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STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION: WHAT TEACHERS DO IN
THE CLASSROOM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to answer the research question: what do teachers do in a standards-based classroom? Four teachers in one elementary school participated in the study. Archival data (lesson plans, walk-through feedback) from the previous school year were used to portray and describe the instructional practices, and teaching styles of the teachers. Additional information was obtained through teacher interviews and self-reported surveys. This information helped the researcher gain a better understanding of teacher knowledge-base and comprehension of standards-based instruction. Student reading scores were also used to make connections between standards-based instructional practices and student reading achievement and progress. An analysis of data and documents suggested that two of the four teachers were proficient in regard to their level of implementation of standards and instructional strategies related to standards. All teachers implemented reading standards, but in each situation it was to various levels and with an assortment of strategies. No claims were made regarding a correlation between student reading scores and the level of implementation of standards, but connections could be made in this area. Those teachers considered proficient had higher number of students who made growth in reading or who were meeting/exceeding reading expectations for their grade level.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001, schools and school districts have been faced with the challenge of meeting high academic expectations and the demands of a stringent accountability system. In an effort to meet the requirements of NCLB, states, districts, and schools are required to determine student learning as measured against a set of established standards. As a result, classroom teachers have had to change teaching practices from textbook-driven methods of instruction to more flexible, collaborative approaches. Standards-based instruction is one such method of meeting the demands of NCLB. According to Chambers and Dean (2000), standards-based instruction provides “learning goals for students and a measure against which to align various components of the education system (e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher preparation, and professional development)” (p. 2). At the elementary level, students in grades three to five take state assessments for their reading performance and progress. An urgent need exists to improve the overall reading achievement of students and research indicates that standards-based instruction is a method for such improvement.

History

Standards-based reform with its rigorous performance, content standards and the related assessments can be traced back to the 1980’s. Specifically, the conception of standards-based instruction is associated with the release of the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report, but has recently come to fruition because of NCLB. According to Thurlow (2002), it derives from a national effort to make the nation more competitive in the global

economy. Furthermore, Ogawa, Sandholtz, and Scribner (2004) state that there has been a push at the federal level for the adoption of standards and this movement has had bipartisan support. From the 1992 Bush administration and the work of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing to the passage of Goals 2000 by the Clinton administration, there was a specific request for standards and standards-based instruction (Ogawa, et al., 2004).

As with any reform movement, there are supporters and critics. According to Kirschner (2004), proponents argue that standards-based curriculum will benefit every student through a quality education. At the same time, opponents counter that it can harm student learning, promote lower student expectations, and does not prepare students to meet demands of society (Vaughn, 2002). The debate over standards-based instruction began in the late 1990's and early 2000's with the research and analysis published by Marzano and Schmoker (1999), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Reeves (2004). Marzano and Schmoker (1999) contend that in schools with high levels of student achievement, teachers knew exactly what to teach and how to assess it meaningfully. Valencia and Villarreal (2003) contend that standards-based instruction, "...is structurally misdirected because it treats the symptoms of school failure (e.g. poor achievement), rather than the cause (i.e. inferior schools)" (p. 618). Despite varying viewpoints, local districts are faced with the challenge of meeting state reading standards at a minimum proficiency level and many educators favor the implementation of standards-based instruction as the best means of meeting that challenge (Thurlow, 2002).

Standards, in contrast to other reform movements and initiatives (i.e. whole language), are here to stay (Cuban & Tyack, 1995). The federal reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that each state develop grade level expectations, or a set of standards in each content area. Along with the instruction of standards, districts and schools are being held accountable for student achievement through the use of high-stakes assessment. Because these assessments are to be aligned with state standards, the standards have become the focus for schools to achieve the results that need to be met (Ainsworth, 2004).

Standards have many benefits, and they have several drawbacks. As a result of standards-based school reform, teachers' roles have changed dramatically. There has been a shift from the use of more structured, page by page textbook instruction to data driven instructional methods which are more flexible, collaborative, and student-centered (Chambers & Dean, 2000). According to Chambers and Dean (2000), educational standards are intended to place the focus on measurable learning outcomes. This shift in focus allows teachers to accommodate a variety of learning styles as well as rates of student learning. On the other hand, because standards-based instruction is directly aligned to state assessments, teachers and administrators may experience anxiety regarding standards-based instruction and the accountability piece. Mulvenon, Connors, McKenzie, and Williams (2003) conducted research on teacher attitudes towards standardized testing and implications for practice. In this study, they learned that teachers report feelings of "pressure to raise test scores, believe too much time is spent on tests and associated tasks" (Mulvenon, et al., 2003). They state that the use of standardized test scores was the least valued assessment for decision making and individualized student planning (Mulvenon, et al., 2003). Chambers and Dean (2000)

support this argument by stating “increased emphasis on accountability has had unforeseen and unwanted consequences for teaching and learning” (p.3).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to analyze teacher behavior and classroom instruction in relation to standards-based instruction. With the passing of No Child Left Behind, schools have been forced to move towards the instruction of standards. Standards-based instruction as a whole includes the teaching of standards (in the state of Missouri: grade level expectations), the use of scoring guides, and the implementation of common classroom assessments (Reeves, 2001). Students are assessed towards their mastery of these standards. Based on this information, this specific research question was addressed in the study:

1. What do teachers do in the classroom when using standards based instruction?

This case study placed those classroom practices in context as the differing instructional strategies of four teachers were analyzed and explained through a descriptive case study approach. While no direct claims were made regarding student reading achievement, the study described student achievement in classrooms with varying levels of standards-based instruction.

Significance of the Study

There have been few qualitative studies that have intentionally explored the implementation of standards-based instruction and the outcome on student reading achievement. While math, writing, and other subject areas are critical areas of learning, student reading achievement continues to be a concern. This study aimed to gain a better understanding of teacher perception and knowledge level of standards-based instruction

to determine if the teachers' levels of implementation and perception of standards-based instruction correlated with student reading achievement. The work identified teacher beliefs, knowledge, and practices as they relate to standards-based instruction. With the outcomes of standards-based instruction, the study could stimulate more wide-spread use and reduce apprehension among educators regarding standards-based instruction and assessment.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions were used to effectively describe the different strategies and components of standards-based instruction.

Standards-based instruction: Instruction which focuses on student learning outcomes and uses scoring guides and common assessments to measure student progress in relation to those expected outcomes

Standards: a model that is used as a basis of instruction

Grade level expectations: state (Missouri) established scope and sequence defining standards and expected learning outcomes for grades K-12

Assessment: measures student performance

Scoring guides: the documents used to determine whether the work is exemplary, proficient, progressing toward the standard, or not yet meeting the standards

Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA): reading assessment for grades kindergarten through third. Specifically assesses student reading ability in the following areas: sustained reading, previewing and predicting, oral reading, use of strategies, and comprehension

Evaluation: An appraisal (examination or test) to determine progress of student learning toward meeting academic standards

Balanced literacy: A program used to implement reading. Its components include learning centers/corners, guided reading, shared reading, spelling, and phonemic awareness.

Guided reading: A portion of balanced literacy in which reading instruction is differentiated, provided in small groups, and students are grouped according to their instructional reading level.

Depth of Knowledge (DOK): measures the degree to which the knowledge elicited from students on assessments/questions/activities is as complex as to what students are expected to know as stated in curriculum/GLE's

Assumptions

Standards-based instruction is a reform initiative that positively impacts student reading achievement. When implemented at a high level, this reform movement creates a challenging academic program, which assesses student progress on specified benchmarks. It does not compare one student to another, nor does it use a bell curve method of determining student success. Student achievement is based on student progress towards a specific learning outcome. The assumption is that teachers who implement standards-based instruction plan different instructional strategies. It was also assumed that the research identified and placed, in context, factors other than instructional strategies that influenced student achievement.

Limitations

The proposed study had the following limitations. While several measures (survey, interview, lesson plans, and walk through documentation) were used to document the extent to which a teacher used standards-based instruction, the process attempted to describe the different “degrees” of implementation; and, it only described the teaching habits of four teachers from one school. Researcher bias and teacher apprehension may have led to skewed answers and interpretations of participant responses on the survey and to the interview questions.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study included data collection from only one school year, from one elementary school, and from only four teachers within this school. This school was chosen because it was the site of the principal research investigator. The research investigator is the principal of this school.

Organization of Study

In summary, this chapter gave an introduction and history of standards-based instruction. The purpose of this study was to specifically describe what happens in a standards-based classroom. With certain assumptions, limitations, and delimitations identified, the study analyzed archival data and documents relevant to standards-based instruction and were used to paint a portrait of four elementary teachers and their teaching strategies. In chapter 2, a review of relevant literature will describe viewpoints from both proponents and critics of SBI. Chapter 3 will describe the study design, demographics of the school, participants, and instrumentation. Chapter 4 gives the research results with a very clear portrait of the four participants and their teaching styles

and strategies. Finally, chapter 5 presents the summary and conclusions of the research project.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Curriculum standards, with their effects on instructional and assessment practices, are changing the profile of American school systems. Nation-wide, school districts are designing, re-designing, developing, and re-developing curriculum standards to meet the high level of accountability established by the federal government. The passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has required and mandated that state education departments develop thorough accountability systems and assessments. NCLB legislation has made the use of data vital to improve student achievement necessary, and has brought increased attention to the need for continuous improvement within school systems (Bernhardt, 2004). As part of this reform, overviews by Marzano and Schmoker (1999) of current trends in testing and assessment reveal that there are major changes in instructional practices and how these practices are driven in a standards-based system. The standards movement can be considered a major force in education today, and some researchers assert that the significance of the campaign will be huge (Marzano and Schmoker, 1999). More specifically, many reformers contend that, in order for effective change to take place, there must be local, state, and national standards for schools (Bedwell, 2004). American schools are faced with the challenge of creating standards-based instructional systems, which may significantly increase student achievement.

Standards-based Instructional Systems

Before one can begin to discuss the trends, advantages, and disadvantages of such an accountability system, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of the definition

and history of standards-based instruction. According to Chambers and Dean (2000), standards-based instruction is the “result of a call to action from political leaders, educators, and the American public to raise student achievement” (p. 1). Early on, standards appeared critical because they provided learning outcomes for students, as well as a measure against which to align a variety of components of the educational system (e.g. curriculum, instruction, teacher preparation, and professional development). Additionally, the purpose of standards was to put the focus on what students learned, as opposed to when they learned it (Chambers & Dean, 2000). Chambers and Dean (2000) also reported that this shift in focus would allow for accommodations of various learning styles and rates of learning. As a result, standards would guide instructional practice and encourage the most effective instructional strategies for students. Carr and Harris (2001) define standards as “statements that identify the essential knowledge and skills that should be taught and learned in school” (p.184). They further describe a “standards-based system” in which the curriculum being implemented in the classroom is designed to help students attain the defined standards (Carr & Harris, 2001).

From a different viewpoint, Reeves (2004) refers to the use of a bell curve when discussing standards and assessments. He remarks that when utilizing the normal distribution, or “bell curve”, there is a comparison with other students’ performance, and there is no clear definition of the learning objectives (p. 30). As a result, students, teachers, and parents rarely know whether or not students have mastered the goals established (Reeves, 2004). Conversely, students, parents, and teachers know immediately when success towards a benchmark/standard has been achieved within a standards-based environment (Reeves, 2004). Reeves (2004) contends that timely

feedback, immediate results, and vital information can be retrieved regarding the student's performance. With all of the different perceptions of what standards-based education entails, consensus seems to exist on at least three major components: learning objectives, called standards that are specific; standards that apply to all students; and, assessment that provides critical feedback about student performance in relation to the standards (Chambers & Dean, 2000).

Historically, the standards-based reform can be traced to the early 1980's. At a national level, a surge towards academic standards has had bipartisan support, and federal officials have strongly encouraged the adoption of standards (Ogawa, et al., 2004). In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission) was released, and it has been associated with the beginning of the standards movement (Chambers & Dean, 2000). In 1992, the first Bush Administration established the National Council on Education Standards and Testing. This Council issued a report supporting national standards and testing. Subsequently, the Clinton Administration supported the same philosophy of standards through the passage of Goals 2000, which codified national goals and actually provided funding for states to develop standards and assessments. During the 1990's, teacher groups, such as the American Federation of Teachers, advocated for higher academic standards and encouraged state education agencies to create a national system of standards and assessment (Ogawa, et al., 2004). In reaction to the developments at the federal and state levels, local districts utilized standards in core academic subjects with the overall goal of raising student achievement through standards-based curriculum and rigorous assessment (Ogawa, et al., 2004). Prior to NCLB in 2001, teachers and schools

were engaged in teaching activities which may have included drill, worksheets, and pages from a textbook.

Like any other school reform initiative, standards-based instruction has advocates and critics, advantages and disadvantages. The following section describes the literature related to the advantages and disadvantages of standards-based instruction and the implications for today's educational system.

Proponents of Standards-Based Education

The enthusiasm for standards comes from the belief that they can contribute to improving and equalizing student performance. Proponents claim that standards offer educators a consistent, systematic guide for their instructional practices. Ogawa, et al. (2004) suggest that "by specifying what knowledge or skills students must demonstrate, standards point toward the instructional practices that teachers should employ" (p. 1176). Moreover, as tools of improvement, standards emphasize a renewed focus on student learning and set high expectations for the academic performance of all students (Ogawa, et al., 2004).

Reeves (2001) argues that the primary focus of academic standards should be on classroom assessment, not on high-stakes annual tests. When teachers focus on the results of common, classroom assessments, student performance is compared to a standard as opposed to a norm, an average, or to other students. In this respect, students are required to demonstrate their proficiency. Advocates of standards-based classrooms propose that this is an improvement over the traditional assessments because the responses hold greater value for the teacher or student (Reeves, 2001). Additionally, Reeves (2001) contends that the focus of standards-based assessments is the

improvement of student learning and not the depiction of an evaluation, or the announcement of a score.

One purpose for the standards movement was to address the lack of articulation among teachers at grade levels, within schools, and across districts. Chambers and Dean (2000) state that once educators begin implementing standards, they recognize the obvious benefits, such as focused curriculum and increased awareness. Not only are teachers cognizant of the curriculum and what is being taught, but the students and parents are as well. Reeves (2001) further substantiates this argument with a different vocabulary, but the same concept. He suggests that a prime feature of standards-based education is that the assessments are “transparent.” Open tests, performance assessments, and constructed responses are based on rigorous standards. They enhance learning and increase student engagement (Reeves, 2001).

Teachers who utilize standards-based instruction provide educative, not evaluative feedback through their assessments (Reeves, 2001). The primary purpose of this school reform movement is to improve student achievement. These assessments related to standards are not typical educational tests. Student success is achieved through multiple opportunities for meaningful feedback. It is defined through demonstration, not guesswork; and it is achieved through learning, not drill (Reeves, 2001). Additionally, Marzano and Schmoker (1999) state in schools where high levels of student achievement were achieved, teachers knew exactly what their students needed to learn, what to teach, where to improve, and what to work on with their colleagues.

A residual advantage of standards-based instruction is the positive impact that it has shown on classroom teachers. As reported in the work of Chambers and Dean

(2000), teachers state that they are trusted by administrators to make appropriate instructional decisions in the classrooms. Additionally, they remark that standards allow them to prioritize what they teach, and they do not feel the need to teach every word of a textbook, or every word of a teacher's guide (Chambers & Dean, 2000). While some educators note that standards-based instruction is simply another name for something that they have always done, others describe it as a systematically different approach to teaching and learning. They describe it as an "instructional map" (Chambers & Dean, 2000).

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (2001) conducted a research synthesis of standards-based instruction in the classroom. Through the research, a list of characteristics which describe exemplary teachers of standards-based instruction was developed. The researchers found that teachers who were successful at implementing standards in their classrooms exhibited traits in the following areas: sophisticated pedagogical content knowledge; tailored instruction; metacognitive modeling and coaching; and, complexity and interactions (McREL, 2001). According to the analysis, exemplary teachers teach to a child's assessed needs; they use a variety of instructional strategies such as the use of small instructional groups; they coach students about how to apply the skills to reading connected text and material and skills are not taught in isolation; and, finally, their students are engaged in higher thinking and high level of student discussion (McREL, 2001).

In summary, some of the advantages of standards-based instruction are as follows:

- The goal is to improve and equalize student performance.

- There is an instructional focus on curriculum and increased awareness on student needs.
- Awareness extends beyond the teacher, and parents and students are thoroughly informed of the expectations.
- Student performance is compared to a standard as opposed to a norm, an average, or to other students.
- Students are required to demonstrate their proficiency instead of making guesses.
- There is a positive impact on classroom teachers, their perceptions, and their instructional practices.

Opponents of Standards-Based Education

As with any educational program, there are both proponents and critics. Standards-based instruction is no different. With all of the strengths of such a system presented, and evidence to support standards-based education, there are still those who criticize its use and doubt its effectiveness. The standards-based movement has been criticized for its connection to high-stakes testing, and some studies have revealed that such instructional practices can narrow a curriculum and promote the instruction of lower order cognitive skills (Darling-Hammond, 2004). As a result, opponents of the standards-based movement have described their concerns through numerous research studies.

Even though some educators appreciate the benefits that standards can bring to a school's educational program, many do not understand the premise of standards-based education. Brandt (2003) validates this by describing surveys which found that a national

sample of fourth through eighth grade teachers actually do not accept standards-based instruction. Furthermore, he states that practices should be consistent with purposes, but due to a lack of understanding there may be disagreement over the actual purpose (Brandt, 2003). Multiple interpretations of what the outcomes should be, and the diversity of approaches to standards-based instruction, lend themselves to ambiguity, confusion, and frustration among teachers. In a publication released by McREL, Chambers and Dean (2000) conducted interviews with beginning and veteran teachers from across the country who are engaged in standards-based instruction reform efforts. Chambers and Dean (2000) learned from teachers that the teachers feel the need to be told concretely what standards-based education is in order to be able to implement it effectively.

Chambers and Dean (2000) contend that teachers express frustration over their lack of understanding of the concept. In some cases benchmarks are confusing because they contain too much jargon, and technical problems make it difficult to organize curriculum, instruction, and assessment around standards (Chambers & Dean, 2000). Moreover, teachers describe their uncertainty regarding which instructional strategies are actually standards-based and which are not (Chambers & Dean, 2000). Many critics would argue that this lack of knowledge could not help improve student achievement.

Additional frustration expressed by teachers is that there is not enough instructional time to teach all of the standards. Florian (1999) states that “teachers need time to master new standards, to plan instruction focused on standards, and adequately teach and assess the standards” (p.11). In a study conducted by Florian (1999) teachers from four school districts located in Colorado (1), Wyoming (2), and North Dakota (1)

were surveyed to determine the estimated amount of time required to teach standards as it compares to actual available instructional time. In the survey, 27 second grade teachers; 54 fifth grade teachers; 40 middle school teachers; and, 87 high school teachers replied to the survey. Teachers were instructed to estimate the amount of time in hours it would take to teach a standard, indicate to what extent they felt the standard was important to know, and to what extent it was appropriate for students in their grade to know. The survey revealed that an average of 1100 hours of instructional time is needed at each grade level to adequately teach the required standards (Florian, 1999). Most schools have an average of 1000 hours of classroom time to teach all subjects and required standards.

Standards-based instruction and its strong correlation to high-stakes testing have been scrutinized for its potential for corruption of indicators. Duran (2005) claims that there is a deliberate inflation of student academic progress and test scores. Moreover, he concludes that further deception includes purposefully miscoding assessment answer sheets into school results for purposes of accountability and an over identification of special education students so that their scores will be exempt (Duran, 2005). An unintended consequence of this connection to high-stakes accountability is that some districts provide merit pay to teachers with high student scores, and others (schools, or individual teachers) are put into intervention status if there is a lack of progress noted for their students (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Critics claim that this pressure creates undue frustration for teachers, parents, and students.

Another major criticism of standards-based school reform is that it misses the point of educational improvement. Valencia and Villarreal (2003) state

“it is structurally misdirected because it treats the symptoms of school failure (e.g., poor achievement), rather than the cause (i.e., inferior schools)” (p.618). Furthermore, they contend that standards-based reform is molded by deficit-thinking in which the failure of a school is due to the deficiency of the students (Valencia & Villarreal, 2003). Duran (2005) adds that at-risk students attending high-poverty schools typically do not have their academic needs met, are victims of preconceived notions of ability and motivation, and are blamed for the lack of school academic success.

In summary, several disadvantages to standards-based instruction have been mentioned. They are as follows:

- There are multiple interpretations of what the outcomes should be.
- The various approaches to standards-based education lend themselves to ambiguity, confusion, and frustration among educators.
- The pressure of high-stakes testing creates deliberate inflation of student test scores and some deception to achieve these scores.
- Its intentions are misguided because it treats the symptoms of school failure instead of the causes.
- There is a fear that standards-based instruction can narrow a curriculum and promote the instruction of lower cognitive skills.

Conflicting Evidence Regarding the Effectiveness of Standards-based Education

Not surprisingly, given the environment of contradictory opinions, research results indicate conflicting evidence regarding the effectiveness of standards-based education. Some research concludes that the practice and effective implementation of a

standards system has a positive impact on student achievement (Reeves, 2001). Other research maintains that such a system has not produced desirable results, and some researchers go so far as to claim that it inhibits student progress and creates environments where students cannot adequately succeed (Valencia and Villarreal, 2003). This section attempts to describe evidence that supports both the advantages and disadvantages of standards-based practices.

Some districts across the nation have implemented standards-based initiative with great success. In her study, Darling-Hammond (2004) cites specific reform efforts in three schools in Connecticut. These schools were described as being among the lowest performing schools, based on state standards in Connecticut. However based on a five year comparison of the schools' state test scores after the reform, there was an average gain of 12.3 points, which is nearly 4 points higher than gains made compared to overall state averages (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Darling-Hammond (2004) contends that similar results have been noted in schools in New York City and schools in California. All of these schools were considered to be among the lowest performing schools in their states, and their demographics were described as high minority and low socioeconomic populations. Through the use of practical strategies such as creating smaller learning units, employing school-wide and classroom performance assessments, and providing meaning for professional development opportunities for teachers, these schools have demonstrated increased student achievement scores (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

There are still other success stories in regard to the standards-based reform initiative. Marzano and Schmoker (1999) describe the success stories of several

schools and districts, across the nation, which have implemented standards-based strategies and have seen improvement in student achievement. For example, in Frederick County, Maryland, it was shown that the number of students reaching commonly assessed standards increased dramatically, from the middle to the highest tier in Maryland schools. More specifically, these schools used local assessments that were deliberately and consistently aligned with state benchmarks and standards (Marzano & Schmoker, 1999). Additionally, they describe Lake Havasu City, Arizona, where Title I teachers worked in teams to identify, define, and focus instruction on common reading skills. The results were significant, demonstrating that the number of students reading at or above grade level increased from 20% to 35% in just one year of implementation of standard-based instruction (Marzano & Schmoker, 1999).

The research indicated commonalities among the schools and districts that showed remarkable improvement. Darling-Hammond (2004) described these practices related to effective standards-based instruction in the following manner:

- Providing relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers;
- creating a collaborative and empowering school culture;
- clearly articulating and communicating performance standards; and
- creating processes for school assessment that can effectively evaluate students' opportunities to learn and can be used for continual improvement and change.

Just as there is evidence that attempts to prove that the standards movement is improving student achievement, there is research to the contrary. In a study conducted of the Texas Assessment Program by Valencia and Villarreal (2003), it is suggested that Texas' attempt to improve reading performance through the standards-based school reform is a "futile enterprise." The authors state, "These data on race/ethnicity have demonstrated a pervasive and unwavering pattern: African American and Mexican American students-compared to their White peers have significantly higher rates of failing the TAAS exit-level test" (p.613). While the study does not give specific numbers regarding the student performance and comparisons, the authors do state that the lower TAAS pass rates resulted in a lawsuit of the state of Texas in which Mexican American and African American students sued on constitutional and statutory grounds. In this case, students had taken and satisfactorily passed required work for graduation, but did not pass the TAAS (Valencia & Villareal, 2003). Additionally, Valencia & Villareal describe states in Louisiana which indicate that 2000-2001 retention data for grade four in Louisiana reveals a 27.4% retention rate of black students as compared to only 7.6% white students (Valencia & Villareal, 2003). In both instances, Valencia & Villareal suggest that minority students are not benefiting from the instruction of standards (2003).

In another study of the "unintended consequences of standards-based reform" by Ogawa et al. (2004), they describe test scores in a "standards-based" district as falling below state standards (p. 1177). The purpose of the study was to answer the research questions: "In what ways are the district's standards differentiated by academic ability? And, to what extent and in what ways are standards gaps reflected in key educational domains including assessment, curriculum, and instruction?" (Ogawa, et al., 2004). The

research was conducted in a medium-sized district east of Los Angeles, California. It included 22 schools with an approximate enrollment of 19,000. More specifically, 52% qualified for free/reduced lunch, and 24% were labeled limited English proficient. Fifty-seven percent of the students were identified as Hispanic, 35% were white, 5% were African-American, and 3% were other (Ogawa, et al., 2004).

In this district, they expected to see positive correlations between local assessments and state assessments. They discovered that on the district test, elementary students scores were in the 50-60% range; whereas, on the state test average scores were 30-40%. The same type of analysis and results were demonstrated for secondary students (Ogawa, et al., 2004). The authors conclude that the emphasis on standards had little effect on student performance on state tests and the district rankings remained predominantly below the 50% percentile (Ogawa, et al., 2004).

Summary

Regardless of the controversy surrounding standards-based education, it has captured educators' attention. With the mandates and implementation of No Child Left Behind, standards have offered educators opportunities to review and create connections between curriculum and assessments. The NCLB accountability requirements are having a profound effect on districts nationwide. Whether or not standards-based education is the answer to achieving these mandates still remains to be seen.

Research has described both definite advantages and disadvantages to standards-based instruction. Districts and individual schools will need to assess their own needs to determine if the reform effort is needed to improve student achievement in their setting. The issue of standards and accountability can be separated from teaching, assessment,

and professional development practices currently implemented in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Across the nation, improvement of student achievement is evident, and the implementation of standards-based instruction is one possible method of making gains in overall student academic progress. Reeves (2000) states that

“although standards alone are clearly an insufficient instrument for the improvement of student achievement, the essence of standards- the clear articulation of what students should be able to know and be able to do- forms the basis for essential transformations necessary for school success” (p.5).

Schools must overcome the challenge of meeting the requirements set forth in NCLB, and standards-based instruction is a catalyst to making this happen. Some suggestions by Reeves (2000) and Darling-Hammond (2004) capture possible strategies that could help steer positive change. They are as follows:

- Use standards and authentic assessments of student achievement as indicators of progress for improved teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2004).
- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers that build their understanding and capacity to teach in ways that are aligned with current standards (Darling-Hammond, 2004).
- Encourage the design of classroom structures that promote intensive, positive teacher-student relationship (Darling-Hammond, 2004).
- Create strategies for school accountability that examine and create support for positive school change (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

- Create instructional strategies that require student thinking, reasoning, and communication proficiency (Reeves, 2000).
- Change from guesswork surrounding letter grades to use of comprehensive diagnostic assessments (Reeves, 2000).
- Transition curriculum from coverage of every standard to the use of meaningful “power standards” (Reeves, 2000).

Debate and controversy surround the implementation of standards-based instruction. It is clear, however, that there can be no debate over the need for improved student performance. The question remains what methods will be used to make these necessary gains.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

With the passage of the 2001 NCLB, schools and districts are faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of high stakes testing and federal education requirements. As a result, teachers are expected to alter instructional methods to include the implementation and assessment of standards. The research studies and related literature have suggested that there are both advantages and disadvantages of standards-based instruction (SBI). At the same time, there is literature which substantiates that it is ineffective. Since NCLB was enacted in 2001, there has been an increase in the implementation of standards. There are still very few qualitative studies which have documented the impact of the standards movement. According to Shank (2002), the goals of qualitative research should be to gain “insight, enlightenment, and illumination” (p.11). This case study provided specific insight into the teaching styles, instructional techniques and level of implementation of SBI of four classroom teachers in an elementary school and how their perceptions relate to the reading achievement of the students in their classrooms. The principle researcher attempted to answer the following research question: what do teachers do in the classroom when using standards-based instruction?

Study Design

This study explored the teaching styles and instructional practices of four elementary teachers in one elementary school in St. Louis County. It was a qualitative case study for several reasons. First, it described in fine detail the teaching methods developed and used to implement standards-based instruction in four separate

classrooms. While the sample size was small, the overall description of the participants and their instructional practices was very explicit.

Second, the individual experiences of the teachers were described and analyzed based on individual interviews with those teachers. While the reading performance and academic progress of their students provided information regarding the possible effectiveness of SBI, these measures alone could not adequately describe the actions, thoughts, and knowledge base of these four teachers. A much more detailed picture of a teacher charged with SBI implementation was created when capturing the participants' personal feelings, attitude, and perception of standards-based instruction.

Third, the study utilized archival data from one school year which included lesson plans and walk-through feedback. Finally, the participants also completed surveys from the *Center for Performance Assessment*. These self-rated surveys were used to assess teacher understanding and self-perception of their personal implementation of SBI. The success or failure of SBI could not be adequately described on a line or bar graph. Rather, exploration and rich description of the actions and thought processes of teachers of SBI provided detailed information regarding the unique characteristics of standards-based instruction.

Demographics of School

The focus of this study was situated in one elementary school in St. Louis County, Missouri because of the following factors: continuous/consistent teaching staff at this school, teacher preparation and implementation of SBI, availability of Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) scores, and the convenience for the researcher. Additionally, this school has been open since the 2004 school year, and since this time,

teachers have received extensive training and professional development in the area of standards-based instruction. The school based walk-through feedback and teacher evaluations on state expectations and state standards.

The four teachers who participated in the study have been in the school since it opened in 2004. This was a clear advantage due to the fact that the teachers were familiar with and have implemented standards-based instruction during each of these school years. Turnover would lead to reliability issues regarding the standards-based implementation. All teachers have received numerous and similar hours of professional development and training in the area of standards-based instruction.

The racial composition of the student population in the participating school is predominantly 99% African-American and 1% other. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch was approximately 64%. The total school enrollment averaged 650 students in grades K-6. Class sizes in these grade levels averaged 22 students during this school year. Similar to the school racial composition, three of the four participating teachers, were African-American.

Participation

Participants in this study were four elementary classroom teachers: two second grade teachers and two first grade teachers. At each grade level, there was a combination of teachers who were considered proficient/exemplary teachers of standards-based instruction and progressing/proficient teachers. Teachers considered proficient/exemplary have a high level of use of standards-based instruction in the classroom and can clearly articulate these standards. Teachers considered progressing/proficient are still mastering the concept of standards-based instruction and

demonstrate a lower level of implementation. These teachers taught the respective grades during the 2006-2007 school year.

Instrumentation

A teacher interview was conducted to help develop a “portrait” of the teacher and her instructional practices and philosophy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This interview consisted of open ended questions to allow the participant the opportunity to be thorough and specific in describing teaching styles and standards-based instruction. Additional information utilized included classroom observation data, walk through feedback, and lesson plans.

To determine self-reported teacher proficiency and level of implementation of standards-based instruction, a survey from the **Center for Performance Assessment** was used with permission from Dr. Doug Reeves, author of the checklist. For purposes of the study, the teachers completed the survey and ranked themselves in each of the areas as exemplary, proficient, or progressing.

The survey assesses teachers in 13 key areas:

- Standards are highly visible and expressed in language that students understand.
- “Exemplary” student work is displayed throughout the classroom.
- Students can spontaneously explain what “proficient” work means for each assignment.
- For every assignment, project, or test, the teacher publishes in advance the explicit expectations for “proficient” work.
- Student evaluation is always done according to the standards and scoring guide criteria and never done based on a “curve.”

- The teacher can explain to any parent or other stakeholder the specific expectations of students for the year.
- The teacher has the flexibility to vary the length and quantity of curriculum content on a day-to-day basis in order to ensure that students receive more time on the most critical subjects.
- Commonly used standards, such as those for written expression, are reinforced in every subject area.
- The teacher has created at least one standards-based performance assessment in the past month.
- The teacher exchanges student work with a colleague for review and evaluation.
- The teacher provides feedback to students and parents about the quality of student work compared to the standards.
- The teacher helps to build a community consensus in the classroom and with other stakeholders.
- The teacher uses a variety of assessment techniques, including extended written responses (Reeves, 2004).

Secondary data collected involved student reading achievement scores. Student reading achievement was determined by scores achieved on the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) during grades one, two, and three. Scores from DRA administered at the beginning of school year were used to establish a baseline against which end of the year scores were compared. This test was administered to first, second, and third grade students by the classroom teachers and reading specialists as a part of the school-wide information gathering. These assessments were conducted during one-on-one reading

conferences as children read specially selected assessment texts. Levels of difficulty were indicated on a scale from A (Level 1) through Level 44 with the following grade indicators:

- Level 1: Kindergarten
- Level 16: First Grade
- Level 28: Second Grade
- Level 38: Third Grade

Student reading levels were classified as below basic, approaching, meeting, or exceeding readers based on their score in relation to their grade level placement. The information from the DRA was used as an instructional tool when planning for individual readers. Classroom teachers administered the DRA and have been trained to administer, score, and use the data as an instructional tool. DRA does not assess reading standards. It is an assessment used to determine student instructional reading levels, but it was the only test available to provide specific information regarding student reading. For the purposes of this study, the DRA was considered contextual data. The data were simply used to further describe student outcomes as they relate to standards-based instruction. No direct claims were made regarding standards-based instruction and DRA scores.

Data Collection

After the four teachers gave their informed consent to participate in the study, data collection began. The following archival data were collected: sample lesson plans from the teachers involved, teacher evaluations conducted by the administration, walk-through feedback, and student DRA scores. Teacher evaluations were eliminated as an artifact because one of the four teachers was a tenured teacher and no formal evaluation was

conducted during this school year for this teacher. The rest of the information was summarized to create a full portrait of the teacher and specific instructional strategies implemented in the classroom. It was also used as a comparison between what appeared to be teacher knowledge base and comfort level of standards (through the interview) and what was actually displayed in lesson plans and walk through documentation.

The four teachers individually completed a self-rated survey. This checklist is taken from the work of Reeves (2004) and is titled, *Classroom Checklist for Standards Implementation* (Reeves, 2004). This survey consisted of a scoring guide, which ranked teacher performance/level of implementation based on the three levels of descriptors: exemplary, proficient, and progressing.

Each teacher was then interviewed individually. The interview questions were open-ended with the purpose of engaging the teachers in dialogue regarding standards-based instruction. The questions were based on the work of Reeves and derived from information on the *Classroom Checklist* (2004). Throughout the interview, teachers used data points to reflect on their instructional practices, including student DRA scores and observations, and reflected on their instructional practices.

Student reading achievement data from the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) were used to describe student reading achievement and growth during the 2006-2007 school year. Pre and post data that was part of the standards instructional data collection were used to measure growth in each classroom participating to determine if these data correlated to the teachers' self perceptions of implementation of standards-based instruction.

Data Analysis

The role of the researcher in this case study was one of participant observer. The researcher is the principal and direct supervisor of the elementary school teachers who participated in the study. Additionally, the researcher summarized the findings of the archival information collected. According to Tellis (1997), there must be an analytical strategy that will lead to conclusions. He proposed, through the work of Yin, two strategies for the use of analysis in a qualitative case study. One method is to rely on “theoretical propositions” of the study and then to analyze the evidence in relation to the propositions. The other strategy is to develop a case description which would be the framework for the organization of the case study (Tellis, 1997).

For this proposal, the researcher triangulated the teachers’ perceptions with the archival data collected and made connections between three major data sources. These areas included lesson plans, walk-through data, and the responses to the interview questions. Audio taping of the teacher interview was conducted, and content-specific coding was used to identify the issues more clearly at this stage. Through this process, the interview answers were analyzed according to the initial categories. For the purposes of this study, the answers were coded based on their relationship to the following categories: knowledge of standards-based instruction, types of standards-based instructional strategies, and the amount of time spent on standards-based instruction. Other issues emerged through the data analysis process and were captured with additional coding.

The analysis of the information reflected the researcher’s intent to answer the research question about what teachers do in the classroom when using standards-based

instruction. Additionally, through the analysis, the researcher created a portrait of the teacher's perceptions and practices regarding standards-based instruction.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in a qualitative case study is usually referred to as "trustworthiness." Shank (2002) states that matters of trustworthiness can be successful in some settings and not so successful in other settings. He states that qualitative research observers need to be explicit regarding their findings and it is imperative that the researcher is honest about his/her perspectives (Shank, 2002). The researcher's role in this school is that of supervisor and principal of the elementary school faculty included in the study. Additionally, qualitative research, specifically case studies, lends itself to criticism. According to Berg (2004), external criticism is primarily concerned with "the question of veracity or genuineness of the source material" (p.240). Validity and reliability issues in this study included several issues. First, the researcher conducted the interviews and the coding process, and transcribed the interviews.

Therefore, the researcher also had a neutral party transcribe the interview answers to see if there are similarities in the findings. Moreover, the teachers were given a copy of the researcher's interpretation of interview answers to see if the results represent what they intended to say. This "member check" will provide additional evidence of agreement on the accuracy of the portrait of teachers using SBI in the classroom (Schwandt, 2001).

Chapter 4

Research Results

Introduction

The current study was designed to analyze teacher behavior and classroom instruction in relation to standards-based instruction. Federal legislation (NCLB) and the emphasis of standards and student achievement towards those standards have created a new accountability system on the part of school districts nation-wide. As a result, teachers' roles and actions towards have changed dramatically. This study attempted to answer the specific research question: What do teachers do in the classroom when using standards-based instruction? This research placed those classroom practices in context as the differing instructional strategies of four teachers were analyzed and explained through a descriptive case study approach. The analysis was conducted through the use of archival documentation (walk through data/observations and teacher lesson plans), teacher interviews, self-rated surveys, and student reading scores.

This chapter is divided into several sections in order to thoroughly describe the findings of this research study. Section 1 is a school profile, which specifically describes the elementary school involved in the study. Embedded in this section is a brief history of the professional development opportunities provided through the school and a discussion regarding walk throughs. Section 2 gives a brief background description of each of the participants. Section 3 will provide a description of the coding and data analysis process used by the principal investigator. Section 4, 5, 6, and 7 provide a profile of each teacher involved in the study and specifically describes the findings as

they relate to each teacher individually. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

School Profile

The study was situated in one elementary school in St. Louis County, Missouri. This school has only been in existence since the Fall of 2004, and it opened as the 20th elementary school in the second largest school district in St. Louis County. For purposes of this study, archival documents and data were based on information from the 2006-2007 school year. During this year, the school enrollment averaged 650 students in grades kindergarten through sixth grades and class sizes averaged 22 students per room. The racial composition of the student population in the participating school was predominantly 99% African-American and 1% other. At the same time, the racial composition of homeroom teachers (kindergarten through sixth grades) was 32% African-American. The percentage of students eligible for free, or reduced priced, lunch was approximately 64%. With this free/reduced lunch rate, the school qualified for Title I funding and services, and during the 2006-2007 year the school was classified as a Needs Improvement school under the provisions of NCLB. This classification was based on Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores from the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years.

Since the opening of the school, teachers have received extensive training and professional development in the area of standards-based instruction. Professional development, specific to standards based instruction and instructional strategies associated with SBI, was provided during 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 school years. The professional development varied in topics from balanced literacy, specific

state standards, guided reading, and MAP strategies. Table 1 provides a summary of the professional development activities and how they were conducted at the school. This information is important because it describes the amount of training that the teachers were afforded in regards to standards. This information also only includes the professional development offered by the school and the professional development team of the school. It does not include additional learning opportunities that the teachers may have secured on their own. These opportunities were described in more detail within the teacher profile. Standards-based instruction was the basis of each workshop/in-service. Additionally, some of the activities presented were types of instructional strategies that can be utilized to implement standards within the classroom.

Table 1

Professional Development Description

Title of Professional Development Activity	Year Presented	Presenters	Length of activity	Type of activity
Guided Reading	04-05	Literacy teachers	4 hours during a professional development day	Instructional strategy
Reading assessments	04-05	Literacy teachers	1 hour during a staff meeting	Assessing reading standards
Balanced literacy	04-05	District literacy coordinators	Half day of professional development	Strategy for implementing reading standards
Effective guided reading lessons	04-05	Literacy coaches	Half day of professional development	Strategy for implementing reading standards
Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum	04-05	Center for Performance Assessment	Full day of professional development	Integrating reading and writing standards

Table 1 (continued)

Title of Professional Development Activity	Year Presented	Presenters	Length of activity	Type of activity
Balanced literacy	05-06	Literacy coaches	Half day of professional development	Instructional strategy for standards implementation
Power Standards	05-06	Principal	Half day of professional development	Standards implementation
Standards 1.6, 1.10, and 3.5	05-06	Principal and literacy team	Half day of professional development	Standards implementation
Balanced Literacy	05-06	District Literacy Coaches	Full day of professional development	Instructional strategy for standards
Effective guided reading lessons	05-06	Teacher leaders	1 hour at a staff meeting	Instructional strategy for standards implementation
Power Standards	06-07	Principal	1 hour at a staff meeting	Standards instruction
Backwards Design	06-07	Principal	½ day and full day professional development	Strategy for standards implementation
New reading series	06-07	District literacy coordinator	Full day professional development	Strategy for standards implementation
New reading series	06-07	Literacy coaches	1 hour at a staff meeting	Strategy for standards implementation

There was a total of 44 hours of professional development offered at the elementary school studied. All teachers were expected to participate in professional development activities, workshops, and in-services provided within the school setting. Certified staff members were also afforded the opportunity to attend additional professional development activities on their own.

The school administration based walk through feedback and observations on state grade level expectations and state standards. Based on the work of Downey and a team of professors of educational leadership (2004), walk throughs are “short, focused, yet informal observations” (p.2). Downey states that walk throughs are an opportunity to gather information about instructional teaching practices and teacher decision-making processes. In this particular elementary school, the process involved developing a list of instructional practices that were considered powerful instruction. This list was created with the input and suggestions of the building leadership team (teacher leaders, parents, and administrative team members). Each week, the building principal published, in weekly announcements, the instructional strategies which would be specifically looked for during the walk throughs. These were considered look-fors. They typically remained the same for several weeks in a row. Walk throughs were conducted in a variety of formats. Daily walk throughs were implemented by administrators individually (building principal, assistant principal, and instructional specialist). On a weekly basis, the administrators conducted walk throughs as a team. Beginning in January of 2007, administrators from the district office also conducted walk throughs at least once a month with the building principal. Each visit lasted 5-7 minutes, and each classroom teacher was visited at least twice each month formally. Two different formats were utilized for giving teachers feedback on what was observed. One tool was called “two stars and a wish” in which the teacher received feedback on two positive things observed during the walk through and on one item that the observer would like to see improved. In October of 2006, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) published its required Missouri School Improvement Process (MSIP) walk through form.

A copy of this form is included in the appendix. This form was also used to provide specific feedback to teachers.

Participants' Profiles

Four teachers from one elementary school agreed to participate in the study. Two of the teachers were first grade teachers and two were second grade teachers. All four teachers had been teaching at the elementary school since it opened in the Fall of 2004. Additionally, all four teachers had the opportunity to participate in all professional development opportunities offered at the elementary school. Of the four teachers, three were African-American and one was white.

One of the first grade teachers had been in education 37 years. During this tenure, she had served as a Title I reading teacher and an assistant principal in another state. After retiring and moving to the St. Louis area, she assumed the role of a classroom teacher and had been teaching at this elementary school since 2004. The other first grade teacher had been teaching for nine school years. She taught in one other district for one year in addition to the eight years she had been in the current district. Additionally, she received her master's degree in educational administration and served as the professional development chairperson for this elementary school.

Of the second grade teachers, one teacher had taught for nine years at the time of the study. Her teaching experiences included teaching ninth through twelfth grade English, and teaching first, second, and third grades. She also received a master's degree and certification in educational administration. The other second grade teacher has been in education since the year 2000. She has taught reading and second grade in another metropolitan St. Louis district and has continued her teaching experience in this current

district and school as a second grade teacher. She also holds a master's degree in education.

Coding and Data Analysis

This study explored the teaching styles and instructional practices of four elementary teachers in one elementary school. The purpose was to provide specific insight into the teaching styles, instructional techniques and level of implementation of SBI of these classroom teachers and to explain how their perceptions related to the reading achievement of the students in their classrooms. Additionally, the research study answered the following research question: what do teachers do in the classroom when using standards-based instruction?

In order to provide a detailed profile of each teacher in the study, the data were analyzed using codes and triangulation. Four major data/documents were used to provide the necessary information for each profile. As mentioned previously, archival documentation and data were used from the 2006-2007 school year. The four major sources of data were walkthrough feedback/observation, teacher interview and survey answers, and teacher lesson plans. Twenty lesson plans were selected randomly and nine walk through observation forms were chosen randomly. The researcher had originally intended to use teacher formal observations, but one teacher participating in the study had already achieved tenure and no formal observations were conducted during the 2006-2007 school year. Documentation would have been inconsistent without observations for all teachers involved. The teacher interview and surveys were conducted during September 2007. Connections were made between each of the documents in order to

create a profile of each of the teachers. Student reading scores from the DRA was used as secondary data to substantiate the theory proposed.

The following codes were used and identified as essential in the data collection. Each of these areas of analysis was considered because of its direct relationship to standards based instruction and/or the fact that it is an instructional strategy used to implement standards (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2

Walk-Through Data Codes

Instructional Activity/Strategy	Code
Cooperative learning	CL
Reading standards	RS
Student Engagement	SE
Learning Centers	LC
Guided Reading	GR
Student Work	SW
Assessment Techniques	AT
Recall Questions	RC
Skill/Concept	SC
Strategic Thinking	ST
Extended Thinking	ET

Table 3.**Lesson Plan Coding**

Instructional Activity/Strategy	Code
Cooperative Learning	CL
Reading standards	RS
Learning Centers	LC
Guided Reading	GR
Assessment Techniques	AT
Recall Questions	RQ
Skill/Concept	SC
Strategic Thinking	ST
Extended Thinking	ET

The following probes were given during the teacher interviews. The purpose of the questions was to gain specific insight into the knowledge and perception of the teachers.

Question 1: Describe your teaching style and the varying instructional strategies that you use in the classroom.

The purpose of this question was to get a better understanding of the teacher's perception of what specific strategies were used to promote standards-based instruction. Additionally, it served as a stem for determining the teacher knowledge base in regards to different instructional strategies implemented for SBI.

Question 2: Give your definition of standards-based instruction.

This particular statement was used to gain a greater insight into the teacher's understanding and perception of standards-based instruction.

Question 3: Describe your method for designing a lesson.

The researcher's purpose for this question was to gain an in depth insight into the teachers' understanding and thought process of developing lessons based on standards and the inclusion of differing instructional strategies related to implementing standards.

Question 4: Describe your method of alignment of instructional planning and delivery and the Missouri Framework of Standards for reading.

The purpose of this statement was for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher's development of lessons and alignment to state reading standards. At the same time, the researcher was trying to gain knowledge regarding the teacher's knowledge of state reading standards.

Question 5: Describe the professional development that you have received in regards to standards-based reading instruction.

The purpose of this statement was to gain specific insight regarding the types of professional development activities that the participants engaged in as well as determine the level of understanding of the actual in-service itself.

Question 6: If I were to take the roof off of your classroom and observe what was happening inside, what would I see?

The purpose of this question was to gain greater understanding of the teacher perspective of what teacher and student behavior in a standards-based classroom looked like and the different types of instructional strategies which occurred the classroom.

Question 7: Describe the strategies that you use to evaluate student growth and modify instruction to ensure continuous student development.

The purpose of this question was to gain insight into the teacher's understanding of assessment and how to use it as an instructional tool.

Question 8: Describe how you work with teammates to ensure the practice of standards-based instruction and assessment in your classroom.

The purpose of this statement was to gain further insight and perception regarding the planning process and how teachers collaborate to develop lessons and establish standards.

Question 9: What role does data play in the implementation of state standards?

The purpose of this question was for the researcher to understand the teacher perception of the state standards and relationship with assessment and accountability. Additionally, it was to gain a better understanding of the use of the DRA and its purpose with lesson development.

Question 10: Give any other information about your teaching techniques that is related to standards-based instruction.

The purpose for this question was to determine if there was any missing information regarding the teacher's perception of standards-based instruction.

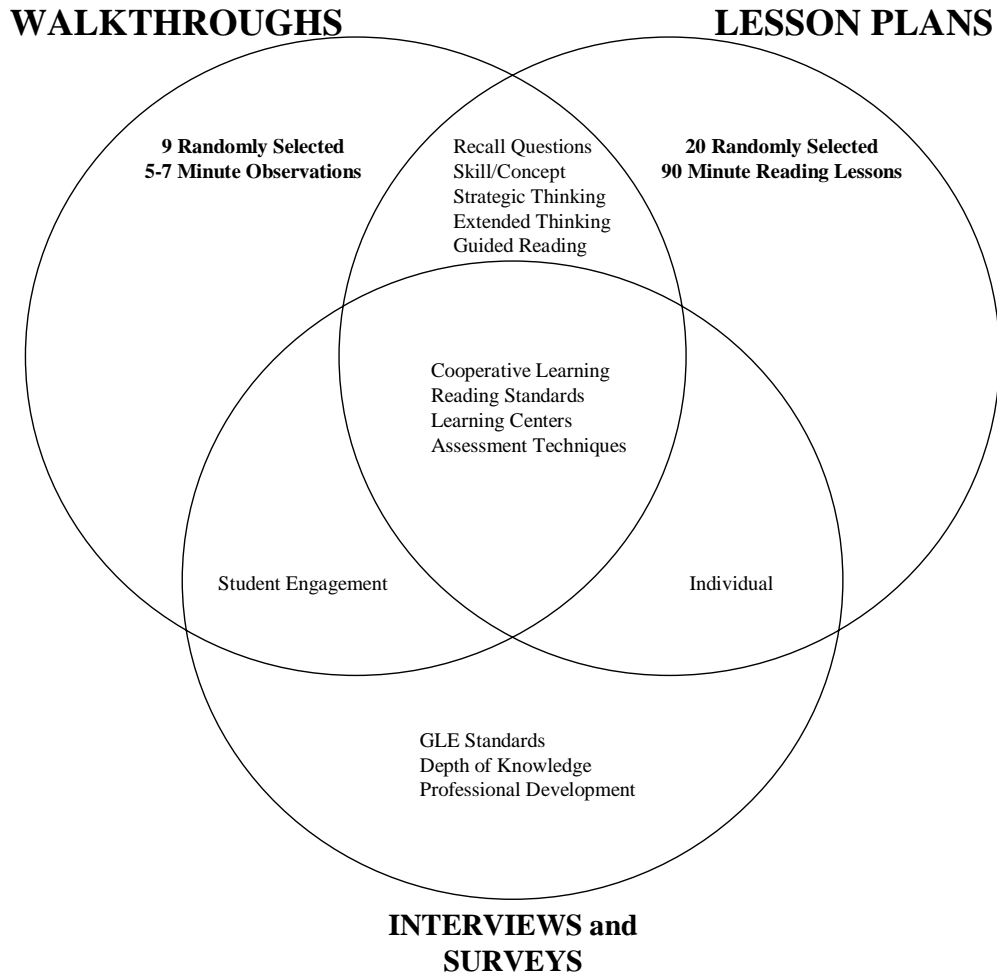
Table 4 describes the important points of the interview questions and the coding accounted for each answer.

Table 4.**Interview coding**

Instructional Activity/Strategy	Code
Cooperative Learning	CL
Balanced Literacy	BL
Student Engagement	SE
Assessment Technique	AT
Standard/Grade Level Expectation	ST/GLE
Depth of Knowledge	DOK
Professional Development	PD
Guided Reading	GR

Using the codes listed above, connections were made between the documents to determine the following: number and variety of instructional strategies used in lesson plans, observed during walk throughs, and discussed during the interview; and, a comparison of what was said in the interviews and what was observed in the walk throughs and lesson plans. The diagram on the next page (Figure 1) depicts the relationship between the four data sources and the information that was capable of being retrieved through each document. While there were four major sources of data, in this diagram, interviews and surveys were combined. These two data sources described teacher perspectives of SBI.

Figure 1



Relationship Between Data Sources

Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) scores were used as a secondary data source. While the DRA does not specifically assess standards, it was the only reading assessment available. The DRA was used because teachers use this information for instructional planning and to establish reading groups in the classroom. The data were further described and explained in the individual teacher profile sections. The scores from the DRA administered at the beginning of the year were used to establish a baseline for comparison and to determine growth based on end of the year scores. No direct

claims were made regarding standards-based instruction and DRA scores. The following chart provides a description of student growth in each classroom as it relates to DRA scores (Table 5).

Table 5.
Diagnostic Reading Assessment Scores

Teacher	Beginning of Year	End of Year
	Meeting or Exceeding	Meeting or Exceeding
	Grade-Level Basis	Grade-Level Basis
A	76.5% (13/17)	52.6% (10/19)
B	60.0% (9/15)	75.0% (15/20)
C	68.4% (13/19)	68.4% (13/19)
D	60.0% (12/20)	66.7% (14/21)

The last piece of data considered was the teacher self-rated survey. With permission, this survey was taken directly from the Center for Performance Assessment. A copy of the checklist is provided in Appendix A. The survey was administered to the teachers individually during the fall of 2007. The teachers were asked to rank themselves as exemplary, proficient, or progressing in each area of standards based instruction. The results of the checklist added to the teacher profile to provide further detail regarding each participant's perception of her level of expertise and understanding of standards-based instruction. Table 6 displays an overall summary of the participants' perceptions of standards-based instruction. The number in each column represents the number of participants who perceive themselves in each area.

Table 6.**Classroom Checklist**

Professional Practice	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing
1. Standards are highly visible in the classroom. The standards are expressed in language that the students understand.	2	2	0
2. Examples of “exemplary” student work are displayed throughout the classroom.	3	0	1*
3. Students can spontaneously explain what “proficient” work means for each assignment.	2	0	2*
4. For every assignment, project, or test, the teacher publishes in advance the explicit expectations for “proficient” work.	2	2	0
5. Student evaluation is always done according to the standards and scoring guide criteria and never done based on a “curve.”	1	2	1**
6. The teacher can explain to any parent or other stakeholder the specific expectations of student for the year.	3	1	0
7. The teacher has the flexibility to vary the length and quantity of curriculum content on a day-to-day basis in order to ensure that students receive more time on the most critical subjects.	1	3	0
8. Commonly used standards, such as those for written expression, are reinforced in every subject area. In other words, “spelling always counts” – even in math, science, music, and every other discipline.	3	1	0

Table 6. (continued)

Professional Practice	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing
9. The teacher has created at least one standards-based performance assessment in the past month.	3	1	0
10. The teacher exchanges student work (accompanied by a scoring guide) with a colleague for review and evaluation at least once every two weeks.	2	2	0
11. The teacher provides feedback to students and parents about the quality of student work compared to the standards – not compared to other students.	3	1	0
12. The teacher helps to build a community consensus in the classroom and with other stakeholders for standards and high expectations of all students.	3	1	0
13. The teacher uses a variety of assessment techniques, including (but not limited to) extended written responses, in all disciplines.	3	1	0

Note: * and ** denotes same teacher

The next four sections of this research project describe the four participants individually and in detail. The purpose of the profile was to answer the original research question: what do teachers do in a standards-based classroom? Using the data and documents previously described, the researcher paints a portrait of each teacher which includes her instructional practices as they related to standards-based instruction and her understanding and perception of standards based instruction. Because the researcher was the building principal, she could also provide personal insight into each teacher professional characteristics and traits. To protect individual identity and anonymity of

each participant, names were not used and teachers were referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and Teacher D with no specific reason for the label. Table 7, on the next page, denotes the number of times each strategy of standards-based instruction was noted in each document analyzed. This information was based on ten interview questions, twenty lesson plans, and nine walkthrough forms.

Table 7.**Data Analysis and Connections**

Teacher	Type of Strategy	Interview	Lesson Plan	Walkthrough
A	Cooperative Learning	2	0	1
	Reading Standards	7	15	7
	Student Engagement	2	n/a	4 high 2 moderate
	Learning Centers	0	20	0
	Guided Reading	1	0	0
	Assessment Techniques	8	1	0
	Recall Questions	0	20	7
	Skill/Concept	0	14	4
	Strategic Thinking	0	4	0
	Extended Thinking	0	0	0
	Depth of Knowledge	2	0	0

Table 7. (continued)

Teacher	Type of Strategy	Interview	Lesson Plan	Walkthrough
B	Cooperative Learning	2	0	5
	Reading Standards	7	20	9
	Student Engagement	2	n/a	9
	Learning Centers	0	20	5
	Guided Reading	0	6	3
	Assessment Techniques	8	0	1
	Recall Questions	0	20	8
	Skill/Concept	0	19	8
	Strategic Thinking	0	15	20
	Extended Thinking	0	0	0
	Depth of Knowledge	2	0	0
C	Cooperative Learning	2	0	0
	Reading Standards	2	12	1
	Student Engagement	0	n/a	4
	Learning Centers	0	0	1
	Guided Reading	1	0	2
	Assessment Techniques	3	1	0
	Recall Questions	0	0	6
	Skill/Concept	0	0	1
	Strategic Thinking	0	0	0
	Extended Thinking	0	0	0
	Depth of Knowledge	0	0	0

Table 7. (continued)

Teacher	Type of Strategy	Interview	Lesson Plan	Walkthrough
D	Cooperative Learning	5	0	2
	Reading Standards	6	20	6
	Student Engagement	3	n/a	4
	Learning Centers	0	20	2
	Guided Reading	0	0	3
	Assessment Techniques	4	0	1
	Recall Questions	0	20	4
	Skill/Concept	0	20	5
	Strategic Thinking	0	12	4
	Extended Thinking	0	0	0
	Depth of Knowledge	2	0	0

Teacher A Profile

During the 2006-2007 school year, Teacher A, or Ms. A, was a first grade teacher and has held this position since the school opened in 2004. Ms. A was often described as a nurturing and caring teacher. Yearly, the administrative staff received requests from parents that their children be placed in Ms. A's class. Her firm yet caring demeanor can be used as an example and model for all teachers. Ms. A was known for building positive relationships with her students and her families. She always had a smile on her face and referred to her students as "friends." Additionally, Teacher A's strong classroom management skills created a learning environment which was conducive for all learners. Ms. A was known for having high expectations and setting clear procedures in an effort to ensure the success of all of her students. Teacher A stated in her interview,

“... my expectations for learning and achievement are very high. My expectations for appropriate conduct are very high.” This was evident through her classes’ hallway behavior. They were always known as the quietest homeroom in the hallways and typically earned awards for their exemplary behavior. An example would include the fact that Ms. A waited in the lunch line with her students until each child got through the serving area. Supervisors were there to monitor the line, but Ms. A felt it was her duty and responsibility to make sure that each child followed the school rules and procedures for hallway behavior. Teacher A was well-respected by colleagues and earned Teacher of the Year for this elementary school. She was a team player and volunteered for school wide and district wide committees. When help was needed, Ms. A was always offering her services and expertise. For example, when there was a minor bus accident, the students had to be removed from the bus and taken back inside the school until another bus arrived. Without hesitation, Ms. A helped supervise the children and monitor the bus lines, even though her duty time was over and she could have gone home for the day. This is an example of her team player attitude. Moreover, she welcomed students from all grade levels into her room and served as a buddy teacher for other classrooms.

Ms. A’s classroom was warm and inviting. It was well organized and conducive to learning. Visual aids were posted throughout the room, but more importantly it was colorful and bright and welcoming. When one entered Ms. A’s room, he/she would always be greeted with a warm smile and a welcome statement from Ms. A and the students. There was always learning taking place. Behavioral disruptions were few, and if any did occur, Ms. A handled them with ease and with little distraction to the learning environment. Routines and procedures were consistently enforced and implemented, and

students were aware of the expectations and learning choices of the class. For example, the simple 1-2-3 routine of lining up ensured a quick, but smooth transition from the tables to the carpet for reading time. Little instructional time was lost during transitions from one activity to another, and students were aware of the procedure.

Students enjoyed being a part of Ms. A's class. They took pride in their behavior and always strived to meet her expectations. From the researcher's perspective, Ms. A's class was orderly and conducive to learning. When asked to take the roof off of her classroom and describe what was happening inside, Ms. A stated the following, "you would see students that are actively engaged. You would see lots of cooperative learning taking place. You would see the overhead being used, manipulatives being used, and you would hear many higher ordered thinking skills in place." While the walk through data only indicated one incident in which cooperative learning activities were used, the researcher was familiar with Ms. A and her teaching style. Cooperative learning and team activities were used on a regular basis. When the students sat in teams, they were all given roles and tasks to complete as a team members. Cooperative learning was an important part of the learning process in her classroom, and students were aware of the expectations and procedures. One member of the team might be in charge of passing out the materials, while another member was responsible for collecting papers and assignments. Each student would know how important his/her role was on the team, and each could specifically tell an outsider of his/her role for the day, or the week. This was evident in the manner in which they carried out their tasks. Other roles included encouraging each other, managing team points, and being a peer helper (for a fellow student who might be struggling with the assignment). Ms. A organized her teams so that

they were eclectic and diverse. There were varying academic levels at each team. This was intentional so that the students with higher academic levels could help the other students.

Ms. A's lesson plans reveal an organized, detailed individual. Each plan was typed, included the learning objectives, and were specific regarding the learning activities which would take place each day of the week. The lessons included the components of balanced literacy: spelling, centers/corners, phonemic awareness, and shared reading. The plans did not include guided reading lessons which were a major component of balanced literacy. When asked in the interview what her method of lesson design was, Ms. A responded, "I design my lesson according to the curriculum to motivate the students. I use my objectives for purpose." Her lesson plans clearly support this practice. Out of the twenty lesson plans analyzed, fifteen included reading standards. The standards documented in the lesson plans included such objectives, or grade level expectations (GLE), as: identify author/illustrator; gather, analyze, and apply information and ideas; draw inferences/conclusions, and many others. It was important to note which GLE's were written into the lesson plans, because this provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the level of instruction intended to occur in the room. Based on the information in the lesson plans, and the types of standards implemented, several levels of depth of knowledge (DOK) were noted. In six of the lessons, recall activities were prevailing and in the other fourteen lesson plans, recall activities were considered highest reached. Skill/concept questioning, or activities, were present in fourteen of the lessons, and three of them were at the highest level. In four

different lessons, strategic thinking activities were noted at a prevailing level, and no lessons revealed extended thinking activities.

In connection with walk through data, all nine included the instruction of reading standards. While the lesson plans indicated that learning centers were planned, walk through data did not indicate that learning centers were used. Of the nine walk throughs, not one noted the use of learning centers by children. Additionally, connections between the lesson plans and walk throughs indicate that recall questioning/activities were present in all nine situations, skill/concept were noted in four of the nine, and there was no evidence of strategic thinking/extended thinking noted in the walk throughs. While lessons were written based on balanced literacy components and activities, there was inconsistency between the manner in which the lessons were written and the manner in which they were observed during walk throughs. It should be noted, however, that walk throughs are only a snap shot of the teacher's instructional day, and because they only last between 5 and 7 minutes, not all learning activities were seen. Additionally, the researcher recognizes that lesson plans were only a guide to what is intended to be taught and that adjustments, based on student need and understanding of the concept, are sometimes made to the actual implementation of a lesson.

While there was some inconsistency between the actual walk through data and lesson plans, the walk through documentation revealed additional information about Ms. A as a teacher. In her interview, when asked to describe her teaching style, she did so in the following manner, "... I like for students to be actively engaged in active learning, problem solving, hands-on, visual, manipulatives." This belief was evident in the walk through data. Ms. A is clearly a teacher who engages her students in the learning

process. Of the nine documented walk throughs, eight incidents were noted of students engaged in the learning process and six of these were noted as high levels of engagement (75%, or higher, of the students).

She was also a learner herself. In her interview, she indicated that she had received professional development in areas such as balanced literacy, reading evaluation, writing techniques, assessments, standards, and backwards lesson design. With this background knowledge, Teacher A was committed to growing and learning as an educator. Walk through documentation and answers to interview questions indicated her desire to include standards and instructional strategies related to standards in her everyday teaching.

A closer look at walk throughs and the interview answers gave description to the variety of instructional strategies implemented in Teacher A's room. While the lesson plans did not indicate it, walk through documentation and answers in the interview described these practices. Ms. A spoke a great deal about student engagement and cooperative learning in the interview. In Ms. A's class, students are expected to be active participants in the learning process. Ms. A stated in the interview, "I believe that all students when given the opportunity are capable of learning at their level of achievement with success." Walk through documentation revealed that student work is almost always posted, either inside or outside of the classroom. Sometimes the work was posted with scoring guides and shows examples of exemplary work, other times it is posted regardless of the quality. Children were recognized for their accomplishments in Ms. A's class.

Teacher A referred a great deal to assessments in her interviews. While there was little evidence of assessments in the walk through feedback, or lesson plans (only DRA

was referred to once), Ms. A had a clear understanding of the role of assessments in regards to instruction, specifically standards-based instruction. When asked to describe the strategies that are used to evaluate student growth and modify instruction to insure continuous student development, Teacher A responded by saying, “I use assessments. Assessments give me a good idea of what I need to work on really hard. Assessments also let me know which students need extra help. Assessments also let me know who is ready to move on and it also helps to organize my groups.” This is exactly how assessments are used in a standards based classroom. Ms. A also referred to the use of assessments when referring to collaboration with team members. She stated the following, “I would plan according to our curriculum. When we do the assessment, we do those based on skills that have been taught.”

Ms. A was a very conscientious teacher. She was well aware of her students’ academic levels and always made the appropriate accommodations to ensure their academic success. As the participant’s direct supervisor and building principal, the researcher was familiar with Ms. A’s knowledge base of student data. Ms. A could articulate which students were struggling academically and could put an academic intervention plan in place to help the child make progress. For example, when one student was below grade level in reading, Ms. A took the initiative to work with the literacy teacher and the parents to create a plan to help the child. Accommodations were put into place, special tutoring was provided, and the parents received extra practice work to complete at home. While the child did not achieve grade level by the end of the year, he did make significant gains. This was because of Ms. A’s extra effort.

The participant completed a self-rated checklist which specifically addressed instructional strategies and practices utilized in a standards classroom. Teacher A marked herself exemplary in all areas of the checklist. The data analysis indicated that there were certainly areas in which Ms. A could be considered exemplary through the evidence provided in the walk through documentation, lesson plans, and interview answers. Specifically, Teacher A used a variety of assessment techniques (question #13). Through her answers during the interview, Ms. A was explicit about how assessment was used in relation to standards. Additionally, the implementation and teaching of standards were demonstrated in the walk throughs, lesson plans, and the interview answers. Also, walk through documentation indicated that student work was almost always posted inside, or outside, of Ms. A's classroom. While the work did not always specify the level of proficiency in relation to a standard (question #2) it did provide students with examples of quality student work.

No major disclaimers were made regarding DRA scores and standards-based instruction, but student progress from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year is important to note. Ms. A began the school year with seventeen students in her class. Of these students, thirteen were considered reading at the beginning first grade level, or proficient readers. Four students were considered reading below grade level (or, at a pre-primer level). At the end of the school year, there were nineteen students. Of the nineteen students, ten were considered meeting/exceeding reading expectations, or considered reading at an end of first grade level. There were three students starting the school year on grade level, but based on end of the year DRA scores, were considered below basic at the end of the school year. While growth was made, the students did not

end the year at a proficient level. Of the eight students scoring below basic at the end of the school year, one had an Individual Education Plan to support his academic programming. Of the four students who originally scored below grade level on beginning of the year tests, one student made nearly nine months growth and was considered approaching end of the first grade reading level.

In summary, Ms. A could be described as a teacher who implements standards-based instruction at an inconsistent level. She was passionate about her job and had high expectations for her students and their learning. She has participated in a variety of professional development activities geared towards standards and standards-based instructional strategies. She had many strengths and experiences as a classroom teacher and used these attributes in her everyday teaching activities. The researcher was able to draw conclusions regarding Teacher A's level of implementation of standards. Through the use of walk through documentation, interview answers, and an analysis of lesson plans, it was evident that Teacher A used a variety of instructional strategies, but they were not consistently viewed throughout each of the documents. Her knowledge base and comfort level with standards instruction was revealed through her confidence and ease in answering the interview questions. The inconsistencies between the walk through documentation and the lesson plans left the researcher with questions about the actual implementation of standards based instructional strategies. Standards were implemented, but the degree and variety to which they are implemented was contradictory.

Teacher B Profile

Teacher B, or Ms. B was a 1st grade teacher during the 2006-2007 school year and was in this position for the two years prior to the study. Ms. B was considered, by district

officials, a model teacher for the balanced literacy program of the district. She had given presentations to the staff, and other teachers have observed her classroom for ideas on how to implement the balanced literacy model. Year after year, because of her positive reputation, parents requested Teacher B as a teacher for their children. Ms. B was known for her nurturing and caring disposition, and at the same time, for her firm and consistent control of student behavior. Rarely did Ms. B write a disciplinary referral, and she was known for building positive relationships with her students and with parents. She could be heard in the hallways asking her children if their behavior is professional, or if they were acting like professionals. Not only was she knowledgeable regarding educational issues and programming, but she could relay this information to parents in a friendly, easy to understand manner. As a member of the first grade team, she was known as a team leader. She organized team meetings and worked with her teammates to ensure the implementation of balanced literacy. She also extended her team player attitude beyond her own grade level. For example, when students needed a place for time out, or cool off, Teacher B was always willing to take these students into her classroom. She provided them with a workspace and offered assistance to help them be successful when they returned to their homeroom. She could be described as having strong relationships with colleagues throughout the building and was well respected by all staff members. As a matter of fact, Ms B was recognized as Teacher of the Year for this elementary school.

From the researcher's perspective, Ms. B's room could be considered a premier learning environment. When visitors came to the building, Ms. B's class was a chosen room for others to see exemplary teaching strategies being implemented. The classroom was warm, inviting, colorful, student friendly, and organized. If students were asked who

their teacher was, they always responded with a big smile and an enthusiastic answer. Guided reading groups were established and implemented based on student reading levels. Learning centers were well organized, implemented, and incorporated differentiated learning activities. Learning corners represented all content areas with the addition of technology and listening centers. Upon entering Ms. B's room during learning centers, one would see students independently and actively engaged in learning activities. While two students were practicing high frequency words in the poetry corner, the words were based on the student's individual needs. At the same time, three other students could be in the reading corner writing answers to reading passages which were on each student's individual reading level.

A review of lesson plans revealed an organized, detailed, and specific classroom for instruction. The lesson plans included components of balanced literacy: phonemic awareness; spelling; centers/corners; shared reading; and, guided reading lessons. The format of the lesson followed the balanced literacy model and was inclusive of all lessons in a Monday thru Friday format with each lesson building upon the other. Of the twenty lessons analyzed, nineteen included reading standards and learning centers. Seven lessons described the use of guided reading lessons. The guided reading lessons were differentiated and written specifically for student strengths, but also geared towards meeting the needs of the students. Specific reading strategies and standards were listed in the guided reading plans. It was evident through Teacher B's answers in the interview, and the design of the lessons, that she used student assessment information to guide instruction. For instance, during the interview, when asked to describe how she worked with teammates to insure the practice of standards-based instruction and assessment in

the classroom, Ms. B answered, “we have the collaborative scoring. And we have the common plan time so we met and went over our assessments and our goals for our students for that month. And then we also have the data driven decision making meetings where we talked about the students’ progress and what goals we need to address and the objectives.”

Ms. B made instructional decisions based on the academic needs of her students. During quarterly individual teacher meetings with the building administrator (principal researcher), Ms. B identified students who she felt she could move to the next reading level with additional instruction and individualized accommodations. Within these plans, Ms. B would create and implement student specific spelling and writing conferences. These conferences with students were based on student specific data in reading and writing. Ms. B used this data to work with students and set goals based to improve student performance. In addition to creating and implementing these plans within the classroom, Ms. B provided data and information to the parents on a weekly basis. The parents of each child in her classroom were informed regarding the academic performance and reading level of his/her child. This level of communication provided detailed information and created an open relationship with parents.

Her lesson plans revealed the intended instruction of the first grade standards, or GLE’s. The following learning objectives were noted: identify character/setting; create a flow chart and sequence; relate text to self; gather, analyze, and apply information and idea; draw inferences/conclusion, and many more. These types of standards can be taught at many levels of DOK. The plans and activities described to implement the objectives indicated that of the twenty lessons, nineteen included learning standards that

were taught at the highest level of recall questioning. Additionally, skill/concept activities and/or questions were noted in nineteen lessons with sixteen of those being at the highest level noted. Strategic thinking questions were noted in sixteen lessons, and they were all at the prevailing level. This type of lesson planning is indicative of a teacher who has high expectations for student learning and challenges their thinking. When compared to lesson plans, walk through data indicated a connection between the types of activities provided to students. Of nine documented walk throughs, recall questioning and skill/concept activities were noted in eight lessons with both highest and prevailing levels being achieved. The walk through data also portrayed a clear picture of the different types of strategies that Teacher B tried to teach her students. Activities and instructional tools such as graphic organizers, note taking, and guided practice were provided. Ms. B summarized her teaching style when she said, "I think that my teaching is eclectic because I try to use a lot of the multiple intelligences and of course cooperative learning to help the children, because all students learn in different ways."

Ms. B's classroom can be described as warm and inviting. Student work was posted throughout the classroom and in the halls. It was displayed for a variety of purposes. Some work had scoring guides and showed examples of exemplary work. Other work samples were non-inclusive of proficiency, but were posted regardless. Students were arranged by teams in her class. They shared supplies and had buddy readers.

Student engagement was a high expectation for Teacher B, and this was evident through the information obtained in the walk through documentation and interview. When asked to give additional information regarding her instructional practices, or about

standards-based instruction, Ms. B, stated, "... let your students know your expectations and then you know where to start and you know how much they know... I just try to be clear and precise and let them know, and I want the students to feel comfortable as they come in. And so I have open communication with the students and their parents." Ms. B sent home weekly homework packets, consistently invited parents to visit the class, and sent weekly progress reports to parents.

Cooperative learning activities promoted a high level of student engagement in Teacher B's class. On five of the nine walk throughs it was noted that some type of cooperative learning strategy was being utilized by students and student engagement was listed as high on at least eight occasions. Ms. B supports this theory in her own words, "... a lot of cooperative learning... they know their objectives and goals for that day... and a lot of teamwork and collaboration." If students were asked what they were learning, they could easily recite the learning objective and share examples of how it was incorporated into their learning activities.

Students thrived in Ms. B's class. A connection between DRA scores, interview answers, lesson plans, and walk through data revealed this. As previously mentioned, Teacher B relied heavily on assessment information to guide instruction in the class. During one of the walk throughs, Ms. B was assessing student reading individually through the use of running records. Running records were used to assess student knowledge of high frequency words and reading fluency. Throughout the interview, Teacher B referred to assessment and data driven decision making. More specifically, assessment techniques were referred to during her answers to eight of the ten questions. When asked to describe strategies that she used to evaluate student growth and modify

instruction promote continuous student development, Ms. B responded in the following manner, “Informal and formal assessment. I’ve used a lot of observation because they were first graders. So, you have to be able to observe them to see if they actually know and if they can use it like in everyday life experiences... I would use the DRA, or even anecdotal notes to make sure that they’re reading appropriately. Assessment, because that’s for everything. Written, orally.”

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. B had fifteen students in her class. Of the fifteen, nine students were considered proficient readers. At the end of the year, Ms. B’s enrollment increased to twenty students. Of the twenty, fifteen were considered meeting, or exceeding, first grade reading levels. This was an increase from 60% to 75% of proficient readers from August to May. Of the six students scoring below basic at the beginning of the year, five were still considered below basic at the end of the year. Two of the students were referred for further evaluation for special education. One of the six students scored in the exceeding grade level range.

On the self-rated checklist, Ms. B marked herself exemplary in eleven of thirteen areas and proficient in the other two areas. She ranked herself proficient in the areas of evaluations which were completed according to standards and scoring guides and in the area of teacher flexibility to vary length and quantity of curriculum implementation. Evidence indicated that there were consistencies between her perception of herself in the classroom and actual practices. Interview answers specifically noted the teacher’s understanding and perception of student evaluation and assessment and the role that it plays in the classroom. The teacher marked herself exemplary in this area. Connections were made with the guided reading lessons (in the lesson plans) and this differentiation.

The lessons were designed based on student reading levels and assessment information. Student work, the visibility of standards in the classroom, and a variety of assessment techniques were all marked as exemplary by the teacher. Walk through data, lesson plans, and interview answers all indicated that these things occurred in the classroom on a consistent basis.

Teacher B's commitment to standards based instruction and instructional strategies was evident through her professional development learning opportunities. When asked to describe the professional development that she has had in regards to standard-based reading instruction, she responded by saying, "we had a lot of professional development at I was also trained in the Arkansas based literacy model... I went to a lot of workshops on reading and instruction and assessment." Additional professional development was noted in the areas of state standards, backwards design, and common assessments. Teacher B also presented mini workshops to other staff members in the area of standards instruction, guided reading, and balanced literacy.

In summary, Ms. B can be described as a teacher who implemented standards-based instruction consistently and at a high level. She was committed to her job and her profession and held high expectations for students and student learning. She participated in a variety of professional development activities related to standards instructional strategies and has also shared her expertise with colleagues through workshops and in-services. Ms. B had many strengths and experiences as a classroom teacher, and she used this acquired knowledge in her everyday teaching activities. The researcher was able to draw conclusions regarding Teacher B's level of implementation of standards. Through the use of walk through documentation, interview answers, and an analysis of lesson

plans, it was evident that Teacher B uses a variety of instructional strategies, and they are consistently viewed in each of the documents. Her knowledge base and comfort level with standards instruction was revealed through her confidence in the interview. Her detailed and specific answers to the questions added insight into her knowledge base and familiarity of SBI. The consistencies among each of the artifacts left the researcher with the assumption that there was a consistent, high level of standards based instruction in Teacher B's classroom.

Teacher C Profile

Teacher C, or Ms. C was a 2nd grade teacher during the 2006-2007 school year. While she had been in the school since it opened in 2004, this was her first and only year teaching 2nd grade at this elementary school. Prior to that, she taught third grade. Ms. C requested a change to second grade so that she could have the experience teaching younger grade levels. Teacher C had strong classroom management and was known for her firm disposition with children. She also had strong relationships with parents. On a daily basis, parents were in her classroom volunteering their time to read with students, copy papers, or just to visit. Ms. C encouraged parent involvement and would even give her personal phone numbers to families so that she could be contacted at any time. Among staff, Teacher C was known for her creative ideas. At the end of the school year, she had a celebration in which students drank from a juice fountain, the classroom was decorated, and parents attended to praise student learning progress. By the administrative staff, Teacher C could be known for her resourcefulness and willingness to learn new strategies for her class. She worked hard during the school year to improve her knowledge and skill level of learning centers and balanced literacy. She was consistently

asking the advice of administration and inviting team leaders into her room to provide feedback regarding her reading instruction.

Ms. C's lesson plans revealed little about her instructional practices. Her lesson plans were organized day by day and subject by subject. At the beginning of the year, her lessons were more organized and specifically stated standards and objectives that would be taught. On the contrary, lessons at the end of the year were vague and gave little information about what was happening instructionally in the classroom. Of the twenty lessons analyzed, there were twelve documented lessons with standards. The lessons did not reveal specific types of instructional strategies, or activities, which would be used. On one occasion, an assessment technique of a quiz was listed for the standard of cause and effect. The following standards were documented in the lesson plans: setting/characters; context clues; main idea; sequencing; summarizing; and, cause and effect. Some lessons were written simply based on the page numbers that the students would read, or complete, for that day. On these occasions, no learning objective, or standard was expressed. This type of lesson was noted four out of the twenty lessons. When asked to describe her method of lesson design, Teacher C stated the following, "first assessing to see what the children are interested in, making sure that I'm following the curriculum, making sure that the state standards are covered." While her lesson plans did not reveal the use of a variety of instructional strategies to implement standards, there was evidence, in her interview answers, of her knowledge base regarding different techniques. For instance, in response to the question about describing her teaching style and the varying instructional strategies used in the classroom, Teacher C stated, "I like to

use a lot of hands-on, a lot of cooperative learning, a lot of experiments and different items of that nature with manipulatives.”

Ms. C’s class was organized into teams. Tables were utilized to create a team atmosphere. Students worked together to complete assignments and classroom supplies (i.e. crayons, pencils, and scissors) were shared among team members. While students were arranged by teams, few cooperative learning components were implemented. Instruction was primarily provided in a whole group format, but students could work together to help each other on the assignments. Learning objectives were posted on the board each day, and students could recite what the learning expectations were. The assignments did relate to the objective posted, but they were primarily work sheets. The worksheets did not promote higher order thinking or differentiation of instruction.

Comparisons and connections were made between the walk through data, the lesson plans, and the interview answers. DOK in the lesson plans revealed that most questioning and activity could be considered at the recall level. Of the twenty lessons, fourteen were considered lessons at the recall level and twelve of these were prevailing. Five lessons were at a prevailing skill/concept level. Consistencies between lesson plans and walk through data were noted in this area. Of the nine walk throughs, six were considered recall questioning and one was considered skill/concept. It was difficult to determine the level of DOK in the lesson plans because of the lack of information provided in the plans. Additionally, Teacher C did not mention or refer to critical thinking, or DOK during the interview.

During the interview, Ms. C did refer to assessment and the use of balanced literacy. When asked to describe strategies that would be used to evaluate student growth

and to modify instruction, Teacher C said the following, “I would say pre- and post-test to make sure that they are on task.” The use of pre and post tests is important in the implementation of standards and balanced literacy. The assessment information helps the teacher create their guided reading groups. Ms. C clearly stated that she had professional development in the area of guided reading instruction and balanced literacy. She specifically stated that the role of data was “to drive instruction” and said that when using standards-based instruction “you would basically utilize information from a variety of sources in order to find out what the status of the students is.” While she was familiar with the concept of data driven decision making, there was minimal evidence of this in the classroom. For instance, students were given the same packet of reading sheets regardless of their reading level. Specifically, these packets were on the level of five students, but were below the level of some and above the level others.

The documents did reveal that Ms. C had some level and understanding of standards-based instruction. In the walk throughs, it was noted that learning centers had occurred at an extensive level (one notation) and that guided reading groups were being utilized (two notations). Teacher C referred to cooperative learning, balanced literacy, experiments, and hands-on activities as her teaching style and practices. While these practices were not necessarily observed in walk throughs, or lesson plan analysis, Ms. C did demonstrate an understanding of what they are. Additionally, walk through data indicated that student work was almost always posted. The work was non-inclusive of a purpose, but examples of student efforts were in the classroom. Ms. C rated herself on the checklist anywhere from exemplary in some areas to progressing in others. This self-rating portrayed some inconsistencies between the documents analyzed and the teacher

perception of implementation. One such example would be the teacher self-rating of exemplary in regard to exemplary student work displayed, but walk through data indicated that there was no real purpose for the student work. In the area of assessment techniques, the teacher rated herself as proficient, but there was little, if any evidence of this in the other documents.

In summary, Teacher C had a knowledge base and understanding of standards-based instruction. This was evident through her answers in the interview, the professional development activities in which she participated, and in some of the information documented in walk throughs. There was a great deal of inconsistency, however, between the documents and evidence of standards. While standards were noted in the lesson plans, they were observed minimally in walk throughs. At the beginning of the school, thirteen of the nineteen students in Ms. C's class were considered proficient readers. At the end of the school year, this number remained the same. The same students scoring below grade level at the beginning of the year were the same students scoring below basic at the end of year. Steady growth occurred throughout the year among each of the students. In some cases, from assessment to assessment, students remained the same in their reading levels (i.e. one student stayed at the same level from 2nd quarter to 4th quarter). Based on information obtained through the documents, the researcher can assume that there was an inconsistent level of implementation of standards in Teacher C's classroom.

Teacher D Profile

During the 2006-2007 school year, Teacher D, or Ms. D, was a second grade teacher and had held the position since the school opened in 2004. Ms. D was known to

be nurturing, caring, and firm. Her positive disposition and warm smile were contagious and added to her strong, positive relationships with students. Teacher D's strong classroom management skills created a learning environment which was organized and conducive to the success of all learners. She can be described as having high expectations and setting clear procedures in an effort to help all of students make progress. Examples of her classroom management included the use of the flip card system and think it through sheets. Students knew the expectations in the class: be safe, respectful, cooperative, responsible, and peaceful. If they made different behavior choices, they were expected to flip a card. The first card was a warning; the second card was to complete a think it through sheet; on the third card, students received a parent phone call home; the fourth card resulted in a time out; and the fifth card could have been an office referral, or detention. Think it through sheets were integral in helping students reflect on their behavior and develop a plan for changing it so that they could make better choices. Through all of this, Ms. D also sent home positive notes for students who did not flip a card. Additionally, special plans were in place for students who needed extra intervention.

In the interview, when asked to describe her teaching style and the varying instructional strategies, Teacher D stated the following, "I use a teaching style that incorporates as many intelligences as possible. And I allow the students plenty of time to discuss and think, pair, share and use cooperative learning and hands-on activities so that they get the most out of learning." This was evident through the physical arrangement of the class. Students were arranged and sat in teams and she taught and expected

collaboration and cooperation among the groups. Students could earn team points for working together, collaborating, and cooperating with each other.

Ms. D's class was considered a family. Students felt a sense of belonging and enjoyed learning in her class. Each day began with morning meetings where students discussed issues that needed to be resolved and also praised each other for successes. Teacher D used strategies such as class council and encouraging words to create the family atmosphere in her room. During class council students discussed class goals and created plans for earning their goals. Additionally, students could be heard using their positive (encouraging) words to help each other, praise others for positive behavior, and encourage classmates to do the right thing. They were arranged in teams at their tables and Ms. D thoughtfully created the groups. Students helped each other with assignments, and team talk was implemented at a high level. Specifically, Ms. D assigned peer helpers to students who struggling academically. These helpers work with their assigned peers to help complete assignments, practice basic skills, and encourage strong effort. She relied a great deal on partner work and peer helpers. This was conveyed when she said, "when they're partner reading, they're actively engaged, they're all engaged in reading. Because one person's reading, the other person's following along. If that person gets stuck, they're helping them sound out the word. They're not just giving them the words, they're helping them with the words." Discussions were thought provoking and challenged student thinking. Each student was afforded the opportunity to participate, and Ms. D encouraged a voice from everyone by calling on students randomly.

She organized second grade team meetings, worked with the discipline team to get meeting notes and other correspondence to all members, and was always offering

assistance wherever needed. This team player attitude was evident through her participation on the school-wide disciplinary leadership team and through her efforts in curriculum and assessment writing. She was always available and willing to help wherever needed, noticed when there was a problem, and jumped in to help without even being asked. A perfect example would be when extra supervision was needed in the hallway, Teacher D was one of the first on the scene to assist when it wasn't her day, or area, for morning supervision. She has high expectations for student learning and behavior. Her students were considered well-behaved models for other students in areas such as the cafeteria and hall ways. They were always earning awards for their positive behavior and for earning high scores on the computerized test in the school.

A review of lesson plans revealed organization, detail, and specificity. Teacher D implemented the new reading series through a balanced literacy approach. Her lesson plans were organized based on the pacing calendar, weekly activities, and daily activities presented in the new reading series. They were well organized and clearly stated the learning objective (standard) to be taught as well as the strategy which would be utilized to reinforce that concept. The lesson plans included the following balanced literacy components: phonemic awareness, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension. There was no reference made to the guided reading portion of balanced literacy, but assessment techniques and questions were clearly stated in each of the lessons. Of the twenty lessons analyzed, all of them referenced to the instruction of standards and learning centers. Types of standards mentioned included the following: character and setting; summarizing; main idea and details; make and confirm predictions; compare/contrast; problem/solution, and many more. It was evident through Teacher D's lesson plans and

answers in the interview that she was familiar with standards and the implementation methods. For instance, in the interview, when asked her method of alignment of instructional planning and delivery to the Missouri reading standards, she responded in the following manner, “the planning is pretty convenient. It’s already in our reading book, our reading instruction manual. And so if I’m using the manual the way I’m supposed to, then I know that I’m using the standards and the GLE’s.”

The connection between the lesson plans and the walk through documentation indicated that Teacher D has high expectations for student learning, and she challenges them to stretch their thinking skills. In all of the twenty lessons, questioning and activities were at the recall level with highest prevailing in each of them, except one. Skill/concept questions/activities were also present in each of the lessons with ten of the twenty being at highest reach and the others at a prevailing level. Additionally, in at least twelve lessons strategic thinking activities were present at a prevailing level. When asked to take the roof of her classroom and describe what would be happening inside, Teacher D responded in the following manner, “... there are questions that are in the book and they even say at the bottom of each question will tell what the category is, think and compare, compare and contrast. Define, answer on your own. You have to come up with an explanation or definition based on what you have read. And there’s always a graphic organizer that goes with it.” This is the teacher’s explanation of how she expected students to find the answers on their own and explain their reasoning. Connections with walk through data supported this theory. In at least five of the nine walk throughs, recall questioning, skill/concept, and strategic thinking were present. They were at a combination of prevailing and highest levels reached.

Further analysis of the three documents revealed Teacher D's teaching style and provided more detailed information regarding the types of instructional strategies used in the classroom. While specific strategies such as cooperative learning and guided reading were not observed in the lesson plans, they were repeatedly mentioned in the interview. Additionally, the walk through data supporting the use of these instructional strategies were noted as moderate to extensive in use. In Ms. D's class, cooperative learning strategies were implemented at a high level. Students were assigned specific tasks and responsibilities within their teams. They were aware of their duties and could recite what their role for the day was. They took pride in their jobs. While one student might be in charge of collecting and gathering materials, another child would have been given the task of time keeper, or cheerleader. When asked to take the roof off her classroom and describe what would be happening inside, she stated the following, " you'd see lots of discussions, a lot of problem-solving, a lot of cooperative learning, students reading every single day and almost every aspect of learning. I really enjoy the partner-sharing, especially during read-alouds." The walk through data also portrayed the different types of strategies that Teacher D used with her students to reinforce concepts. Activities and instructional tools such as graphic organizers, non-linguistic representation, guided practice, and question/answer sessions were provided. Through these activities, cooperative learning, and the learning centers, student engagement reached moderate to high levels.

Ms. D's classroom was a true learning environment. It was language rich and student centered. Minimal teacher talk occurred because of the level of student discussion and conversation. Learning objectives were clearly posted in student friendly

terms, and students could recite what it was they were learning for the day. Ms. D focused on the instruction of vocabulary and maintained word walls in an effort to encourage students to use the language during discussions and written assignments. When answering questions (written, or oral), students were expected to use complete sentences and use part of the question in their answer. The learning community in Ms. D's class also involved the support and encouragement of parent participation. Ms. D sent weekly practice packets home and maintained daily communication with parents. She informed the parents of their child's reading level and set goals with input from parents.

Teacher D relied heavily on assessment techniques and used them to guide instruction in her class. This was displayed through the analysis of all documents. On one occasion, assessments were being administered during walk throughs. Running records were being used to determine student reading fluency and number of high frequency words. In each lesson plan, at the end of the week, assessment techniques and questions were noted. All of the assessments were related to standards and benchmarks. Additionally, throughout the interview, Teacher D referred to assessment and how it guides instruction. When asked to describe strategies utilized to evaluate student growth and modify instruction to promote student development, the following answer was given, "I do a lot of informal assessment where it's not necessarily paper and pencil. Especially during partner reading, that's an excellent time to really hear how a student is doing." In regard to weekly assessments, Teacher D explained the following, "I try to find out where the most trouble is. So I take the information from them and I might re-teach the next

week even though that might not be the skill. But I can take a 20 minute mini lesson and re-teach and maybe do a small assessment just to see if they have achieved that goal.”

In regards to assessment and the DRA, at the beginning of the year, Teacher D had 12 of 20 students reading proficiently. At the end of the school year, Ms. D had 14 of 21 students reading proficiently (or, reading at the end of a second grade level). This was a gain of 60% to 66% reading at, or above, grade level from August to May. Of the eight students not reading proficiently at the beginning of the year, one was considered exceeding grade level expectations and one was approaching. Of the six students scoring below basic at the end of the year, two had Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) which addressed their reading concerns.

On the self-rated checklist, Ms. D marked herself from progressing to exemplary. Of the thirteen categories, she marked herself proficient in nine areas, with two other areas progressing and three areas exemplary. The areas of progressing included the use of identifying and posting student work. This was consistent with the walk through data which indicated that on only three of nine situations, student work was posted, but non-inclusive of quality. The areas where Teacher D ranked herself proficient included: standards are visible in the classroom; student evaluation was done according to the standards and never on a bell curve; and, commonly used standards were reinforced in other subject areas. Consistencies exist between the documents to support this perception. Walk throughs, lesson plans, and the interview answers all portray a high level of understanding and implementation of standards and assessment towards these standards. She stated that she received a great deal of professional development in the area of standards-based instruction. These learning opportunities included, “backwards

design to implement lessons so that we come up with scoring guides and assessments and then we work backwards to come up with lesson plans to achieve those goals for the scoring guide and for our assessment.” Teacher D summarized in her own teaching by saying, “I would say I try to follow (standards-based instruction) as closely as possible and I try to keep my objectives posted on the board, mostly for my focus, but also if the kids who can read can look at that and see what we’re doing. But I get the objectives, the standards from my standards-based basal. ... I know what my focus is, and I try to keep to it as much as possible, as much as my students will allow me to.”

In summary, Teacher D can be described as one who implements standards-based instruction consistently. She was committed to her job and held high expectations for student learning. Over the years, she has participated in numerous professional development activities related to standards instruction. Ms. D has had many strengths and experiences as a classroom teacher, and she has used this acquired knowledge in her everyday teaching activities. Through the use of the documentation, the researcher was able to draw conclusions regarding Teacher D’s level of implementation of standards. Through the use of walk through data, interview answers, and an analysis of lesson plans, it was evident that Teacher D used a variety of instructional strategies, and they were consistently viewed in each of the documents. Her knowledge base and comfort level with standards-based instruction was apparent through her confidence and thoroughness in her answers in the interview. Her detailed and specific answers gave additional insight into her use and familiarity of standards based instruction. The consistencies among each of these artifacts left the researcher with the assumption that there was a consistent, high level of standards-based instruction in Teacher D’s classroom.

Summary of Findings

The following section summarizes the findings in regard to the four teachers participating in this study. The purpose of the study was to answer the research question: what do teachers do in a standards-based classroom? Through the use of walk through documentation, lesson plans, interviews and surveys, the researcher made connections and developed profiles of teachers in standards-based classrooms. Instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, guided reading, learning centers, and assessment techniques were specifically noted. Additionally, each data source was analyzed for the level of depth of knowledge questioning and activities. This included the use of recall questions, skill/concept, strategic thinking, and extended thinking. Through the connections of the documents, a profile of each teacher was created and described.

Of the four teachers participating in the study, two could be considered proficient in regards to their level of implementation of standards and instructional strategies related to standards. Teacher B and Teacher D demonstrated a high level of understanding of standards-based instruction and strategies through their answers in the interviews and the consistencies between these answers, the walk through data, and their lesson plans. Teacher A could be described as nearing proficiency in the areas of standards instruction. Her answers in the interview indicated that she had a clear understanding of standards based instruction, but there were inconsistencies among the documentation observed in the lesson plans and the walk throughs. From the researcher's view, Teacher C could be considered a teacher at the progressing level of standards-based instruction. Her interview answers and some of the information in her lesson plans showed evidence of

understanding of the concept. The minimal evidence in the lesson plans and walk throughs indicated a low level of implementation of standards in this teacher's classroom.

All teachers implemented reading standards, but in each situation it was to varying degrees and with varying strategies. No claims were made regarding a correlation between DRA scores and the level of implementation of standards, but attention does need to be given to the progress made in the classrooms with a higher level of standards instruction. In Teacher B's classroom progress was made in reading scores from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The number of students meeting, or exceeding, grade level reading increased by nearly 15 percentage points. Similarly, in Teacher D's classroom, there was a gain of nearly 7% of students meeting, or exceeding, reading expectations. The researcher considers both of these teachers to be proficient standards-based instructors. There was an inconsistent finding with the other two teachers. Teacher C, considered progressing by the researcher, maintained student reading scores. There was no gain, and no decrease, in the number of students scoring on grade level in reading. On the other hand, Teacher A, considered by the researcher as a nearing proficient to proficient standards instructor, had a decrease in the number of students scoring on grade level in reading.

Through this study and analysis, the researcher attempted to paint a portrait of each of the teachers and to describe the activities and behaviors which occur in a standards-based classroom. While the data indicated that the instructional activities were implemented at an inconsistent level among all four teachers, there were commonalities regarding the types of instructional strategies used. In the standards-based classrooms, high levels of student engagement were promoted through the use of cooperative

learning, learning centers, and guided reading. Additionally, in standards-based classrooms, assessment techniques were used and data was used to determine instruction and student levels of need. The teachers knew the instructional level of students, they used this information to create lessons, and they created an environment in which students could be successful at this level. In a standards-based classroom, graphic organizers, guided practice, nonlinguistic representation of concepts, and student note taking were displayed. Student work was posted and demonstrated examples of proficiency.

This study did have limitations and delimitations. While several measures were used to document the extent to which a teacher used standards-based instruction, the process used to describe the different “degrees” of implementation it only described the teaching habits of the teachers. Additionally, it only portrayed teaching styles of four teachers. This is a very small sample size. Because the researcher was the principal of this elementary and the direct supervisor of the participants, bias could have led to some of the conclusions drawn. Data were only collected from school year and from only one elementary school.

Table 8**Profile Summary**

	Self Rating	Researcher Conclusions	Student Gains
A	Exemplary	Nearing proficient to	76.5% proficient to
		proficient	52.6% proficient
B	Exemplary	Proficient to	60% proficient to
		Proficient to Exemplary	75% proficient
C	Exemplary	Nearing proficient	68.4% proficient to
		Nearing proficient	68.4% proficient
D	to proficient	Proficient to Exemplary	60% proficient to
		Proficient to Exemplary	66.7% proficient

In summary, individual portraits of four different elementary teachers were created. Conclusions regarding the level of standards-based implementation were made based on the use of walk through data, lesson plans, and interview answers. While this study made no claims regarding student reading achievement and standards based reading instruction, it did describe what teachers do in a standards-based classroom.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

Standards-based instruction is a reform initiative which can be traced back to the 1980's, but has most recently received fuel because of the passage of NCLB in 2001. The plan called for more detailed state educational plans and initiatives. Each state was required to submit a set of state learning standards for each grade level along with assessments which measured the degree to which students scored in relation to their understanding of these standards. As a result, an increase in accountability for student learning at the school and district levels has occurred. Teachers have been forced to examine their teaching practices and determine if they are related to standards-based instruction.

The literature review described the controversies surrounding standards-based instruction. Advantages and disadvantages to standards-based instruction exist. Due to the nature of assessment and accountability, standards instruction is occurring. In Missouri, students are assessed yearly on state standards, and they receive a score in relation to their success with those standards. Whether or not educators believe in the promise of standards-based instruction, implementation is still necessary. In order for students to be successful on the assessments, they must be exposed to the state curriculum and grade level expectations. Across the nation, student achievement is a topic of debate, scrutiny, and controversy. Standards-based reform may be only one method of making gains in overall student academic progress, but with the current accountability system, it is a necessary one.

Proponents of standards-based instruction would be the first to admit that standards instruction cannot stand alone. The instruction of standards must be implemented through a variety of instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, DOK, learning centers, and guided reading. A variety of assessment techniques and the use of the data to drive instruction are the keys to the implementation of standards. Teachers, students, and parents need to be aware of where students are in relation to standards so that adjustments to teaching can be made to help students make progress towards these goals.

After completing the study, it should be noted that the concerns regarding standards-based instruction do hold some credibility. High stakes testing is related to standards-based instruction. It is not feasible to hold a school, or district, accountable based on the scores on one end of the year test. Progress needs to be noted regarding progress made within a school year, and from year to year. Like any reform movement, or instructional program, unless implemented at high levels, standards-based strategies will be not successful. Teachers need to be given opportunities to familiarize themselves with state standards and with effective instructional strategies for implementing the standards.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching practices of teachers in standards-based classrooms and to specifically answer the research question: what do teachers do in a standards-based classroom? Archival data from the 2006-2007 school year were utilized to obtain a better understanding of teacher behavior and classroom instruction in relation to standard-based instruction. This case study placed those classroom practices in context.

After a careful analysis of archival data and interview information, individual profiles of four elementary school teachers were created. These profiles were used to describe what happens in standards-based classrooms. Instructional strategies, teacher behavior, and teacher perceptions and knowledge of standards-based instruction were specifically described and connections were made with student reading scores. Two teachers were considered to be proficient at implementing standards-based instruction. One was considered moving towards the proficient, with some inconsistencies in the level of implementation and knowledge of SBI. The fourth teacher was considered at a progressing level with very little observable documentation which supported the implementation of standards in the classroom.

Through this study, the researcher found a variety of characteristics and strategies within a standards-based classroom. In a room with a higher level of standards implementation, students were actively engaged in the learning process through the use of higher order questioning and activities, cooperative learning activities, and learning centers. Additionally, it is the role of the building leader to provide the support, guidance, and resources necessary to help teachers master the concept of standards-based instruction. This study described how three of four teachers successfully implemented a standards-based system.

Implications for Practice

NCLB is federal legislation that educators deal with daily. Student achievement continues to be a topic of concern, and educators must face the challenge of meeting the demands of the accountability system currently in place. Standards-based instruction by itself will not fix this problem. A variety of instructional strategies must be utilized to

meet the needs of students. Assessment techniques, questioning at a high level of DOK, and data driven instruction are all critical components of standards based education. Schools and teachers must be willing to analyze data and make instructional decisions based on this information.

The teacher profiles presented in this research study provide a picture of the type of instruction which occurs in a standards-based classroom. While no direct claims were made regarding instructional strategies and student reading achievement, some conclusions could be drawn. In the classrooms considered at a higher level of standards instruction, there was more improvement made in reading instruction. In the other two classrooms, either no gains were made, or there was a loss of proficiency among the students.

Part of the study included a self-rating survey completed by the participants. In two of the four situations, there was conflicting information between what the teachers perceived of themselves in standards-based education and what the researcher concluded about their instructional practices. For instance, Teacher A marked herself exemplary in all areas, but was considered to be nearing proficient by the researcher. While teachers in this elementary building received a great deal of professional development in relation to standards, this area continues to be an area which needs focus and attention. Just as it is expected that instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of students, professional development should be differentiated to meet the needs of teachers. If teachers do not know and understand standards and standards-based instructional strategies, implementation could be weak and at a basic level. Professional development needs to be differentiated to meet the needs of teachers. Those teachers considered proficient, or

exemplary, can be used as examples and models for new and struggling teachers. The administration needs to be actively involved in the coaching and modeling so that students do not continue to fall behind.

Professional development is also important for administrators. It is critical that building leaders understand and know standards-based instructional strategies and techniques. They need to be able to coach and mentor teachers in this area. Additionally, administrators should participate in professional development regarding walk-throughs and how to make the connections between walk-through data and instructional strategies. These data can provide building leaders with the information needed to identify strong teachers and those who may need additional support. Additionally, this information could be used to identify professional development topics and expert teachers who could share ideas and strategies for implementation in the classroom. The data can be a powerful tool to improving instructional practices which are the catalyst for improving student achievement.

It is the role of the building administrators to model and coach teachers through the SBI process. Without courageous conversations and critical feedback, instructional strategies will not improve. Administrators need to be honest with teachers about their work performance and help teachers critically analyze their own performance. Building leaders need to be willing to provide teachers with opportunities to observe colleagues who are considered proficient instructors of standards.

Collaboration, coaching, and professional development are the keys to enhancing the level of understanding and implementation of standards-based instruction and instructional strategies. Schools should consider the use of internal coaching for teachers.

Administrators should provide staff with the support and resources needed to implement standards-based instruction. Teachers should be given ample opportunities to collaborate, plan together, and review and analyze data in relation to standards and student achievement. Administrators need to create a climate and culture in the building which collaboration and professional development are focused on standards and standards-based instructional strategies.

In the elementary school where the study took place, standards-based instruction is an expectation. A range of instructional strategies is implemented throughout the building on a daily basis. Teachers participate in a variety of professional development activities to improve the quality of instruction and to gain better insight into the types of instructional strategies which need to take place to improve overall student achievement. This study showed that when standards and standards-based instructional activities are implemented at higher levels, gains were made in student reading achievement. When implemented at a high level, standards can have a positive impact on student academic progress.

Personal Reflections

Standards-based instruction in conjunction with assessment can be a powerful instructional tool. It provides the teachers, parents, and students with the necessary data and information to differentiate instruction. Additionally, teachers and students know the learning outcome and there are no secrets regarding a child's progress in regard to the standard. Change is difficult in any organization, especially when the accountability portion is high. Educators are challenged with many different reform movements and

initiatives which all claim to improve student performance. Along with this, the day to day challenges of ensuring the success of the whole child are present.

Additional research needs to be conducted in the area of standards-based instruction as it relates to the achievement gaps. Specifically, additional research in the area of achievement gaps between African-American students and white students. Student achievement information continues to indicate that African-American students are not performing at the same level as their white peers. There is a need to continue to explore instructional strategies and the learning patterns of African-American students to help improve student achievement in this area.

Further research also needs to be conducted in the area of professional development opportunities for teachers. Specifically, analyzing the types of professional development and helping teachers make the necessary connections to improve instruction would prove to be effective in improving teacher performance and ultimately student performance. At the same time, it would be beneficial to research the types of professional development for administrators and how the administrators make the connections to improving instruction in their buildings.

As the administrator of an elementary school, it is important for this researcher to continue her own education and increase her personal knowledge base regarding standards. Perhaps the two non-proficient teachers could have made more gains given more appropriate feedback, and individualized or differentiated support from the building leader.

Standards-based instruction should not be viewed as one more initiative, or one more program that educators have to implement. It should be embraced as an

opportunity to help all students achieve academic success. Standards and grade level expectations should be used a tool to gauge instruction and as a method of determining academic progress. Grades describe how a student performed in an overall content area, or unit of study. Standards tell what a student knows and understands. This study described what happens in standards-based classrooms. The implementation of standards-based instruction does work.

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Appendix A

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Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

A case study describing what teachers do in a standards-based classroom

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number _____

Principal Investigator Barbara Zigrang PI's Phone Number 314-953-5301

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Barbara Zigrang/ and Dr. Matthew Davis.

You are invited to participate in a research study which will describe the instructional strategies and techniques teachers use in a standards-based classroom. The case study will provide specific insight into your teaching style, instructional techniques and level of implementation of standards-based instruction and how your perception of standards-based instruction relates to the reading achievement of the students in your classroom. It will attempt to answer the research question: what do teachers do in the classroom when using standards-based instruction? Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher or with your current position at the elementary school or district. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

2. a) Your participation will involve

Each participant will be asked to provide archival documents such as: lesson plans, samples of common assessments, and student reading data. Additionally, each participant will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-taped for accuracy.

You will also be asked to complete a survey. The survey will be administered via paper-pencil and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to give permission for the use of archival data such as walk through feedback forms and teacher evaluation forms.

Participants will be involved in one thirty minute individual interview.

Participants will complete one hand-written survey which take at least 5 minutes.

Approximately four participants may be involved in this research.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be **approximately 45 minutes on one occasion for both the interview and the survey. Additional time may be required for the collection of the archival data: lesson plans, common assessments and student reading data.**

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about **standards-based instruction.**
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. All interview information will be confidential. If the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information to reveal your identity will be included. All data will be kept secure during the research process and all primary-source documents will be destroyed at the completion of the research. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, **Barbara Zigrang at 953-5301 or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Matthew Davis at 516-5953.** You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Standards-Based Instruction

1. Describe your teaching style and the varying instructional strategies that you use in the classroom.
2. Give your definition of standards-based instruction.
3. Describe your method for designing a lesson.
4. Describe your method of alignment of instructional planning and delivery and the Missouri Framework of Standards for reading.
5. Describe the professional development that you have received in regards to standards-based reading instruction.
6. If I were to take the roof off of your classroom and observe what was happening inside, what would I see?
7. Describe the strategies that you use to evaluate student growth and modify instruction to ensure continuous student development.
8. Describe how you work with teammates to ensure the practice of standards-based instruction and assessment in your classroom.
9. What role does data play in the implementation of state standards?
10. Give any other information about your teaching techniques that is related to standards-based instruction.

Appendix C

Classroom Checklist

Making Standards Work

Teacher's Name _____

Person Completing Form _____

Date of Observation _____

Professional Practice	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing	Remarks
1. Standards are highly visible in the classroom. The standards are expressed in language that the students understand.				
2. Examples of "exemplary" student work are displayed throughout the classroom.				
3. Students can spontaneously explain what "proficient" work means for each assignment.				
4. For every assignment, project, or test, the teacher publishes in advance the explicit expectations for "proficient" work.				
5. Student evaluation is always done according to the standards and scoring guide criteria and never done based on a "curve."				
6. The teacher can explain to any parent or other stakeholder the specific expectations of students for the year.				
7. The teacher has the flexibility to vary the length and quantity of curriculum content on a day-to-day basis in order to ensure that students receive more time on the most critical subjects.				
8. Commonly used standards, such as those for written expression, are reinforced in every subject area. In other words, "spelling always counts"—even in math, science, music, and every other discipline.				
9. The teacher has created at least one standards-based performance assessment in the past month.				
10. The teacher exchanges student work (accompanied by a scoring guide) with a colleague for review and evaluation at least once every two weeks.				
11. The teacher provides feedback to students and parents about the quality of student work compared to the standards—not compared to other students.				
12. The teacher helps to build a community consensus in the classroom and with other stakeholders for standards and high expectations of all students.				
13. The teacher uses a variety of assessment techniques, including (but not limited to) extended written responses, in all disciplines.				
14. Other professional practices appropriate for your classroom:				



Notes/Follow-Up Action _____

Appendix D

MSIP 4th Cycle Classroom Observation Form

District _____ Building _____ Room No. _____ Team Member _____

Date _____ Time _____ Beginning Middle End Grade Level _____

Subject/Learning Objective _____

Large group Small group Independent work Co-teaching/Class within a class Special Education self-contained

Instructional Delivery Method Observed (Mark "E" for extensive, "M" for moderate, or "S" for slight)	
Class discussion	
Cooperative learning (specify structure)	
Distance learning	
Group work	
Guided practice	
Hands-on/experiments/laboratory work	
Learning centers	
Lecture	
Peer evaluation	
Question and answer	
Seat work (e.g., worksheets, textbook readings)	
Student presentations	
Other	

Instructional Strategies (Mark "E" for extensive, "M" for moderate, or "S" for slight)	
Advance organizers	
Graphic organizers	
Nonlinguistic representation	
Problem-based/project-based learning	
Research - generating and testing hypotheses	
Similarities and differences	
Summarizing and note taking	
Other	

DOK Level	DOK Description	Prevailing	Highest Reached
Level 1	Recall		
Level 2	Skill/Concept		
Level 3	Strategic Thinking		
Level 4	Extended Thinking		

Technology
Was technology used? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please check the type(s) used and the use level.
Type(s) of Technology In Use <input type="checkbox"/> Student computer <input type="checkbox"/> Digital camera/multimedia <input type="checkbox"/> Graphing calculator <input type="checkbox"/> Handheld computer <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Lab equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Projector <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher workstation <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive whiteboard <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Technology Use Level <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 - Centers on acquiring and practicing technical skills; technology is something to learn. <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 - Automates traditional teacher and student roles; technology is optional. <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 - Expands role and/or products; technology is essential.

No instructional activity observed

Student Engagement Level

- High (Above 90%)
- Moderate (75-89%)
- Low (50-74%)
- Disengaged (Below 50%)

Teacher Engagement

- Yes No

Student Work on Display in Classroom

- Student work is displayed
- Student work is not displayed

Purpose of Displayed Work

- Exemplars' work displayed with scoring guide
- Inclusive display (student work displayed regardless of quality)
- Purpose of display not distinguishable

Classroom Learning Environment

The **physical** climate is:

- Conducive to learning
 - Somewhat conducive to learning
 - Not conducive to learning
- (Check all that apply)
- Classroom design
 - Attractiveness
 - External disruptions
 - Cleanliness
 - Temperature
 - Other: _____

The **instructional** climate is:

- Conducive to learning
 - Somewhat conducive to learning
 - Not conducive to learning
- (Check all that apply)
- Disruptive behavior
 - Off-task behavior
 - Lack of organization
 - Internal disruptions
 - Other: _____

Differentiated instruction observed.

Describe _____

Teacher reinforced effort or provided feedback.

Describe _____

Comments (if necessary): _____