mean</b>
DOK 1	33%	46%
DOK 2	46%	79%
DOK 3	43%	49%
DOK 4	25%	21%

(Herman & Linn, pp. 11-12)

These assessments have prompted many states to reconsider and in some cases abandon the testing

consortiums all together. Thirty-one states and territories were partnered with Smarter Balanced, and twenty-six states and territories were partnered with PARCC for the spring 2015 Assessments. As of this writing, only twenty-two states and territories still remain with Smarter Balanced, while only thirteen states and territories remain in the PARCC consortiums. One Ohio teacher remarked that the PARCC test is a "monstrosity." She went on to say, "If the developers of the PARCC Test had begun with the primary goal of ensuring that most children will do dismally so that schools and teachers will look very, very bad, then they could not have done a better job!"

However, these assessments have forced states to re-evaluate the nature of the assessments used in each state. South Carolina administered the ACT Aspire Test to third through eighth grade students in 2015. The Aspire Test consists of similar percentages of DOK 2 and DOK 3 level questioning that the Smarter Balance test will be utilizing. Both tests are based on the Common Core Standards, and both require the students to exercise their higher order thinking skills. In addition, both tests have forced teachers and administrators to re-evaluate the levels of questioning in both daily lessons and assessments.

## **Role of the Principal**

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and its emphasis on all teachers being experts in reading as well as their content area, the roles and responsibilities of the school administrators have also adapted from the management of a school to that of the instructional leader. Within their respective school systems, principals are expected to perform multiple roles. Their primary responsibility, however, is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of enhancing student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2000; Lezoutte, 1994; Waters, Marzano, and McNulty 2003). Although teachers, supervisors, and district level personnel are able to exhibit instructional leadership behaviors, it is the school principal is the anchor for the foundation of instructional leadership at the school level (Sergiovanni, 1998).

Principals who strive to be instructional leaders are committed to meeting the needs of their schools by serving stakeholders and pursuing shared purposes (Sergiovanni, 1998). These administrators advocate excellence in student performance by building a system of relationships with the stakeholders in their schools (Hallinger & Heck, 2000). In turn, these relationships aid in the creation of positive

environments where all students learn (Andrews, Basom, & Basom, 1991).

LaPointe and Davis (2006) assert, "Public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders in promoting powerful teaching and learning" (p.3). Research has also demonstrated that the principal teacher directly influences academic achievement from students" (Supovitz and Poglinco, 2001; Waters and Marzano, 2006). In regard then to CCSS, it follows that the principal's role as an instructional leader correlates directly to curricular and instructional change.

Recent literature suggests that instructional leadership requires principals to be purposeful about building teams, clarifying mission, vision and goals, and cultivating leadership skills in teachers, and in employing data to inform instruction and school improvement (Mendels and Mitgang, 2013). It has also been argued that effective instructional leadership acutely influences the quality of instruction and school achievement, and that leadership rests with the principal (LaPointe and Davis, 2006).

Phillip Hallinger has defined the instructional leader as "the primary source of knowledge for the school's educational program" (1992a, p. 6). He further suggested

that the role of an instructional leader is to comprise "high expectations for teachers and students, close supervision of classroom instruction, coordination of school curriculum, and close monitoring of student progress" (p. 4). Hallinger's learning model for instructional leadership (2010) suggests that leadership contributes to learning and school improvement through four dimensions, "values and beliefs, leadership focus, context for leadership, and sharing leadership" (p. 125).

Expanding:

1. Values not only determine what is important for the school, but also shape the thought and actions of the principal;
2. By maintaining a focus of three key areas including "vision and goals, academic structures and processes, and people" p. 129), principals significantly impact student-learning outcomes.
3. Awareness of context with regard to individual school environment and culture allows principals to adapt their styles according to need;
4. The capacity to which others are allowed by principals to share in decision-making indicates the degree of shared leadership.

In short, Hallinger's model of leadership is delineated by personal traits such as "beliefs, values, knowledge, and experience" (p. 127), and "explicitly aimed at the improvement of student learning" (p. 128).

Instructional leadership requires the balancing of traditional managerial and political duties with instructional duties (Cuban, 1988). Instructional leaders should focus upon curriculum development and improvement more than management and personnel (Lunenburg, 2013). Distinguished Professor Warren Bennis, known for his influence upon several generations of business and political leaders, believed that instructional leadership must include establishment of shared vision, command of a clear voice, a strong moral code, and adaptability to persistent change (Bennis, 2003).

Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter (2010) offer these characteristics of an instructional leader as being able to,

1. "Facilitate the creation of a school vision that reflects high and appropriate standards of learning, a belief in the educability of all students, and high levels of personal and organizational performance" (p. 746).

2. "Emphasize ambitious goals that call for improvement over the status quo. In particular, instructionally anchored leaders make certain that goals are focused on students, feature student learning an achievement, and are clearly defined" (p. 746).
3. "Ensure that responsibilities for achieving targets are made explicit and that timelines for achieving objectives are specified. In short, they (that is, the instructional leaders) make sure that the school vision is translated into specific, measurable, concrete, end results; also ensuring that the resources needed to meet goals are clearly identified and made available to the school community" (p. 746).

Anecdotally, this recent thinking is a departure from the model of leadership the researcher witnessed and experienced via the principals of both childhood and into the teaching vocation. The more authoritarian approach of these earlier teachers - mostly men, and also a departure from a now more inclusive representation of principals - perhaps is best explained by one of those prior mentors and

models. "I want my teachers to work from bell to bell and to know that they are being watched". Rather than collegial and complementary, that style might be characterized as the "my way or the highway" approach to school leadership.

This is not to suggest that these stalwarts were not effective in their work and in their profession. In fact most of them had a significant, positive influence upon this writer as well as for many of the teachers and students whom they led. But it is to suggest that in more recent times the role of the principal has evolved - perhaps returned - to a philosophical state of where the principal is again the principal teacher within their school; in short the instructional leader.

Research has shown a variety of facets within quality leadership in education itself, including the ability to be reflective. John Kotter, another eminent thinker in the field of business leadership and change, suggests that effective leaders: 1) are realistic and reflective in their individual performance; 2) listen carefully and open their minds to continual learning; and 3) engage in critical reflection regarding what works and what does not work, and which items become essential daily practices (Kotter, 1996).



Again, this thinking is not new within modern educational practice and has been long used in the routine training for the practice of social service and by business leaders. Renowned educator John Dewey wrote that "reflection is the reasoning-out process, which allows the individual to compare and contextualize experiences". In fact, as Dewey added, the notion of listening reflection and measured responses allows us to learn from experience and to come along with others to a reasoned decision or strategy (Dewey, 1933). In short, reflective practice supports instructional leadership.

It is also advantageous for the instructional leaders to be proactive rather than reactive, as well as to be strategic, creative - visionary, even - in framing, establishing, and motivating a culture of excellence within the school, among staff members and faculty, and for the students. Blasé and Blasé (1999) note, instructional leaders ideally engage collaboratively with teachers to cultivate a supportive environment where change may take place (p. 351). Again, such attitudes and behaviors delineate the culture of the school.

Blasé and Blasé (1999) further assert that creating a shared understanding and acceptance for the school vision is among the most important facets of establishing a school

culture. This culture is built within the school over time as all the constituents of the school community, including faculty, staff, students and parents, work together to advance the vision and fulfill the mission of the school (Blasé & Blasé, 1999).

It is within these ideals that the instructional leader frames her or his work. It is within these ideals that an effective principal may transform instructional beliefs and practices by using the standards -- along with evaluation -- to discuss exactly what effective instruction looks like. Without such consistency and openness to change, growth will likely not be sustainable (Brooks & Dietz, 2013). Without building and reinforcing a culture of mutuality and shared vision and goals for student achievement, schools will likely struggle to establish patterns leading to positive outcomes for students and a sense of purposefulness for teachers (Lawrence, Huffman, and Lavole, 2005). Therefore it is imperative that the instructional leader cultivates a school culture capable of working toward curricular improvement and student achievement (Kotter, 1996).

In short, the principal's role as instructional leader is vital, and this importance cannot be over stated. Such leadership must stem from both personal competency and

the commitment and confidence to lead. Yet, the effectiveness of this leadership is influenced by openness and transparency, the fostering of trust and authenticity, and a willingness to listen carefully and respond appropriately. When mutual trust is nurtured by the instructional leader, shared visions may be established and the authentic work of vital education may occur.

Peterson and Deal (2009), describe the critical elements of school culture, the purposes, traditions, norms, and values that bring guidance and adherence to any school. Without this culture of excellence, supportiveness, openness, mutual respectfulness, and trust schools will suffer (Peterson & Deal, 2009). And this is not to mention the additional strains created by CCSS and other concerns about teacher and staff evaluations, which can interfere with the goal of creating a school culture around learning. As Fullan (2007) notes, regardless of how effective other matters are addressed, without attending to matters of school culture, any change is "bound to fail" (p.31).

In all of this, the role of the principal must be constantly evolving toward instructional leadership and away from more authoritarian, supervisory, managerial approaches of the recent past. In this manner

instructional leaders can make a significant impact upon standards based reform through frequent, open, reflective, and concise communication within the school community, which allows collaborative structures to flourish. Such structures encourage, rather than restrict, professional and personal development and creativity to flourish (Dunkle, 2012).

As Porter, et al, (2010) state, "principal leadership matters" (p. 136). Such leadership matters toward the implementation of CCSS, even as - perhaps especially as the CCSS create other issues challenging principals, faculty, students, parents, and political leaders.

Principals who lead may well never be able to address all of the concerns, both academic and political, of the various constituents and stakeholders. Yet progressive leadership can hopefully open the door to trust, change, and growth, which discussion seems to be in short supply in this era. That however, is also a discussion for another paper.

### **State Adoption/Implementation of Common Core**

At its height, the Common Core State Standards were formally adopted by forty-six states and the District of Columbia. These standards were set for full implementation and assessment during the 2014-2015 school term.

In a 2011 study and report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP), Kober and Rentner (2011), suggest that ultimate responsibility for ensuring that students master the knowledge and skills in the standards rests with districts and schools, and their administrators and teachers. Kober and Rentner further assert that although districts will continue to have flexibility in deciding how to accomplish this goal, many will need to change/adapt their curriculum, instruction, local assessments, teacher professional development, and other elements of education to align to these new standards (Kober & Stark-Rentner, 2011).

A 2011 Center on Education Policy (CEP) study of forty-three states and Washington D.C. identified six key findings in how school districts were preparing to implement the CCSS. Table 2.8 summarizes and explains the results of the six CEP study findings and the corresponding data to support each finding.

The CEP study concluded that the implementation of the CCSS would require considerable work, coordination, and collaboration with district and state level agencies.

Stephen Sawchuk (2012), states that implementation of CCSS is a Herculean task given the size of the public school teaching force and difficulty that educators face

when creating the sustained, intensive training that this teaching force will need (Sawchuk, p. 16). The goal of this massive training is to deepen the understanding of the standards in order to deliver the necessary quality of instruction. (Kober & Stark-Rentner, 2011)

A major hurdle in the developmental phase was the absence of curricula aligned with the standards and the shift in thinking from basic questioning at DOK 1 to higher order thinking and questioning at the DOK 2 and 3 levels. More challenging content for students is also more challenging content for the teacher to deliver.

CCSS supporters state that the standards encourage a focus on the most important topics at each grade level and subject, allowing teachers to help students to develop those skills. Proponents of this position hold that this simplifies things for teachers and schools by enabling a focus on fewer standards, thus allowing for more mastery.

Lucy Calkins (2012), states that any school reform effort must be deeply connected to the learning culture of the school, the collaboration of its teachers and school leaders, and assessment (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, p. 181).

Table 2.8:

*Explanation of CEP Study Findings*

<b>CEP findings of District Level CCSS Implementation</b>	
<b>Finding</b>	<b>Data</b>
Three-fifths of the districts in states that have adopted the CCSS viewed these standards as more rigorous than the ones being replaced and expected the CCSS to improve student achievement and learning.	Rigor: 58% in Mathematics 57% in ELA Improved Achievement: 55% in Math 58% in ELA
Two-thirds of the districts in CCSS adopting states have begun to develop a comprehensive plan and timeline for implementing the standards or intend to do so in the 2011-2012 school year. Sixty-one percent of the districts are developing and/or purchasing curriculum materials.	48% of the districts have developed teacher professional development plans for ELA and Math implementation.
Adequate funding is a major challenge.	76% view adequate funding to be a major challenge. 21% view funding as a minor challenge.
Two-thirds of districts in adopting states cited inadequate or unclear state guidance on the CCSS as a major challenge.	Unclear state guidance pertaining to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher evaluation/accountability.</li> <li>• Alignment of local assessments to CCSS.</li> <li>• Alignment of teacher education programs to CCSS.</li> </ul>
Districts appear to face relatively little resistance to implementing CCSS from parents, community members, or educators.	10% of districts considered teacher resistance as major challenge. 58% considered teacher resistance to be a minor challenge. 5% viewed resistance from community members and parents as major resistance issue.
District or school-level staff participated in various state, regional, or district level activities in the 2010-2011 school year to become informed about the CCSS.	88% participated in state, regional, and/or district CCSS informational meetings. 63% participated in state, regional, and/or district CCSS planning and implementation meetings.

Calkins identifies assessment as the true understanding of where our children are in their learning process and what they need in order to progress (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating achievement, pp. 181-182).

Calkins identifies three principals for effective whole school reform. These are:

**1. Don't interpret the CCSS as a mandate to shoehorn more "stuff" into an already overcrowded curriculum.**

CCSS is not about curricular compliance, it is about accelerating student achievement. In order for this to occur, schools need to build and develop ongoing systems of continuous improvement. The goal of this is to make learning for the students and teachers an ingrained part of the school culture and infrastructure (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating achievement, p. 82).

**2. Choose priorities that draw on the school's strengths.**

Identify strong teaching practices already in place and present at your school. Pay special attention to those practices that enhance achievement across curricular areas. Calkins cites that 20% of what teachers and a school do make 80% of the impact (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman,



Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating achievement, p. 185).

**3. Implement the selected reforms fully and seriously, then learn from the process and extend it to new areas.**

Douglas Reeves (2010) concluded that innovations that are implemented with low and medium degrees of fidelity have little to no effect on achievement. However, on the opposite side, innovations implemented with 90% and higher fidelity make extremely significant impacts on student achievement (Reeves, 2010).

A key concern at the heart of the implementation with fidelity is the costs incurred by the districts as a result of the required professional development and resources needed. The implementation of the Common Core occurred during a period of decreased local and state budgets. During the 2011-2012 school year, 84% of CCSS school districts experienced budget cuts, 54% of those districts were forced to slow or stop their implementation due to budget constraints.

Addressing implementation costs in 2012, the Thomas Fordham Institute discussed a so-called "Smart Implementation" of Common Core (Murphy, Regenstein,

McNamara, Finn, & Winkler, 2012). The Fordham study developed three implementation approaches for Common Core:

- 1. Business as Usual:** This is the traditional approach that has been taken with initiatives in the past. It entails the purchase of hard-copy texts, annual paper student assessments, and in-person professional development for teachers. This is the most expensive, due to the initial funding of full implementation costs, yet most traditionally utilized approach.
- 2. Bare Bones:** The name correctly implies that it is the cheapest method based on cost. It consists of open-source materials, annual computer-based assessments, and on-line professional development in the form of webinars and modules.
- 3. Balanced Implementation:** Uses a mix of instructional materials such as teacher self-published texts, and/or district-produced materials. Balanced Implementation also utilizes interim and summative assessments, and what the authors call a "hybrid" system of professional development similar to the train

the trainer model. The cost of this method is about half of the Business as Usual method (Murphy, Regenstien, McNamara, Finn, & Winkler, 2012).

In regards to South Carolina, the 2012 Fordham Institute Study indicated that the Palmetto State budgeted \$66.9 million dollars total in per-pupil costs. The Business as Usual approach would have cost the state an additional \$143.2 million. The Bare Bones approach indicated a potential monetary savings of \$15.2 million. The Balanced method indicated an additional \$21.3 million in student expenditures. While the Bare Bones showed a savings, the potential costs and losses do not validate the means.

### **Backlash and Controversies**

The Common Core represents both a qualitative and quantitative leap forward in educational development and teaching of subsequent generation of children. Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman, (2012) remarked that the CCSS are a big deal. It is no longer acceptable practice to provide the vast majority of Americas' children with a fill in the blank, answer the questions, read the paragraph curriculum. Our nation needs to provide all students with a thinking curriculum, with writing workshops, reading clubs, research

projects, debates, and think tanks. The Common Core Standards offer this crucial wakeup call. (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, p. 9).

This "Wake-up call" has come at a cost. In their rush to adopt the Common Core State Standards many states and districts have neglected the aspect of professional development regarding the CCSS for state, district, and school level administrators. This in-turn has led to a misunderstanding of CCSS with the teaching staff, which has trickled to the parents, students, and other school stakeholders.

State Departments of Education have each implemented professional development for CCSS, however, the facilitators in many cases, did not possess the necessary understandings of the CCSS to effectively train the administrators and teachers regarding how to implement the CCSS. Districts and schools have been forced to "be creative" in their professional development and implementation. This approach only reinforced the negative views of teachers, parents, and community leaders regarding CCSS. This reinforcement has led to a political and system backlash against CCSS by many school districts and states.

Teacher support for the Common Core declined from 76% support in 2013 to 46% support in 2014 (Bidwell, 2014). In

February of 2014, the National Education Association (NEA), which helped develop the standards, stated that a Common Core "Course Correction" was needed. While not rejecting the standards out-right, the union claimed that the initiative has been "botched" and that seven out of ten teachers believe that the implementation is not meeting their expectations in their respective schools (Bidwell, 2014).

The Common Core Assessments remain an ongoing source of concern and controversy. These assessments, through their enhanced rigor and utilization of higher order questioning and analytical concept (DOK2-DOK4) questions have raised concerns by parents, students, and educators as being too rigorous. Additionally, there have been concerns about the developmental appropriateness of the Primary level assessments. The inaugural year for these assessments was 2015. In an April 19, 2015 article, *The Washington Post* reported that more than 175,000 New York third through eighth grade students had "opted out" of the Common Core English Language Arts exams, given the previous week. Analysts predict that third through eighth grade opt outs in New York may exceed 200,000. This rate will cause New York to miss the Federal Race to the Top mandate of 95% of students tested.

Valerie Strauss of *The Washington Post* stated a parental movement centered in New York has garnered opposition to Common Core and other state standards that parents believe to be unfair to students and teachers. The anger expressed by the New Yorkers is centered around the assertion that test results are used for what are termed as "high-stakes" decisions, which are against the advice of assessment experts.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers are the developers of the CCSS initiative. These organizations are comprised of state governors and state commissioners of education. In 2009, the Obama Administration enacted the, "Race to the Top" education initiative, tying \$4.35 billion in federal education funds to the states adopting "College and Career Ready Standards". States adopting the CCSS would qualify for these funds. While not developed or mandated by the federal government, many politicians have identified the nationwide alignment of the Common Core as the "Federalization" of education. While this is not the case, it serves a political focal point.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz stated that, "Instead of a federal government that seeks to dictate school curriculum

through Common Core. Imagine repealing every word of Common Core" (Strauss, 2015). Others have vilified Common Core as intent to impose "Communism" or a "one size fits all" system upon education in America. The CCSS has also been referenced as an appropriation of Soviet-style ideology and propaganda by the political far right (Strauss, 2014). Nine states - Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Utah - have created Anti-Common Core groups led by parents, teachers, and activists.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal called for his state to drop the standards and the state mandated assessment. Ironically Governor Jindal was one of the first Governors to publically embrace the CCSS.

Ohio legislators have also held hearings on bills that would eliminate Common Core. Representatives of Utah, New Jersey, and North Carolina sought revisions of the standards. Minnesota only adopted the ELA standards, while the states of Texas, Nebraska, Virginia, and Alaska never adopted the CCSS.

In March of 2014, Indiana, which was one of the first states to adopt the Common Core standards, then became the first to drop them, with the state protest led by the activist group, "Hoosiers Against the Common Core." The Indiana group's issues focused upon the overall cost of

adopting the CCSS, and what was perceived as a centralization of control over schools and teachers. Indiana's particular standards were approved in April 2014, yet these standards have also been criticized for their similarities to the Common Core standards. Indeed, a review of the Indiana standards indicated that 93% of the grades 6-12 standards were either identical to or slightly edited versions of the Common Core. Indiana's K-5 standards yielded similar results.

Oklahoma dropped the Common Core in June 2014. The Oklahoma state legislature also passed a bill assuring that there would be zero overlap between Oklahoma's standards and the Common Core.

### **South Carolina's Response to Common Core**

South Carolina officially withdrew from the Common Core on May 30, 2014. New state standards known as the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS) were subsequently developed for the 2015-2016 school year.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley signed a measure indicating that the state would utilize the Common Core Standards during the 2014-2015 school term, but would not participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment that spring. The law also stipulated that both the state school board and the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee must



approve any standards developed by the South Carolina Department of Education. The new law further prohibited the state from adopting any assessment being developed by the Smarter Balanced consortium.

This law, Act 200, led to the rushed adoption of the ACT Aspire assessments, which in-turn created an additional controversy concerning the ethics of the awarding of the contract to ACT Corporation. South Carolina's new standards dubbed the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for English-Language Arts (SCCCRSELA) and South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for Mathematics (SCCCRSM) were approved in March of 2015.

### **South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards**

On June 6, 2014, the South Carolina State Legislation ratified Act 200. This Act required the state to develop new, high quality, college and career ready standards in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (MA) to be implemented during the 2015-2016 school year (South Carolina Department of Education, p. 6).

In the fall of 2014, the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) formed an ELA and Math Standards Writing Teams. These teams consisted of K-12 educators and members of higher education. Their purpose was to develop high quality ELA and Math standards to the replace the CCSS,

which were then being utilized. These committees utilized the 2014 ACT College and Career Ready Standards, the CCSS in ELA and Math, and standards from other states that were not part of the CCSS initiative as a road map for the development of the South Carolina Standards.

The teams collaborated with business and higher education specialists charged with identifying those skills that high school graduates ought to be able to demonstrate in either the workforce or at the college level. These revised standards are now known as the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

Following the mandate of these new parameters, the various committees worked toward developing the necessary standards. Draft copies of the SCCCRS Math Standards were similarly posted for review on November 5, 2014, while SCCCRS ELA standards were posted for review on November 6, 2014. The ELA standards garnered 2,200 public survey reviews, while the math garnered 1,600 public surveys and reviews. In addition to the public reviews, the SDE formed two committees to review the SCCCRS ELA and SCCCRS Math standards. The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) also formed separate panels to review both the SCCCRS ELA and SCCCRS Math standards.

Based upon feedback from the public surveys, the State Department of Education Review Committees, and the Education Oversight Committee Review Committees, the standard writing teams revised and updated the standards. The final draft of the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards ELA Standards was approved by the SDE on January 21, 2015. The SCCCRS Math Standards were approved by the SDE on February 11, 2015. Final approval and adoption of both standards came from the SCEOC on March 9, 2015.

A member of the College and Career Ready Standards committee remarked that there is a 97% correlation between the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards to the Common Core Standards in both English Language Arts, and Mathematics. In addition, the South Carolina Department of Education has published comparative documents for the SCCCRSELA and SCCCRSM standards. These documents dissect each of the SCCCR Standards and their corresponding CCSS standards in side-by-side tables.

A member of the group South Carolina Parents Involved in Education remarked, "We were tasked with writing our own English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards that are not Common Core. We have failed". (Cassidy, 2015). The South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards can

be referred to as Common Core “warmed over” (Cassidy, 2015). The parent cited above also suggested that the state standards controversy “is not going away” (Cassidy, 2015). Yet, despite parental protests, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee identified the standards as more challenging than the Common Core indicating that 15% of the math and 18% of the English Language Arts demand more of the students than the corresponding Common Core Standards.

## **Chapter III**

### **Research and Design Procedures**

This study utilized a qualitative design method centering on the analysis of semi-structured interviews to illustrate the relationship between the school administration's attitudes regarding the SCCCRS standards, the level of involvement in the planning of and participation in professional development in school level Common Core/SCCCR implementation, and the effectiveness of the school's overall implementation. In addition, the study sought to identify strategies and methods being utilized in schools that are successfully implementing the SCCCRS. This chapter includes a summary of the sample population, an explanation of the research instrument, and a review of the data analysis procedures.

### **Conceptual Framework**

It was the desire of the researcher to develop a qualitative framework for ascertaining how school leaders established and maintained connections, analyzed new information, and made appropriate/sound decisions through their daily interactions within their school environment.

This framework was influenced by the Grounded Theory Qualitative Analysis.

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory originated in sociology, and is based on symbolic interactionism, which states that meaning is understood through the interaction with others in a social setting (Blumer, 1986; Dey, 1999; Jeon, 2004). The goal of grounded theory according to Glasser and Strauss (1967) is to develop an explanatory theory of basic social processes which are studied in the environments in which they occur through a systematic analysis of data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Lingard, Albert, and Levinson (2008) state that grounded theory is most appropriate when the study of social interactions or experiences aims to explain a process (Lingard, Albert, & Levinson, p. 337). Lingard (2008) goes on to state, "The central principle of data analysis in Grounded Theory is constant comparison. As issues of interest are noted in the data, they are compared with other examples for similarities and differences (Lingard, Albert, & Levinson, p. 459)."

Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify that the basic idea of Grounded Theory is to read and re-read a textual data base, in this case field notes and interview

transcriptions, and to then identify various categories and concepts. Once these categories and concepts are identified, the researcher next seeks to understand their interrelationship with each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To understand how schools are implementing the SCCCRS and the role that school administration plays in this process, the researcher utilized Grounded Theory as the structure for the analysis and coding of the field notes and transcriptions. The researcher coded the interview transcriptions and field notes via the use of Selective Coding.

Selective coding is essentially a process of choosing a single core category and relating all other sub-categories of data back to the core (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The core category of this study was the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS. Sub categories included administrative attitude towards CCSS/SCCCRS, administrative involvement in professional development relating to implementation, and instructional strategies relating to professional development and classroom utilization.

### **Statement of Positionality**

As a school administrator, the researcher supports the notion of a common set of standards for our students nationwide, and that these standards

significantly changed what has been taught and how it is delivered. In addition, as a school administrator, the researcher believes it is his responsibility to ensure that these standards are implemented with fidelity within the school for which he is responsible. This assertion of administrative leadership is imperative for the successful implementation and progress of any program within the school one leads.

The researcher acknowledged that as an administrator who supports the Common Core and the South Carolina Ready Standards a bias exists. Furthermore, he acknowledges that a bias exists towards the administrators surveyed and interviewed. The researcher knew and worked with several of the administrators surveyed and interviewed. The researcher was therefore cautious regarding to the interjection his own personal beliefs and experiences into the conversations.

### **Instrumentation**

A ten-question, researcher designed survey (Appendix A) was used in the initial stages of the study. The first four questions identified the type of school, the approximate size of the student body, the gender of the principal, and the number of years that the principal has



been at the school. Questions five through seven ascertain the principal's knowledge of and opinion of the SCCCRS. Questions eight, nine, and ten relate to the development and implementation of the SCCCRS in the school and leadership participation in the development and implementation.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified the criteria for "High" based on the school principal's responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?", as either agree or strongly agree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?," as either important or very important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?," as either involved or highly involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?," as either involved or very involved.

The criteria for "Low" was ascertained via the school principal's responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either strongly disagree or disagree. Question 7) "How important to

education are the CCSS initiative and SCCR Standards?," as either not important or somewhat important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCRS in your school?," as either not involved or somewhat involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?," as either not involved or somewhat involved.

Once the survey data was received, the researcher selected and visited two schools that appeared to be successful in the implementation. The purpose was to interview the members of the school SCCR implementation teams to discuss the factors and strategies that were enabling the school to be successful in its implementation.

Indicators of a successful school were defined based on responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCR initiatives?" as either agree or strongly agree. As well as responses to survey question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCRS in your school?," as either involved or highly involved.

The researcher also selected and contacted two schools that appeared to be struggling with their implementation. The purpose was to interview the members of the school

SCCCRS implementation teams to discuss the factors and strategies that were preventing the school's implementation. Indicators of a struggling school were defined based on responses to survey question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCrs initiatives?" as either strongly disagree or disagree. Responses to survey question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCrs in your school?" as either not involved or somewhat involved. As well as responses to survey question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCrs Professional Staff Development are you?" as either not involved or somewhat involved.

To facilitate semi-structured interviews at each site, a researcher designed set of interview questions (Appendix E) facilitated the semi-structured interviews with the school administration and their implementation teams. These interview questions related to the principal's understanding of the SCCCrs, the factors inhibiting or facilitating the implementation of SCCCrs, and strategies being utilized to implement the SCCCrs. These questions were designed to begin the discussions, and to keep these discussions focused and on topic.

## **Population and Sample**

The researcher identified five school districts situated in three counties within the Interstate 95 corridor of South Carolina. These districts are identified as the Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon school districts.

Alpha School District (ASD) is a large rural school district serving a single county in South Carolina. The district's schools are situated in towns within the county and their outlying areas. ASD consists of sixteen schools: three high schools, one junior/senior high school, three middle schools, and nine elementary schools. ASD's poverty index is 79.9% free and reduced lunch status. Alpha School District's leadership team has undergone recent transition at the curriculum and instructional levels, but has remained stable at the building levels. The average experience rate for principals is 8.3 years.

Beta School District (BSD) is also a large rural district serving a large rural county in the South Carolina. Like ASD, the BSD schools are situated in or near the towns of the county. The district is made up of twenty-three schools: three high schools, one magnet high school, one alternative school, and one institute of technology. There are thirteen elementary schools: one

early childhood center, one magnet school for math and science, one magnet school for the arts, and ten elementary schools. Beta School District also has three middle schools and one elementary/middle school serving grades 5K through eighth grade. Beta School District's poverty index is 80.75% free and reduced lunch status. BSD's district leadership team has been in place now for three years. The average experience rate for principals in BSD is 7.3 years.

The Gamma School District (GSD) is a large urban district servicing a city in South Carolina. GSD consists of three high schools, three middle schools, and fourteen elementary schools. Of the fourteen elementary schools, nine schools are 5K through sixth grade, four schools are 5K-fourth grade, and one is a fifth and sixth grade only. The three middle schools of GSD serve grades seven and eight, while the three high schools serve grades nine through twelve. GSD's poverty index is 70.09% free and reduced lunch status. Gamma School District has gone through two district level leadership changes in the past three years, with continuity at the district level curriculum and instruction department. The average experience for principals in GSD is 6.2 years.

Delta School District (DSD) is a mixed urban-rural school district. The district services three small, rural

communities and their outlying areas, as well as a small urban area. The district consists of three 4K-5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary schools in the small outlying communities. DSD also has a 4k-2<sup>nd</sup> grade primary and a 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school within the small urban area. Delta School District also has an intermediate school that houses all of its sixth grade students, a junior high for all seventh and eighth grade students, and a traditional high school. The poverty index of Delta School District is 89.83% free and reduced lunch status. DSD's current district leadership team has been together for two school years, and the average principal experience in DSD is 2.9 years. The low average experience has been due to high rates of school level administrative turn over and transfers in the recent years.

Epsilon School District (ESD) is a small rural district in South Carolina. It consists of one elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. ESD's poverty index is 76.53% free and reduced lunch status. Epsilon School District has undergone a change in leadership at the district level, however, the principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels have remained in place.

## **Validity**

Prior to administering the survey to individual school building principals, the researcher field tested it with a small group of six school administrators that were not associated with the study. Their feedback enabled to the researcher to adapt and adjust the questions and response criteria to fit the needs of the study. Examples of feedback consisted of reducing the number of questions from fifteen to ten, and changing question five from four choices to three, thus eliminating the category 7-10 years.

Also prior to any school visit, the researcher conducted trial semi-structured interviews with two school leadership and implementation teams not associated with the study. These trial interviews enabled to researcher to streamline the interview process by maintaining a focus on the topic at hand, enhancing the awareness of interjecting personal thoughts and philosophies into the interview record, and to develop and practice the necessary listening and questioning skills to conduct the actual semi-structured interviews while remaining objective.

The trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating the worth of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four fundamental elements of trustworthiness in Qualitative Analysis:

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability.

Credibility, or the "confidence in the truth of the findings," (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was established based on the development of the study utilizing a large research base of research as identified in chapter 2. In addition, the researcher utilized member-checking throughout the study to establish validity in areas of conclusions, interpretations, and common themes. These consisted of follow up calls and email messages to the school teams regarding any questions from the site interviews and cross reference of transcriptions to the original recordings. The researcher also approached each interview as that of a conversational facilitator. Active listening strategies such as, "So I heard you say...", and "I understand you say... and please correct me if this is misstated," were also utilized to ensure accuracy and to eliminate the interjection of the researcher's personal views and interpretations. In addition, to avoid inserting personal bias into the conversations, the researcher was cautious about interjecting his own personal beliefs and experiences into the conversations.

Transferability was established via the use of thick descriptions within the reports of the findings. These



thick descriptors enabled the readers to draw their own conclusions in relationship to their understandings and academic settings.

Dependability was maintained via documentation. This documentation consisted of recordings of the interviews, field notes taken during the semi-structured interviews, field notes and recordings from follow up phone sessions, email correspondence with principals and superintendents, transcriptions of the recordings, and continual accounts of the progress of the study.

In cases of the potential for researcher reflexivity, confirmability was exercised. The design of this study provided for the utilization of results that were based on the perceptions and experiences of the participants. These participant views and experiences were articulated in the findings as shared by the participants. In order to avoid the potential for the interjection of personal views and beliefs of the researcher relied heavily on the active listening techniques described earlier and heavily concentrated on listening to the discussions rather than contributing to them.

### **Data Collection**

To establish a method for study and data collection the researcher sought permission from the district

superintendents of the schools and staff to be surveyed within the study. Seventy such requests were sent via a formal letter (Appendix D), which included the researcher's rationale for the study and a request to survey and to later interview principals and teachers within the districts considered. The researcher also later followed these requests with personal call or note of inquiry.

### **Survey**

A ten-question survey designed by the researcher was sent to the seventy school principals in the five districts studied (Appendix A). The survey itself was administered via SurveyMonkey.com. SurveyMonkey.com is an online survey site, which allows for quick and simple access for the respondent access. The commercial survey site enabled the researcher to access, track, and view the responses from a variety of electronic mediums such as tablets, mobile devices, and traditional computer access.

A link to the survey was sent via email to the principal of each of the seventy total schools in the five districts studied (Appendix E). The email introduced the researcher and stated the purpose of the study. The message also requested that the principal complete a brief ten-question survey via the link provided in the email.

Addresses for each of the principal respondents were identified via the school or school district web pages.

### **Interviews**

Upon collection and analysis of the data, the researcher contacted two schools that were defined within the study as successful and two schools defined as struggling. The researcher also chose one additional school that was, based on the survey results, successful, yet struggling with student achievement. Prior to the visits the research e-mailed each school principal, requesting their permission to visit the school at an agreed date and time. The purpose of the visit was to conduct semi-structured interviews with the school principal and their SCCCRS implementation team to discuss the school's progress towards implementation of the SCCCRS in the school (Appendix E), as well as to identify strategies that were either facilitating or inhibiting more effective implementation. These implementation teams mainly consisted of school level administration (principal, assistant principals), curriculum coordinators, instructional coaches, and teachers.

Interview protocols were designed to understand each member of the team's role in the SCCCRS implementation process, as well as to understand the role the principal

played in the process. The data gathered from the interviews probed what Spillane et al., (2004) identified as interaction of the leaders' thinking, behavior, and situation and to develop understandings of how the implementation teams perceive their role within the school (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

All of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. In addition, the researcher took field notes during the interviews. These notes were coupled with transcriptions of the interviews during the analysis of the data. Throughout the analysis of the notes and transcriptions, the researcher made follow up communications with the principals via phone conferences and email discussions to address various questions regarding the implementation team interviews as well as the status of the school's implementation.

Throughout the study, all electronic data was stored on a password protected hard drive and an email server with a secure firewall. Transcriptions and notes were stored in a locked cabinet in a secured location. At the conclusion of the study, all data, including any identifying information was destroyed.

## **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size of seventy total schools in five districts, and the short time frame between the adoption of the CCSS and the subsequent adoption of the SCCCRS. Additionally, due to the small sample size, response numbers from schools will be a concern and may affect replication of the study.

A second limitation lies in the researcher semi-structured interviews with the school administrators and their implementation teams. The possibility of bias may exist during the interviews and discussions held with the school personnel. This bias could be in the form of a conformational bias wherein the researcher utilizes the responses from their interviews to confirm their pre-determined hypotheses. In this case, the response data from the Interviews has the potential confirm the personal thoughts of the researcher regarding their stance on the CCSS/SCCCRS. In addition, there is a potential in the interviews for school personnel to inflate or downplay their positions, roles, and responsibilities in the process, as well as the success or failure of the implementation.

Researcher predisposition is another potential for bias. The researcher favors the implementation and

utilization of CCSS/SCCCRS, which position is based on the CCSS premise of enhancing thought and problems solving skills of the students over the concept of rote memorization. In addition, the researcher has studied extensively the rationale behind CCSS/SCCCRS and thinks he possesses high understanding of the concepts as well as their implementation with the school and classroom. The researcher is confident that possible personal bias is addressed through neutral analysis of the data and the information obtained herein.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Analysis and Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine school administrators' attitudes towards SCCCRS and their effects on the school level implementation of the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. The researcher's goal has been to identify specific strategies and methods used by schools that are successfully implementing the standards. In addition, the researcher has sought to identify the relationship between the school administration's attitudes regarding the standards and the effectiveness of the school's implementation. In this chapter, the results of the Principal Survey and the results of the site interviews was reviewed and analyzed to address the research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?

2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the South Carolina College & Career Ready Standards in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?
3. What is the relationship between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards SCCCRS and the effectiveness of the implementation of SCCCRS in the school?

### **Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to examine school administrators' attitudes towards SCCCRS and their effects on the school level implementation of the Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. Specifically, the study examined:

1. What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?
2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the South Carolina College & Career Ready Standards in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?



3. What is the relationship between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards SCCCRS and the effectiveness of the implementation of SCCCRS in the school?

The survey data was analyzed to identify school level administrators that know and understand the rationale behind the SCCCRS standards, the significance of them in the academic process and their personal involvement in the implementation of the standards.

The survey data was analyzed by the researcher to identify schools where the administrators possess a high understanding and knowledge of SCCCRS and are actively involved in the implementation of SCCCRS. The researcher also identified administrators possessing low knowledge and understanding of SCCCRS and who were very hands off with the implementation within the school. The belief is that administrators with a high working knowledge and involvement may lead to a more successful implementation. This analysis led the researcher to the second phase of the study.

Phase II of this study entailed the identification of two schools of the seventy with high administrator understanding and involvement in the implementation SCCCRS and two schools of the seventy that have low administrator

involvement in the implementation. In addition, the researcher identified one additional school that based on their survey data indicated a high understanding, yet appeared to be struggling with their implementation. The researcher contacted each site and interviewed the principal and the school SCCCRS implementation team.

The purpose of the interviews was to identify factors supporting or impeding successful implementation. In the successful schools, the researcher inquired and discussed the specific strategies that the administrators and school faculty are utilizing to promote the successful implementation of the SCCCRS and its effects on their student performance.

Initial data analysis consisted of categorizing the survey responses from the forty returned principal surveys. The surveys were categorized based upon the principal's responses to questions 5) "How long have you known about the Common Core Standards Initiative?" Question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS

in your school?" And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?"

These questions referenced the principal's understanding of the CCSS/SCCCRS and the degree of involvement in the planning of professional development. These survey questions enabled the researcher to develop an understanding of the principal's understandings and interactions with the SCCCRS. In addition, the responses provided initial information about the level of the principal's involvement in the development of implementation strategies and school wide professional development planning. The data was sorted into two categories:

1. High administrator understanding of CCSS/SCCCRS and high involvement in professional development based on the responses to questions 5) "How long have you known about the Common Core Standards Initiative?" Question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" Question 9) "How involved are you

in the development of strategies for  
implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?"

And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS  
Professional Staff Development are you?"

2. Low principal understanding of CCSS/SCCCRS and  
low involvement in staff development based on  
the responses to questions 5) "How long have  
you known about the Common Core Standards  
Initiative?" Question 6) "How strongly do you  
agree with the concepts and philosophies  
associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS  
initiatives?" Question 7) "How important to  
education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR  
Standards?" Question 9) "How involved are you  
in the development of strategies for  
implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?"  
And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS  
Professional Staff Development are you?"

Once the schools were categorized into their  
respective categories, the researcher identified school  
teams to be interviewed based upon survey responses from  
school principals and information from each school's state  
report card. State report card information consisted of  
the school's overall achievement rating. The next step in

the process was to set appointments for the researcher to facilitate semi-structured interviews at the selected sites with school personnel consisting of the school principal and the school's SCCCRS implementation team. The purpose of these interviews was to gather responses to the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?
2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the South Carolina College & Career Ready Standards in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?

These research questions served as the basis for the semi-structured interviews about SCCCRS implementation with school's SCCCRS implementation team.

### **Survey Results**

A ten-question researcher designed survey was sent to all 70 school principals in the five districts surveyed. Of the 70 schools surveyed, 40 (57.1%) responded. Ten out of sixteen schools (62.5%) from Alpha District responded. Six out of twenty three Beta District Schools (26%)

responded. Sixteen out of twenty Gamma District Schools (80%) responded. Seven out of eight Deltas District schools (87.5%) responded. One out of three Epsilon Schools (33.3%) responded. Table 4.1 presents a breakdown of the principal survey responses.

The researcher's next step was to address the data based research questions one and two:

1. What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?
2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the SCCCRS in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?

Table 4.1:

*Principal Survey Responses Received*

District	Total Sent	Elementary School Received	Middle School Received	High School Received	Total Received
Alpha	16	4	3	3	10
Beta	23	4	1	1	6
Gamma	20	11	3	2	16
Delta	8	5	2	0	7
Epsilon	3	1	0	0	1

Information from survey questions 6, 7, 9, and 10 provided the information needed to categorize the response data. Questions 6, 7, 9 and 10 are listed below:

6 - How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7 - How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

9 - How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved
- Involved
- Highly Involved

10 - How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved

- Involved
- Very Involved

Based on the survey data, the researcher was able to identify ten schools that indicated high principal understanding of SCCCRS and high involvement in the staff development and implementation of the SCCCRS in their school. The researcher was also able to identify four schools that indicated low principal understanding and low involvement in the staff development and implementation of the CCSS/SCCCRS. Table 4.2 represents the schools with high principal understanding and high principal involvement in staff development as indicated by survey questions 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either agree or strongly agree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" as either important or very important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either involved or highly involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either involved or very involved.



Table 4.3 represents schools with low principal understanding and low principal involvement in staff development as indicated by survey questions question 6) "How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?" as either strongly disagree or disagree. Question 7) "How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?" as either not important or somewhat important. Question 9) "How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?" as either not involved or somewhat involved. And question 10) "How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?" as either not involved or somewhat involved.

The next step was to narrow the successful schools from ten schools to two schools, and to narrow the struggling schools from four schools to two schools. To accomplish this, the researcher examined each school's state issued report card overall rating. These ratings are categorized as Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and At-Risk. The selected schools had either high student achievement ratings of "Excellent" or low student achievement ratings of "Below Average" based on their 2014 state issued school report cards. The researcher added one

additional school, Gamma Pi to the schools to be visited. This school was selected due to the principal's indication of high understanding and involvement in the implementation on the survey, yet showed low student achievement based on their school report card.

Table 4.2:

*Survey Results of Schools with High Principal Understanding and Involvement*

Dist. CODE	Sch. CODE	Question 6	Question 7	Question 9	Question 10
Alpha	Epsilon	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Alpha	iota	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Alpha	Agree Strongly	Important	Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Gamma	Agree	Important Very	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamm a	Alpha	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamm a	Gamma	Agree	Important Very	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamm a	Delta	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamm a	Pi	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilo n	Delta	Agree Strongly	Important Very	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilo n	Epsilon	Agree	Important	Highly Involved	Very Involved

Table 4.3:

*Survey Results of Schools with Low Principal Understanding and Involvement*

Dist. CODE	Sch. CODE	Question 6	Question 7	Question 9	Question 10
		Strongly Disagree	Not Important	Not involved	Not Involved
Alpha	Beta	Disagree	Important	Not involved	Involved
	Gamm a		Somewhat Important	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Alpha	a	Disagree	Important	Involved Somewhat	Involved Somewhat
Gamma	theta	Disagree	Important Somewhat	Involved	Involved Somewhat
Gamma	Xi	Disagree	Important	Involved	Involved

Table 4.4 identifies the five school implementation teams to be interviewed by the researcher, and the school principal's survey results.

Table 4.4:

*School Implementation Teams Interviewed by the Researcher*

District CODE	Sch. CODE	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10
Alpha	Beta	Strongly Disagree	Not Important	No Implementation	Not involved	Not Involved
Gamma	Pi	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Alpha	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	Delta	Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Theta	Disagree	Important	Full Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved

School implementation team interviews were scheduled with the principals of the identified schools. The researcher's message to the principal stated that the researcher hoped to discuss with school level administrators and/or their implementation or leadership teams about the process and strategies, which were used in their execution of SCCRS. Initially, the interviews would be based on research questions one and two:

1. What is the relationship between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards SCCRS and the effectiveness of the implementation of SCCRS?

2. What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the SCCCRS Ready Standards in their classrooms? And to what degree is school leadership involved in the development and implementation process?

### **Interview Results**

Semi-structured interviews were held at each school. These consisted of small group interviews of school level administrators and their SCCCRS implementation teams. These teams consisted of administrators, curriculum coordinators, and teachers.

#### **Gamma Pi**

Gamma Pi, which served as the researcher's first interview, is a large, urban middle school in the Gamma School District. The current school population is about 840 students, and the principal teacher of Gamma Pi has been in the current post for ten years. Gamma Pi's survey results indicated high administrator understanding, high involvement in the development of implementation strategies, but only some implementation of the SCCCRS. On March 17, 2016, the researcher interviewed a small group consisting of the Principal, the two school Assistant Principals, and two teachers who are involved in the implementation process at Gamma Pi. The researcher had an

8:45 AM appointment and arrived at the school at 8:39 AM. The researcher signed in and was met in the office by the school secretary. The secretary notified the principal via radio and then asked the researcher to have a seat and the principal will be back shortly. The interview took place in the office conference room of Gamma Pi and began at 8:52 AM. The Gamma Pi team sat around an oval shaped conference table with the principal on the far left of the researcher, the assistant principal was next to the principal, the two teachers were next, and the other assistant principal anchored the far right. The interview opened with the researcher thanking the team for their time and appreciation of their support of the study. The team at Gamma Pi expressed their desire to implement with fidelity. "Our implementation is being hampered by issues," explained the principal.

The principal added, "These 'issues' include conflict about the alignment of the standards to be taught, the assessment of the standards, and a lack of professional development and technical support." The team believes that there is no adequate blueprint for district level implementation. A teacher explained, "This leaves our school only the use of our in-house resources." This perceived lack of planning has led to what the principal

stated as "Suspensions and frustrations with the SCCCRS implementation."

A major hurdle effecting implementation has been the lack of on-site professional development. "Our staff does not include instructional coaches or curriculum coordinators," explained the Assistant Principal. The team indicated that the district does have district level subject area coordinators, and these coordinators offer professional development. However, Gamma Pi's professional development sessions are not offered on a consistent basis. One teacher stated, "The Principal and Assistant Principals have implemented the majority of our professional development." This administrator facilitated staff development occurs weekly and occasionally twice a week. An assistant principal stated, "Our strategies for these staff development sessions are based on data obtained through walk-through observations, or analysis of MAP and classroom assessment data."

The administrators stated that the majority of the on-site professional development that occurred during the 2015-2016 school year was rooted within the areas of "unpacking" the standards, and identifying the DOK levels of the teacher developed assessments and teacher/student questioning. "We saw that this need resonated from our

current state test scores and the 'blue-print' information that we received about the upcoming state testing series," explained the principal.

One of the teachers stated, "The team as a whole understands that our school's greatest need pertains to the areas of writing and thinking. Our students need to understand the technical structure of their writing with an emphasis on supporting the main focus of the writing." The Gamma Pi students have experienced difficulties citing specific evidence of the main idea and rationally thinking their way through the process. This was echoed by a science teacher, who stated, "Our students often have difficulty with their lab work journals. Their writing tends to be shallow in breadth and lacking specific details regarding the predicted experimental outcomes." This teacher's observation was affirmed by others including the principal who said, "Much of this goes back to a general lack of rigor in the use of student questioning and responding." At 9:58 AM, the school bell rang, and the teachers exited the conference room to return to their classrooms.

The teachers of Gamma Pi seem eager to implement the strategies and methodologies of their process and they have assumed the responsibilities of enhancing professional

development sessions with administration. Gamma Pi's principal noted, "Our effort has yielded some successes, but is limited in its scope given the limitations of time allotted for planning and professional development." The interview at Gamma Pi concluded at 10:27 AM. The researcher again thanked the team for their time and participation. The Assistant Principals exited to the school hall, while the principal escorted the researcher out of the school office.

Principal survey information identified Gamma Pi as a potential success based on high administrator understanding and involvement in the professional development. However, based on the information gathered from the small group interview and the limitations of the availability of professional development, Gamma Pi despite their best efforts are struggling in their implementation.

The major factor limiting Gamma Pi is a lack of on-site personnel to conduct the needed professional development. Both assistant principals indicated that the majority of the on-site professional development is planned and administered by them. While the assistant principals understand the concepts of SCCCRS, they are limited in their time to plan and execute professional development. At the same time, the principal, while knowledgeable of



SSCCRS, is also limited in being able to invest time and energy in their planning and implementation. These limitations are severely hampering the implementation at this school.

### **Gamma Theta**

Gamma Theta is a large elementary school in the Gamma District and serves 630 students. The principal has been in the current position for the past six years. Gamma Theta's survey placed them in the low understanding and somewhat involved group, and the school report card data suggested that this is a high achieving school. On March 17, 2016, the researcher interviewed the principal, assistant principal (AP), and curriculum coordinator (CC) in a round table meeting format. The researcher had an 11:00 AM meeting time and arrived at the school at 10:54 AM. The researcher was greeted in the school office by the school secretary who notified the principal of the researcher's arrival as the researcher signed in.

The interview began at 11:07 AM in the school's conference room, which is attached to the main office area. The team sat at a long rectangular meeting table. The principal sat across from the researcher with the assistant principal on the left and the curriculum coordinator on the right. The researcher began the meeting with a statement

of appreciation to the team for their willingness to participate in this interview and this study.

The principal stated that Gamma Theta School is "implementing the SCCCRS with fidelity," while also admitting a personal general lack of enthusiasm for the SCCCRS. The principal stated, "Even-though I personally see this as another quick fix, we are obligated to follow the directives of the state and district. At our school, we implement all directives effectively, and with fidelity." The principal ensured that the administrative staff designated to train the teachers possess a working knowledge of the SCCCRS and are able to articulate the intricacies of them to ensure a thorough teacher understanding and application. The principal further identified that the assistant principal and curriculum coordinator are the main facilitators the staff development for the teachers regarding the SCCCRS during the weekly Professional Learning Communities or PLC's.

Gamma Theta's administrative team's preparation for staff development and school wide implementation of the SCCCR Standards began as soon as they were told of the impending initiatives. The principal required the members of the school implementation team to attend several state

and national workshops regarding CCSS and how to successfully implement them.

The team discovered that to fully understand the CCSS the teachers need to know what each standard required, and how to “unpack” the information contained within each standard. In addition, the team realized that without a working knowledge of the standards and their meanings, there was a potential for over reliance on corporate developed textbooks. The Curriculum Coordinator pointed out that until teachers understood how to unpack and utilize the standards, the textbooks would only add to the confusion and frustration that some schools are experiencing.

Professional development at Gamma Theta is in the form of weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s). These PLC’s meet weekly on Tuesdays during the teacher’s planning time. The PLC’s are scheduled by grade level and are facilitated by the curriculum coordinator and the assistant principal. The main focus of the PLC’s at Gamma Theta has been on “unpacking” the standards. “Even though we are implementing a new set of standards this year (SCCCRS), they are still fundamentally Common Core,” remarked the CC.

According to the implementation team, a major hurdle that Gamma Theta is facing is the intensification of the

rigor of classroom teacher questioning, and teacher developed assessments. The majority of the PLC's for the past three months have been in response to this need.

"This week's PLC's saw our teachers analyzing the rigor of an assessment that was either given, or to be given in their classrooms this week, and comparing it to one that was administered in their class in October of 2015," remarked the assistant principal. The CC stated that, "The purpose of this was to have the teachers analyze the changes in the rigor of the questioning in the assessment and to draw conclusions based on the types of questions and the student responses."

When asked if the switch from CCSS to SCCCRS created any concerns, Gamma Theta's team asserted that they had no concerns. Both the assistant principal and curriculum coordinator added that as they began to hear about the switch from CCSS to SCCCRS, they immediately began to compare the two standards in order to fully understand the similarities and differences of the two sets of standards. This comparison was then reviewed with the teachers in the school. As the teachers noted that, in their opinion, there was no "appreciable difference" between the two sets of standards. The team felt at ease to plan accordingly.

In reinforcement of the team's efforts the principal noted, "I regularly attend the PLC sessions contributing both as a participant and as a leader". This administrative participation has enabled the teaching staff to acknowledge that their administrators had "bought into" the concepts, which support is a critical component according to both the curriculum coordinator and assistant principal. The principal added, "If other administrators or members of our leadership team expressed any contempt of the standards to the teaching staff, it would have severely hindered our school wide implementation." The principal also asserted the thought that dissention within the team had the potential to "negatively affect the achievements of both our students and our school". The interview ended at 12:41PM. The assistant principal exited the conference room and headed to the school's main hall. The curriculum coordinator next exited and returned to her office. The principal escorted the researcher out of the conference room and main office. The researcher again expressed gratitude to the principal for their time and supportiveness offered toward this study.

Based on school report cards and state test data, Gamma Theta School can be classified as a successful school. The survey results indicated that the principal

was somewhat knowledgeable of the SCCCRS. However, the interview indicated that this principal expressed an adequate understanding of the standards and is involved in continuous professional development and improvement within the school.

Gamma Theta differs from Gamma Pi in that Gamma Theta possess the necessary personnel to provide relevant and effective onsite professional development for the faculty and staff. This professional development is based on the professional learning communities that were described by the curriculum coordinator and principal during the interview.

#### **Gamma Delta**

Gamma Delta is a large elementary school in the Gamma District. Gamma Delta services about 610 students, and the school's principal has been in the current position for sixteen years. Gamma Delta's Principal Survey placed the school in the High Understanding and High Involvement group. School report card data also indicated that Gamma Delta is a high achieving school. The researcher followed up the survey results with an interview with the school administration and SCCCRS implementation team on March 17, 2016.

The researcher's interview with the Gamma Delta team consisted of an interview with the principal and the school's curriculum coordinator (CC). The researcher arrived at the school at 12:58PM for a 1:00 meeting. The researcher was met in the office by the secretary and principal. The principal escorted the researcher to the curriculum coordinator's office, which was three doors down the school hall from the main office. As the principal led the way, there were classes moving through the halls heading to their special area classes. The curriculum coordinator's office was a small rectangular shaped office. The CC's desk sat adjacent to the wall facing the hall with two chairs set up to the left of the desk. The researcher sat in one of the chairs, the principal in the other, while the CC remained at the desk.

The interview began at 1:07 PM. The principal responded to the researcher's opening question by stating that the school (Gamma Delta) is implementing the SCCCRS with fidelity and implementation has progressed smoothly according to the team. Gamma Delta attributes its success to a collective approach to rigor and the utilization of the standards to drive their school's instruction.

The principal of Gamma Delta School stated, "Our state standards drive everything undertaken at our school. For

instance, all worksheets submitted for copies must display the standard, the standards for the day must be posted in each classroom, and even our school's bulletin board displays and themes must be identify with a grade level and subject area standard."

Gamma Delta also maintains Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). These PLC's, meet weekly by grade level. The curriculum coordinator and instructional coaches facilitate the PLC's. In addition to PLC's the grade level teachers meet weekly with an academic/instructional focus. The 2015-2016 school years' focus at Gamma Delta has been the development of common assessments consisting of questions aligned with the standards and the utilization of leveled text sets. With regards to rigor, the principal stated we have two fundamental questions that are constantly used in every question and activity, "Tell me why, and tell me how." These questions force our students to explain the process as to how they were able to come to their specific answer. The idea is, according to the principal, "If they can explain their answer process, then they understand the concept."

Gamma Delta's principal stated, "Understanding the personalities and leadership qualities of the teachers is a



key to our success." The principal added, "Our Curriculum Coordinator facilitates the PLC's but it is the teacher leaders who drive the collective approach of the instruction and student expectations in our school."

Student data is another key component of Gamma Delta's implementation. The principal explained, "All teachers maintain data sheets for tracking each student's progress at Gamma Delta School. This student data is used in the planning and implementation of PLC's".

Data walls are also used at Gamma Delta. Weekly, each teacher tracks their students' progress via these walls and must physically move each student's data card. This weekly monitoring of student progress adds to the collective understanding of the student achievement and progress.

Gamma Delta's Administration remarked, "We were not 'thrilled' with our most recent state test results, and we did not dwell on them. Our teachers and staff and suggested an 'invalidation of the test results,' as the problem." The principal explained, "I know my school, my teachers, and the ability of our students. I look at their data weekly and I know our students are growing! We are successful at Gamma Delta because we use the strengths of our school." This statement at 1:51PM marked the conclusion of the interview. The principal apologized for

the abruptness of the ending and remarked that it was "getting close to student dismissal time." The principal, curriculum coordinator, and researcher all left the CC's office. The principal headed into the main office area, the curriculum coordinator headed towards the cafeteria area, while the researcher returned to the office, signed out, and departed the school.

Based on the school Principal survey results, the interview with the school leadership, and Gamma Delta student data, Gamma Delta School is successfully implementing the SCCCRS.

### **Beta Alpha**

Beta Alpha is an urban elementary school in the Beta District, and serves 640 students. The survey results of the principal of Beta Alpha School, who has been in place for seven years, placed the school in the high understanding and high involvement category. Additionally, the state report card data indicates Beta Alpha as a high achieving school based on overall and improvement ratings.

On March 22, 2016, at 11:03 AM, the researcher conducted a round table interview with a committee from the school consisting of the school principal, assistant principal, the coordinating teacher (CT), and the school literacy coach/reading specialist. This round table

interview took place in the school's conference room which is situated off of the main office of the school. The panel sat around the large oval shaped table at the center of the room with the principal sitting at one end of the oval. The principal was flanked on left side by the assistant principal and on the right side by the literary coach. The coordinating teacher likewise sat next to the assistant principal, while the researcher was seated next to the literary coach. The principal opened the interview by attributing the school's successes to "Embracing the CCSS like it should've been supported when it was introduced." The principal remarked, "We were early adopters in studying and understanding the philosophies and rationales behind the CCSS." This analysis and collective understanding made the transition from CCSS to SCCCRS an "easy one", according to the principal.

"Professional development - and lots of it - is a major key to Beta Alpha's success", remarked the principal. Beta Alpha's Coordinating Teacher frequently attends workshops facilitated by the State Department of Education and other organizations. The information gleaned from such workshops is returned to the school and adapted to fit the needs of the teachers and students of Beta Alpha. Beta

Alpha's staff and faculty believe their professional calling and competency requires such continual development.

It was noted that there was initial resistance to the implementation of the standards at Beta Alpha School. The reading coach stated, "We (school leadership) all knew there would be philosophical changes the staff needed to incorporate, with the most compelling challenge being the transition from teacher led to teacher facilitated classrooms." This natural resistance to change, then, was the greatest obstacle to Beta Alpha's evolution.

"Our (Beta Alpha's) professional development 'paved the road' for the remarkable transition within the school," stated the principal. Beta Alpha's coaches and CT's came in to the classrooms and modeled what that process looked like. These lessons were recorded, and then reviewed with the classroom teachers. The purpose was to analyze the teaching strategies employed by the CT and then integrate them into the teacher's daily instruction.

The coordinating teacher stated, "Our (Beta Alpha) school administration adhered to the collective purpose of, 'This is what the state expects us to do for our students and this is what we expect to see.' Our teachers drive each other to be the best."

In addition, Beta Alpha School internally has everything needed to be successful. The principal remarked that, "Our (Beta Alpha) staff is very forward thinking, believing that they are the trendsetters within the Beta District." This comment ended the interview at 11:49AM. The researcher thanked the group for their time. The assistant principal and coordinating teacher exited the conference room and headed to the school cafeteria, the literacy coach headed to a classroom, and the principal escorted the researcher to the office.

Based upon the survey results, the information obtained from the site interview, and the school's report card ratings, Beta Alpha School is succeeding in their implementation.

### **Alpha Beta**

Alpha Beta School is an urban/rural school in the Alpha District. Alpha Beta's principal has been in the current position for the past seven years and the principal's survey results placed the school in the low understanding and low involvement category. However, Alpha Beta's test data indicates that Alpha Beta is developing their students and academically succeeding.

As per the research design, on March 23, 2016 the researcher interviewed the administrative team at Alpha

Beta School. At 6:51 AM, the researcher arrived at the school, coinciding with the arrival of the principal. The researcher greeted the principal and they entered the school. At 7:03 AM the two assistant principals arrived, and the principal escorted the group to the school's conference room. Alpha Beta's conference is a large rectangular shaped room. In the center of the room was a long rectangular shaped conference table. The principal sat at one end of the table, flanked by the assistant principals. The group waited until 7:09 AM for the arrival of the school's literacy coach, who, upon arrival sat to the left of the principal and the researcher sat on the principal's right. The discussion began at 7:11 AM.

The researcher opened the interview by offering gratitude to the members of the staff for their presence and their willingness to participate in this study. The researcher then asked the members of the team to describe the implementation process of SCCRS at Alpha Beta School.

The principal stated that, "The team shares the collective understanding and remarked that, good teaching drives student learning and achievement regardless of the standards being taught. We old school here at Alpha Beta."

Alpha Beta school is similar to Beta Alpha and Gamma Delta Schools in their collective attitudes about education

and the standards. One assistant principal stated that, "The teachers at Alpha Beta work hard each day, and the administration is keen to support the teachers in fulfilling their classroom mission. For instance, administrators frequently address clerical matters for the teachers, thus enabling teachers to use their skills in lesson planning and teaching rather than in report writing." The other assistant principal remarked, "We can handle some of that paperwork. This builds a sense of teamwork among the staff and improves our morale. After all, the object is to grow our kids".

School administrators at Alpha Beta facilitate monthly, on-site staff development events. The events are viewed by the faculty as meaningful and supportive. The principal stated, "The internal belief is that we, the faculty and staff of Alpha Beta, know our students' circumstances and needs more clearly than others do." The principal went on to state that, "It is also asserted that the monthly presentation offered by our school administrators further connects the administrators and teachers with the various items for discussion and professional development."

Alpha Beta keeps class sizes relatively low at a 14:1 ratio. This ensures that the students receive the maximum

teacher time. As the principal said, "There is no substitute for a teacher's instruction. And our teacher's absence rate is low (94.4%). They are present every day. But even when teachers are absent, we (administration) cover for them. That's our job".

It is notable that Alpha Beta's teacher turnover rate when compared to schools similar to it is low (16%). The principal remarked, "Our low turnover rate is attributed to teachers feeling supported professionally and with consistent discipline of students. This translates to high student performance."

That remark, coupled with the 8:05 AM bell ended the interview. The researcher again thanked the team for their time. The assistant principals exited the conference room and went straight to the halls to aid in ensuring that all of Alpha Beta's students made it to their first period classes on time. The literacy coach was heading at that time to meet with a small group of students. The Principal escorted the researcher to the office area, and then departed to the school halls.

Alpha Beta's survey data puts them in the struggling to implement category, but clearly, after interviewing the leadership team, Alpha Beta is succeeding. Their students are growing academically based on their state report card



rating of "Excellent" and their Improvement rating of "Good."

### **Research Question One**

"What are the attitudes of the school leadership towards SCCCRS, and how do they affect the development and implementation of them?"

Of the 40 responses received, 82% of the principals surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed with the concepts and philosophies of the SCCCRS. Conversely 18% of the principals disagreed or strongly disagreed with the concepts and philosophies of SCCCRS.

The semi-structured interviews conducted at Alpha Beta and Gamma Theta schools, both identified as low, indicated that while the principals at those schools may not agree with the concepts and philosophies of the standards, they are still implementing them with fidelity. Evidence of this implementation was exemplified in statements made by the principals to the researcher during the conducted interviews.

Gamma Theta's principal remarked that, "Even-though I personally see this as another quick fix, we are obligated to follow the directives of the state and district. At our school, we implement all

directives effectively, and with fidelity." This implementation was echoed by Gamma Theta's implementation team.

The administration at Alpha Beta, while indicating non-agreement with the concepts and philosophies of SCCCRS, remained stalwartly supportive of their faculty and staff. The principal of Alpha Beta remarked that, "Good teaching is good teaching, and that is what drives the student learning and achievement regardless of the standards. Our teachers work hard each day, and our administration is keen to support our teachers in fulfilling their classroom mission."

Evident at both sites was the concept that regardless of the standards, there is no substitute for the effectiveness of good teaching. Based on State Report Card ratings from 2012, 2013, and 2014 Gamma Theta School has maintained an overall rating of "Excellent" and improvement ratings of "Excellent." While Alpha Beta School in 2014 was rated as "Excellent" overall, with an improvement rating of "Good."

While both administrators did not favor the implementation of SCCCRS, they ensured that it was

implemented with fidelity. Gamma Theta's principal, while not actively involved in the planning of the school wide professional development, remained an active participant in the professional development sessions. This is evidenced in the statement of, "I regularly attend the weekly PLC sessions and contribute as both a participant and a leader." Gamma Theta's principal also remarked that administrative support regardless of personal opinion is paramount to a successful implementation. The belief was confirmed by the statement, "If other administrators or members of our leadership team expressed any contempt of the standards to the teaching staff, it would have severely hindered our school wide implementation."

The Principals of Gamma Pi, Gamma Delta, and Beta Alpha based on the survey results indicated a high understanding of the SCCCR standards. These principals indicated on the surveys that they are actively involved in the planning and implementation of school wide professional development pertaining to the SCCCRS. Information obtained from the semi-structured interviews confirmed their involvement in researching the standards and then actively participating in the planning of and implementation of

the CCSS/SCCCR standards professional development within their schools.

LaPointe and Davis (2006) assert, "Public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders in promoting powerful teaching and learning" (p.3). Research has also demonstrated that the principal as a teacher directly influences academic achievement from students" (Supovitz and Poglinco, 2001; Waters and Marzano, 2006). In regard then to CCSS, it follows that the principal's role as an instructional leader correlates directly to curricular and instructional change.

The researcher's initial hypothesis was that the administrative outlook toward the CCSS/SCCCR standards would impact the effectiveness of the school's implementation. However, based on the interviews with the implementation teams, the principals of Alpha Beta and Gamma Delta, while sharing a negative personal opinion of the SCCCR standards and not heavily involved in the planning and implementation of their school wide professional development pertaining to CCSS/SCCCRS implementation, are none the less participating in and positively promoting the implementation of these standards.

## **Research Question Two**

"What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to effectively implement the South Carolina College & Career Ready Standards in their classrooms and to what degree is school leadership involved in this process?"

Implementation of the SCCCR Standards planning and execution has been largely left up to the discretion of the individual schools and districts. This lack of consistency coupled with concerns about funding for professional development has contributed significantly to administrative confusion and uncertainty about how to plan for and implement the SCCCRS. During the interview at Gamma Pi School, the principal and implementation team remarked that a major frustration for their school was the lack of a school wide SCCCRS implementation "blueprint" provided to the schools from either the district level, or state department of education.

Educator acceptance of the SCCCRS is a crucial strategy that all educators must utilize. Gamma Pi's implementation team, along with the implementation teams from Gamma Delta, Gamma Theta, Beta Alpha, and Alpha Beta have all essentially remarked the SCCCR Standards are state mandated, and must be implemented

with fidelity. While acceptance can also be considered an attitude regarding these standards, it is none the less a critical component of any successful implementation.

Beta Alpha's principal remarked, "Our school leadership all knew that there would be philosophical changes that our staff would need to incorporate." These philosophical changes fall into the category of acceptance. These standards required that teachers and administrators re-visit their beliefs about teaching and learning. The major shift as noted by Beta Alpha's principal is that of transitioning from teacher led to teacher facilitated classrooms. For schools to accomplish the necessary transitions, the faculty and staff must embrace the acceptance of them.

#### **PLC's**

During the interviews, the implementation teams at all of the sites utilized the strategy of Professional Learning Communities, or PLC's to facilitate their weekly staff development pertaining to SCCCRS implementation. These sessions are conducted weekly. These PLC sessions are facilitated by an administrator, curriculum coach, interventionist, or in many occasions the PLC sessions

are facilitated by a combination of the three. Each grade level participates during their planning time, and the weekly focus is based on the individual school's implementation plan.

However, for PLC's to be successful, there must be a consistent theme and academic focus. Sparks (2002) stated that historically staff development has been plagued with sessions pertaining to the urgent needs of the school and its immediate problems (Sparks, 2002). In order to successfully implement the CCSS/SCCCRS these PLC sessions must maintain their focus on the SCCCRS. Additionally it is the responsibility of the principal in their role as Instructional Leader to "protect" the PLC sessions and to ensure the continuity and fidelity of them.

### **Unpacking**

A reoccurring theme of PLC's that occurred throughout the semi-structured interviews was the "unpacking" of the standards, that is the clear consistent understanding of the aims of the standards and how they are to be implemented. Unpacking allows for the teacher to develop and facilitate the necessary classroom lessons to introduce, practice, and assess the academic components of each standard.

To aid in the process of unpacking the SCCCR Standards, the South Carolina Department of Education has developed and published support documents for the ELA and Math standards to their website. These support documents contain suggested units of instruction for each subject and grade level. The units also contain the SCCCR Standards associated with each unit, the required skills associated with the standard, and links to classroom resources related to the standard.

The support document breaks down each standard into its respective instruction skills and requirements. It provides the teacher with the specific academic information needed to adequately teach the standard to the students. It also provides various links to information and student activities related to the standard. The SCCCRS standards and their support documents can be found on the South Carolina Department of Education's website, <http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/>.

Table 4.5 provides an example of a second grade math unit with "unpacked" standards. The instructional unit is broken down into the corresponding standards.



Table 4.5

*Second grade math unit 1, unpacked standards*

2nd Grade Math Unit 1	
Place Value Concepts	
Content Standards with Clarifying Notes	
1) 2.NSBT.1 Understand place value through 999 by demonstrating that:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 can be thought of as a bundle (group) of 10 tens called a "hundred"; b. the hundreds digit in a three-digit number represents the number of hundreds, the tens digit represents the number of tens, and the ones digit represents the number of ones; c. three-digit numbers can be decomposed in multiple ways (e.g., 524 can be decomposed as 5 hundreds, 2 tens and 4 ones or 4 hundreds, 12 tens, and 4 ones, etc.)</li> <li>• Second graders should come to see a set/group of 10 tens as a new unit called 100 (hundred).</li> <li>• It is important to note that 3 digit numbers can be decomposed in multiple ways (as a basis for later concepts of addition/subtraction regrouping).</li> </ul>
2) 2.NSBT.2 Count by tens and hundreds to 1,000 starting with any number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• example: "Count by 10's starting at 350" (350, 360, 370, 380, etc)</li> <li>• example: "Count by 100's starting at 350" (350, 450, 550, 650, etc)</li> </ul>
3) 2.NSBT.3 Read, write and represent numbers through 999 using concrete models, standard form, and equations in expanded form o concrete models could be diagrams/pictures or actual manipulatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standard form is numerical form (e.g. 387) o equations in expanded form (e.g. <math>300 + 80 + 7 = 387</math>) [note: expanded form does NOT have to occur in any sequential order (e.g. <math>80 + 7 + 300 = 387</math>)</li> </ul>
4) 2.NSBT.4 Compare two numbers with up to three digits using words and symbols (i.e., $>$ , $=$ , or $<$ ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should be required to compare numbers with words (greater than, less than, equal to) as well as symbols.</li> </ul>
5) 2.ATO.3 Determine whether a number through 20 is odd or even using pairings of objects, counting by twos, or finding two equal addends to represent the number (e.g., $3 + 3 = 6$ ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of this standard is based on the conceptual understanding of even and odd numbers. An even number is an amount that can be made of two equal parts with no leftovers. An odd number is one that is not even or cannot be made of two equal parts. The number endings of 0, 2, 4, 6, and 8 are only an interesting and useful pattern or observation and should not be used as the definition of an even number.</li> </ul>

( South Carolina Department of Education Office of Standards and Learning, 2015)

Each standard is then broken down and explained in the bullets directly below the standard.

Additional resources, vocabulary, and links to activities are also provided in the document.

### **DOK Questioning**

Analysis of questioning via the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) classification was utilized by Gamma Theta, Gamma Delta, and Beta Alpha. This strategy is critical. The SCCCRS were written to provide for the facilitation of higher order thinking and learning. Therefore, the questioning in the classroom and on the assessments must be at a higher order.

The implementation teams at Gamma Theta, Gamma Delta, and Beta Alpha realized very early on that the majority of the student questioning in class discussions, activities, and assessment were done so at the DOK 1 level. The SCCCRS are intended to utilize questioning at the DOK 2, 3, and 4 levels. In addition, the corresponding Smarter Balanced, PARCC, and South Carolina Ready assessments are written predominantly at the DOK 2 and above levels.

During the implementation team interviews, it was noted that the major of strategy used to identify DOK levels in class discussions, student activities, and student assessment consisted of informal classroom observations with a focus on teacher questioning by administrators and coordinating teachers. In addition DOK was identified via the analysis of teacher and corporate designed activities, activity sheets, and assessments by teachers, coaches, and administrators during PLC sessions. These strategies have led to the teacher understanding of the components of DOK level 2 and above questioning. In addition, it has enabled the teachers to appropriately integrate higher order questioning at the DOK 2, 3, and 4 levels into their daily instruction and assessments.

### **Research Question Three**

"What is the relationship between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards CCSS/SCCCRS and the effectiveness of the implementation of SCCCERS in the school?"

As Porter, ET...al, (2010) stated, "principal leadership matters" (p. 136). Such leadership matters toward the implementation of SCCCERS, even as - perhaps especially as

the SCCCRS create other issues challenging principals, faculty, students, parents, and political leaders.

This notion is exemplified by statements made by the principals at during the conducted semi-structured interviews. Gamma Theta's principal stated, "Even though I personally see these standards as yet another quick fix, we are obligated to follow the directives of the state and the district. At our school, we implement all directives effectively and with fidelity."

This statement reinforced the instructional leader role, in that the principal acknowledged their personal disdain for the standards, yet understood that it was their responsibility to implement them with fidelity. In addition, the Gamma Theta principal also had the foresight to understand that if other members of the implementation team expressed their own personal contempt of the standards to the teaching staff, the school wide implementation would be severely hindered.

Beta Alpha's principal echoed the sentiments of Gamma Theta, "At Beta Alpha we adhere to the collective purpose of this is what the state and district expects us to do for our students, and this is what we (the Beta Alpha implementation team) expect to see in our classrooms."

All of the principals interviewed expressed generally similar notions. They understand that as the instructional leader of their school, it is their professional obligation to implement these mandates thus ensuring faculty awareness of and student understanding of the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. The principals furthermore acknowledge that they cannot permit their own personal views of these mandates to hinder their school wide implementation.

The roles and responsibilities of the school administrators has adapted from the management of a school, to that of the instructional leader within the school. Within their respective school systems, principals are expected to perform multiple roles. Their primary responsibility, however, is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of enhancing student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2000; Lezoutte, 1994; Waters, Marzano, and McNulty 2003). Although teachers, supervisors, and district level personnel are able to exhibit instructional leadership behaviors, it is the school principal that anchors the foundation of instructional leadership at the school level (Sergiovanni, 1998).

LaPointe and Davis (2006) assert, "Public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders in promoting powerful teaching and learning" (p.3). Research has also demonstrated that the principal as a teacher directly influences academic achievement from students" (Supovitz and Poglinco, 2001; Waters and Marzano, 2006). In regard then to CCSS, it follows that the principal's role as an instructional leader correlates directly to curricular and instructional change.

As Porter, ET all, (2010) stated, "principal leadership matters" (p. 136). Such leadership matters toward the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS, even as - perhaps especially as the CCSS/SCCCRS create other challenging issues for school principals, faculty, students, parents, and political leaders. Factors, including resources, as well as faculty acceptance, are additional, yet crucial components of successful implementation.

Schools Beta Alpha and Gamma Delta each have high administrator understanding and involvement. They also exhibit high student achievement based on their state report cards. The administrative teams in these schools have bought into the program and, in turn, the teachers within these schools have developed a high level of

acceptance of them. Additionally, these two schools have high access to staff development opportunities and resources. These resources have enabled the facilitators to provide superior professional development sessions and opportunities to their school's faculty and staff.

Gamma Pi, while indicating high understanding and involvement, experiences a lack of resources. This lack of resources has hindered their ability to provide the necessary staff development sessions for their faculty. It is also thought that this lack of resources has negatively affected the faculty's acceptance of the standards and their implementation.

Administrator understanding of the SCCCRS does not necessarily mean that the administrator agrees with the concepts and requirements of the CCSS or SCCCRS. Alpha Beta and Gamma Theta schools both indicated a lack of administrator support of the SCCCRS. However, these schools are successfully implementing the SCCCRS through their support of their teaching staff and the knowledge and support of their implementation teams. These implementation team members have been able to step in and facilitate the necessary staff development sessions despite the noted impediments. The principals through their support of their faculty and participation in the

professional development have facilitated and enabled the successful implementation of the SCCCRS in their schools.



## **Chapter V**

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This study examined school administrators' attitudes towards CCSS/SCCCRS and their effects on the school level implementation of the Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. In addition, it identified strategies and methods being utilized in schools that are successfully implementing the SCCCRCR.

### **Re-Statement of the Problem**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is an effort to establish a set of common, nationwide expectations or benchmarks for students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The expectation is that students are expected to learn and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities of their grade level and apply this knowledge, skills, and abilities in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics with an additional literacy component for all content areas.

According to Douglas Reeves (2000), founder of the Leadership and Learning Center, an international organization dedicated to improving student achievement and educational equity, the key to higher achievement lies in a focused, multidisciplinary requirement for students to think, reason, and write in a clear, accurate, and persuasive manner. Reeves also stated that critical thinking rather than memorization will lead to increased student achievement (Reeves, 2000).

The implementation of CCSS is a fundamental shift from an institutional and an instructional educational environment of the past. Nancy Kober (2011), of the Center on Educational Policy, a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools, noted that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring student master of knowledge and skills in the CCSS rests with districts and schools, their administrators and teachers (Kober & Rentner, 2011).

This study employed a qualitative approach framed by the sense-making and activity theories. This study involved five school districts along the Interstate 95 Corridor of South Carolina. Information for the study was gathered through a short survey and from direct semi-

structured interviews by the researcher with school personnel.

A brief ten-question survey was sent to the seventy school principals within the five selected school districts (Appendix A). Based on the principal responses, the researcher identified two schools Beta Alpha and Gamma Delta that exhibited high principal understanding of the CCSS/SCCCRS and indicated high involvement in the planning and execution of school wide professional development related to the CCSS/SCCCRS. The researcher also selected two schools Gamma Theta and Alpha Beta that indicated a low principal understanding of the CCSS/SCCCRS and indicated a low principal involvement in the planning and execution of school wide professional development related to the CCSS/SCCCRS. In addition, the researcher selected one additional school, Gamma Pi, which indicated high understanding and involvement, yet was struggling with their implementation.

The researcher contacted and conducted semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) with the leadership and implementation teams of these schools. The aim was to gain an understanding of the success and frustrations during the CCSS/SCCCRS implementation within these schools.

## **Interpretation of the Findings**

This study was designed to serve as an initial investigation and revealed that - at least in the cases considered - administrative attitude appears to indeed influence the effectiveness of the implementation. However, other factors also appear to reinforce or impede the successful implementation of the standards, and these include factors pertaining to staffing positions, professional development funding, and the collective culture of the schools.

The role of the school administrator has shifted from that of a sight-based manager, to serving as the instructional leader of the school. This is echoed by Nancy Kobler (2011), who stated that the ultimate responsibility to ensure student mastery of knowledge and skills in the CCSS rests with the districts and schools, their administrators, and teachers (Kober & Stark-Rentner, 2011).

School and district level administrators must be able to understand, interpret, and apply the concepts of the CCSS/SCCCRS in order to plan, implement, and facilitate effective staff development at both the district and school level. It is the responsibility of the district level administration to communicate the district's vision of

implementation and to provide the necessary support systems to the schools.

The principal in his or her role as the instructional leader of the school must provide and communicate a clear vision of how the CCSS/SCCCRS will be implemented within the school. This school level vision and implementation must fit within the parameters set by the district level administration.

Four of the five school implementation teams interviewed provided the researcher with information related to both the literature review and research questions. These research questions pertained to administrative involvement in the planning of school level professional development. In addition, the questions sought to identify the principal's involvement with the development of instructional strategies pertaining to the SCCCRC.

Douglas Reeves (2010) stated that innovations implemented with low and medium degrees of fidelity have little to no effect on student achievement. However, innovations implemented with a 90% and higher fidelity had a notable impact on student achievement (Reeves, 2010).

Beta Alpha School identified the positive, unified attitude of facility and staff as a major factor

contributing to the successful implementation of standards with that district. Beta Alpha's administrative team invested productive time in studying the theoretical background of the initiative. Then, as a part of their thoughtful process, they brought preliminary information of the fledgling standards before the faculty and staff, thus paving the way for a smooth reception and implementation of the standards with a high degree of fidelity when the CCSS/SCCCRS were formally introduced. The administrative and school wide unified culture of, "This is what is professionally expected from us in support of our students" - regardless of personal bias or opinion - aided in the adoption process.

The school within the study identified as Gamma Pi experienced considerable difficulty with the implementation of the standards. Yet, the struggles at Gamma Pi School may well have had more to do with insufficient staffing and funding rather than a lack of local administrative knowledge and support.

Alpha Beta School, with little administrative support or participation with professional development, is, however, another success. Even though the Principal does not support the SCCCRS, he participates in the professional development process. It is the collective expectations of

the school faculty and staff that drive the implementation. In the case of Alpha Beta School, administrators do lead and facilitate professional staff development, but their focus is on the specific content to be taught to as well as the continual analysis of the student data. This analysis provides the instructional staff with the necessary information to facilitate the student learning.

Alpha Beta's Principal reiterates that he is charged to support the teachers in their mission and to facilitate student engagement in the education and growth. The Principal remarked, "Good teaching is good teaching regardless of the standards".

Based on Reeves' statement regarding fidelity of implementation, administration at all three of the schools identify with high fidelity of implementation. Alpha Beta's administration, while not in support of the SCCCRS, understands the necessity of providing their teachers with relevant professional development opportunities based on student data. Gamma Pi, while struggling with their implementation, has been able to utilize the resources available to them to provide relevant and effective staff development. Additional funding could seemingly only enhance the fidelity of their implementation.

Beta Alpha exemplifies the notion of implementation with high fidelity. Beta Alpha's implementation began early. It possessed a high degree of administrative understanding and involvement. Additionally, the principal in the role of instructional leader was able to unify the Beta Alpha staff towards the common goal of successfully implementing the SCCCRS.

Throughout the interviews there were re-occurring strategies that were discussed. The notion of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) was mentioned several times. The purposes of PLC's are to provide time for teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators to come together and strategize as a community.

In the sampled schools, the PLC's met weekly and served as the primary delivery method for SCCCRS staff development. This professional development was typically facilitated by the Curriculum Coordinator or another member of the SCCCRS implementation team. In addition, the PLC's served as a way to communicate the classroom implementation progress with the school level implementation team. This communication coupled with classroom observations aided in the planning for personalized professional development based on the needs of the school or teacher.



The "Unpacking" of the standards was another re-occurring strategy. In order to adequately provide for the students, the teachers must possess a working knowledge of what each standard is specifically asking of the student. In order to accomplish this, the standards must be "unpacked," or broken down into the root academic components. Once broken down, the teacher is able to provide the necessary instruction and resources for the various needs of his or her students.

## **Implications**

### **For Practicing Administrators**

The role of the principal has shifted from that of a site based manager to the instructional leader. Ultimately it falls to the principal to establish the vision of what CCSS/SCCCRS will look like in their school.

It is expected that the principal serve as more than a manager or an administrative functionary of the school system. The principal now serves as the instructional leader of the schools, leading and working with the other instructors (teachers). It is this vision that drives planning and facilitation of the staff development needed to successfully implement the standards.

Beta Alpha's principal exemplified this notion through the planning and implementation of SCCCERS within the school

from the outset. The principal's knowledge, understanding, and guidance enabled the school to successfully implement the standards. Beta Alpha serves as an implementation model for the entire Beta School District.

### **Further Research and Questions**

This research was based on seventy schools from five school districts situated within three counties in South Carolina. To enhance the study, the researcher would expand the geographical area of the study to include schools from within various regions of the state. Such an expansion of the geographical areas would enable the researcher to identify the CCSS/SCCCRS implementation successes and struggles within a regional format. In addition, this regional format would enable the researcher to identify implementation strategies and suggestions for improvement based upon regional data, thus providing school and district administrators within each region examples of strategies being employed in schools within similar regional areas.

Test data to support the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS is another key piece of data to utilize to determine successes and struggles. At present there is very little standardized testing data available in South Carolina. In 2015, South Carolinian students in third through eighth

grades took the ACT Aspire Standardized Tests in Writing, Reading, and Mathematics. In 2016, all third through eighth grade students will take the South Carolina Readiness Testing Series (SC Ready) in Writing, Reading, and Mathematics. The ACT Aspire test was aligned to the CCSS and determined mastery at the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile. The South Carolina Ready Test is aligned to the SCCCRS and also determines student mastery at the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile. However, since the SC Ready Test has only been administered once, there is no consistent standardized testing data available to support the effectiveness of school level implementation of the SCCCRS. When the South Carolina Ready assessment has been employed for at least three years, more valid conclusions may be drawn about student growth as evidenced by the SCCCRS.

The 2015-2016 school year was the implementation year of the SCCCR Standards. All of the schools studied were "heavily engaged" in the professional development related to the initial implementation of the SCCCR Standards. As the schools continue to utilize the SCCCR Standards, the following questions should be explored:

1. How has the role of the Principal changed from leading the initial implementation of the standards in year one to the role assumed in years two, three, and four?

2. How has teacher perception of the SCCCR Standards changed from year one to year two?
3. What additional strategies are now being utilized to enhance the delivery of the SCCCR Standards to the students?

### **Conclusions**

As I began this study, I began with the premise, "The more knowledgeable the principal is of the Common Core Standards or the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards, and the more involved the principal is within the implementation of the standards at their school, the more successful the process is likely to be. As I progressed through the study, I saw this to be true.

During the interviews, the principals were all involved in the professional development process. All of the principals possessed a knowledge and understanding of what the standards entailed, and were leaders, facilitators, and participants in the school level implementation process.

Each school possessed an implementation team consisting mainly of administrators, coordinating teachers, curriculum coaches, and teachers. Each school level team also utilized Professional Learning Communities or PLC's in their implementation process. These PLC's served as the

major delivery method of the building level professional development. Each member of the implementation team both participated and facilitated PLC sessions. The principal served both as a facilitator and participant. This participation enabled the Principal to serve in the roles of instructional leader, teacher, and learner.

The success of the school level implementation depends in great deal on the knowledge of and commitment to the implementation of the principal and the school level implementation team. This group must possess a common goal and vision. The principal in their roles as instructional leader must be fully committed to lead and participate in the implementation regardless of their personal views of the standards.

Administrator understanding of the SCCCRS does not necessarily mean that the administrator agrees with the concepts and requirements of the CCSS or SCCCRS. Alpha Beta and Gamma Theta schools both indicated a lack of administrator support of the SCCCRS. However, these schools are successfully implementing the SCCCRS through their support of their teaching staff and the knowledge of their implementation team. These implementation team members have been able to step in and facilitate the necessary staff development sessions despite the noted

impediments. The principals through their support of their faculty and participation in the professional development have facilitated and enabled the successful implementation of the SCCCRS in their schools. As Porter, ET all, (2010) stated, "principal leadership matters" (p. 136). Such leadership matters toward the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS, even as - perhaps especially as the CCSS/SCCCRS create other challenging issues for school principals, faculty, students, parents, and political leaders. Factors, including resources, as well as faculty acceptance, are additional, yet crucial components of successful implementation.

Successes have come from schools where the administrative and implementation teams have fully committed or "bought into" the school level SCCCR staff development program. In turn, the teachers within these schools have developed a high level of acceptance of the standards and were active participants. Additionally, successful schools have high access to staff development opportunities and resources. These resources have enabled the facilitators to provide superior professional development sessions and opportunities to their school's faculty and staff.

Table 5.1

### *Elements of Successes and Challenges*

<b>Successes</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Positive Administrator involvement	Lack of State and District Plan
School level personnel to provide daily/weekly on-site professional development and support.	Lack of school and district level fiscal resources
Unified shared vision of school level implementation teams	Lack of school level personnel to facilitate staff development
District resources and support	Staff development time and materials
On-going professional development via PLC's	Classroom Rigor (DOK)
Administrative Support	
Faculty "buy in" based on shared vision.	

Conversely, limitations, mainly consisting of the lack of professional development resources have hindered implementation. These resources include a lack of personnel to facilitate staff development, the fiscal inability to send staff to trainings, bring quality facilitators to the school, or provide the necessary staff development resources and materials. This lack of resources is a hindrance to any schools ability to provide the necessary staff development sessions for their faculty. In addition, this lack of resources can negatively affect the school faculty's acceptance of the standards and their

implementation. Table 5.1 illustrates factors relating to elements of successes to elements of challenges.

### **Final Thoughts**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative and the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS) have compelled school districts across the country to re-evaluate instructional programs to better meet the instructional needs of students as well as the professional development needs of teachers and administrators. This re-evaluation has often been a difficult process. Human resistance to change makes the process uncomfortable and difficult. Principals facing numerous daily concerns are also charged with facilitating these changes within their schools, while encountering objections from the teachers whom they lead and sometimes the indifference or a sense of disconnection from higher districts officials whom they follow. In spite of this the principal must possess an understanding of the expectations of the standards, as well as gaining the expertise to facilitate staff development toward teacher and student mastery of the content.

The attitudes and involvement of the school level administration also relate to the implementations effectiveness. However, administrator attitude and support is only one factor of the implementation process as a



whole, but perhaps the one most important factor. As the researcher surmised from the interviews, factors such as the availability of on-site trainers, (i.e., Instructional Coaches and Curriculum Coordinators), funding from the school and district level, the availability and utilization of district level personnel to facilitate staff development, and the collective mindset of the school's faculty and staff also play critical roles in the effectiveness of implementation. School leadership sets the tone, but leadership is just one component, albeit a major one, of the multifaceted of Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards implementation process.

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## **Appendix A - Principal's Survey**

1-What is the name of your school & district (this is for data collecting purposes, all schools and districts will remain anonymous)?

2-How many years have you been in your current position?

- Less than 2
- 2-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20+

3-What category best describes your school?

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4-About how many students attend your school?

- Less than 100
- 100-299
- 300-499

- 500-699
- 700-999
- 1000-1199
- 1200-1399
- 1400-1599
- 1600-1799
- 1800-1999
- 2000-2999

5- How long have you known about the Common Core Standards Initiative?

- Less than 1 Year
- 1-3 Years
- 4-6 Years

6-How strongly do you agree with the concepts and philosophies associated with the CCSS and SCCCRS initiatives?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7- How important to education are the CCSS initiative and SCCCR Standards?

- Not Important

- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

8-How deeply has your school progressed into the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS?

- No Implementation
- Some Implementation
- Full Implementation

9-How involved are you in the development of strategies for implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in your school?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved
- Involved
- Highly Involved

10-How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved
- Involved
- Very Involved



## Appendix B – Survey Data

### All Responses

Dist CODE	SchCODE	How long have you know	How strongly do you	How important to educ	How deeply has your schoo	How involved are you in tl	How involved in CCSS/SCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?
		Response	Response	Response	Response	Response	Other Response
Alpha	Beta	4-6 Years	Strongly Disagree	Not Important	No Implementation	Not involved	Not Involved
Alpha		1-3 Years	Agree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Alpha	Gamma	1-3 Years	Disagree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Alpha	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Alpha	Epsilon	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Alpha	Zeta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Alpha	eta	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Alpha	theta	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Alpha	iota	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Alpha	kappa	4-6 Years	Disagree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Alpha	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Beta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Involved
Beta	Gamma	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Involved
Beta	Epsilon	1-3 Years	Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Beta	Zeta	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	Alpha	4-6 Years	Agree	Very Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Beta	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	Gamma	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Epsilon	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	Zeta	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	eta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	theta	4-6 Years	Disagree	Important	Full Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	iota	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	kappa	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	lambda	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	mu	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	nu	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Involved
Gamma	Xi	1-3 Years	Disagree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	omicron						
Gamma	Pi	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Delta	Alpha	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Involved
Epsilon	Alpha	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Somewhat Involved
Epsilon	Beta	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Somewhat Involved
Epsilon	Gamma	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Involved	Involved
Epsilon	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilon	Epsilon	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Very Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilon	Zeta	1-3 Years	Agree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved

#### Survey Results Indicating High Understanding and Involvement

Dist CODE	SchCODE	How long have you known	How strongly do you agree	How important to education	How deeply has your school implemented	How involved are you in the process	How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?
Alpha	Epsilon	1-3 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Alpha	Iota	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Alpha	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Involved	Very Involved
Beta	Gamma	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Alpha	4-6 Years	Agree	Very Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Gamma	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Very Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Gamma	Pi	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Some Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilon	Delta	4-6 Years	Agree	Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved
Epsilon	Epsilon	4-6 Years	Strongly Agree	Very Important	Full Implementation	Highly Involved	Very Involved

#### Survey Results Indicating Low Understanding and Involvement

Dist CODE	SchCODE	How long have you known	How strongly do you agree	How important to education	How deeply has your school implemented	How involved are you in the process	How involved in CCSS/SCCCRS Professional Staff Development are you?
Alpha	Beta	4-6 Years	Strongly Disagree	Not Important	No Implementation	Not Involved	Not Involved
Alpha	Gamma	1-3 Years	Disagree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	Theta	4-6 Years	Disagree	Important	Full Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved
Gamma	Xi	1-3 Years	Disagree	Somewhat Important	Some Implementation	Somewhat Involved	Somewhat Involved

## **Appendix C – Superintendent Permission Letter**

10/30/2015

Matthew D. Scandrol  
University of South Carolina  
Florence, SC 29505

Dr.  
Superintendent of Schools  
District

**Dear Dr.,**

This letter is to request permission to conduct research related to my Doctoral Dissertation through the University of South Carolina.

The purpose of this study is to examine administrator's attitudes towards the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS) and its effects on the school level implementation of the Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. How and to what degree do the attitudes of the school leadership towards CCSS/SCCCRS affect the development and implementation of them? What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to implement the CCSS/SCCCRS in their classrooms? And to what degree is school leadership involved in this process? What is the correlation between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards CCSS/SCCCRS and the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in the school?

The study is a mixed method involving an initial ten-question survey via SurveyMonkey.com to all school principals. Then based on the information received from the survey, the researcher will visit select schools to discuss administrator involvement and the strategies used to implement the standards. These conferences will be with administration and a select group of teachers.

All school, district, administrator, teacher, and city names will remain anonymous. My advisor, Dr. Edward Cox, at the University of South Carolina will assure that my research adheres to the University standards of research and publication.

**Sincerely,**

Matthew D. Scandrol

## **Appendix D – Principal Survey Letter**

Dear Principal,

My Name is Matthew Scandrol, and I am a Doctoral Student in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of South Carolina. My Doctoral Dissertation is researching implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS) in Schools.

The purpose of this study is to examine administrator's attitudes towards the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards (SCCCRS) and its effects on the school level implementation of the Common Core State Standards/South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. How and to what degree do the attitudes of the school leadership towards CCSS/SCCCRS affect the development and implementation of them? What methods and strategies are schools utilizing to implement the CCSS/SCCCRS in their classrooms? And to what degree is school leadership involved in this process? What is the correlation between the attitudes and involvement of school administration towards CCSS/SCCCRS and the implementation of CCSS/SCCCRS in the school?

The study is a mixed method involving an initial ten question survey via SurveyMonkey.com to school principals. This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Based on the information received from the survey, the researcher will visit select schools to discuss administrator involvement and the strategies used to implement the standards. These conferences will be with administration and a select group of teachers.

All school, district, administrator, teacher, and city names will remain anonymous in my reporting and conclusions. My advisor, Dr. Edward Cox, at the University of South Carolina will assure that my research adheres to the University standards of research and publication.

Here is the link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RYJ8ND9>

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Matthew D. Scandrol, Ed. S.

## **Appendix E - Interview Questions**

1. Based on the survey results, the school was in the \_\_\_\_ understanding and \_\_\_\_\_ involvement in the planning and implementation. As a leadership team, discuss with me how you are implementing the CCSS/SCCCRS.
2. With your implementation what have you observed as strength, and what are the school's areas of need?
3. Discuss how the teaching staff has been able to "buy into," or resist to the implementation. What are their perceived concerns about this implementation?
4. How supportive and what resources has the district level staff provided, and how has this supported or hindered the implementation?
5. As we move from CCSS to SCCCRRS what are the biggest challenges that the school & faculty still face, and how as a leadership/implementation team are you able to overcome?
6. Discuss with me the various strategies that your school is utilizing to implement the CCSS/SCCCRS with the teachers in your professional development sessions for classroom utilization.