

IT'S ON THE TEST:  
TEACHERS TRANSACTIONS WITH AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE  
OF STANDARDS AND STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT

by

JAMES ERIC HASTY

(Under the Direction of Bob Fecho)

Abstract

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (United States, 1983) the primary national moves in education reform have called for a two-fold approach of developing rigorous standards accompanied by a standards based approach of education (Fuller, 2009; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Ravitch, 1995). This call has resulted in several waves of education reform including the Bush era “No Child Left Behind” and the Obama administrations “Race to the Top” (Fuller 2009) both calling for rigorous standards, standardized assessments, and teacher accountability based on these assessments. While there is a great deal of literature demanding standards and assessment, there is a dearth of research discussing the relationships of assessment and standards as well as the impact these documents have on education. In this paper I use a Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & Rose, 2005) protocol to analyze and compare the curricular and assessment documents of the State of Georgia, and I use transactional analysis (Stewart, 2010, 2011) to understand how these reform movements and the resulting standards and assessments have affected classroom planning and instruction.

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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to Dr. John Glenn Hasty, Jr.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
	LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER		
1	Introduction.....	1
	Story of my Research.....	2
	Theoretical Framework.....	11
	Next Chapters .....	31
	Acronyms Not So Anonymous .....	32
2	Literature Review .....	33
	Pertinent Research Grounded in Bakhtin.....	35
	History of Curriculum Reform in America.....	38
	Standards Based Education.....	47
	Assessment.....	56
	Pertinent Research Grounded in SFL .....	63
	Conclusion .....	67
3	Methodology and Methods .....	69
	Methodology.....	70
	Methods .....	74
	Limitations .....	92
	Conclusion .....	93
4	Document Analysis.....	94



	A Brief History of Georgia Curriculum and Assessment .....	95
	Documents Examined .....	97
	Exploring the Texts .....	98
	Constructing Learning .....	104
	Constructing Students .....	121
	Discussing Teachers .....	133
	Where the Power Lies .....	141
	Conclusion .....	147
5	Interview Analysis .....	149
	Participants Accepting Standards Based Education .....	152
	Participants Resisting Standards Based Education .....	172
	Participants in the Middle .....	184
	Collaboration .....	191
	Conclusion .....	192
6	Implications .....	194
	Review of Study .....	194
	Connecting the Data .....	195
	A Return to Bakhtin .....	196
	Understandings and Implications .....	197
	Common Core, SBE and Authoritative Discourse .....	198
	The Need for Dialogue .....	201
	Construction and Transmission .....	204
	Setting Matters .....	205

Conclusion .....	207
Reflection on Subjectivity .....	209
REFERENCES .....	212

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: Points of view on discourse: .....	24
Figure 1.2: Theoretical Frame .....	29
Figure 1.3: Revised Frame .....	30
Figure 1.4: Common Acronyms .....	32
Figure 3.1: Theoretical Frame .....	70
Figure 3.2: Documents Examined .....	75
Figure 3.3: Ideation types of figures .....	76
Figure 3.4: Reading CCGPS .....	78
Figure 3.5: Reading GPS .....	78
Figure 3.6: Theme/Rheme Breakdown of CCGPS .....	79
Figure 3.7: Theme/Rheme Breakdown of GPS .....	80
Figure 3.9: Experiential Breakdown of CCPGS .....	80
Figure 3.10: Experiential Breakdown of GPS .....	81
Figure 3.11: List of Teachers and Settings .....	89
Figure 4.1: Common Acronyms .....	98
Figure 4.2: Theme/Rheme Breakdown of GPSCRCT7 .....	99
Figure 4.3: Experiential Breakdown of GPSCRCT7: Being .....	100
Figure 4.4: Experiential Breakdown of GPSCRCT7: Doing.....	101
Figure 4.5: Appraisal .....	102
Figure 4.6: Appraisal Breakdown of GPSCRCT7 .....	102

Figure 4.7: Theme/Rheme of CRCT Introduction .....	106
Figure 4.8: GPSCRCT Reading Grade 3 Introduction .....	107
Figure 4.9: CCCRCT Reading Grade 3 Introduction .....	108
Figure 4.10: Appraisal Analysis of CCCRCT Reading Grade 3 .....	108
Figure 4.11: Experiential Comparison of GPSCRCT and CCCRCT .....	111
Figure 4.12: Experiential Analysis of 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading GPS.....	112
Figure 4.13: Experiential Analysis of GPS Reading Standard 1 .....	113
Figure 4.14: Analysis of CCGPS Reading Standard 1 .....	116
Figure 4.15: Experiential Comparison of 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade GPS Reading 1 Sub-standards .....	119
Figure 4.16: GPSCRCT Introduction .....	122
Figure 4.17: GPSCRCT Purpose Statement .....	122
Figure 4.18: CCCRCT Introduction .....	123
Figure 4.19: Students in GPSCRCT and CCCRCT Introduction.....	124
Figure 4.20: Experiential Analysis of GPS Reading Standard 1 .....	127
Figure 4.21: CCGPS Student Discussion .....	128
Figure 4.22: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Student Discussion: Being .....	129
Figure 4.23: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Student Discussion: Doing.....	129
Figure 4.24: CCCRCT Conclusion.....	134
Figure 4.25: CCGPS Introduction .....	136
Figure 4.26: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Introduction: Being .....	137
Figure 4.27: Theme/Rheme Analysis of GPS Introduction.....	142
Figure 4.28: Theme/Rheme Analysis of CCGPS Introduction.....	144

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“We can’t do standards-based lesson plans with these documents! We need the standards, not these things.” The speaker was my former colleague, Margaret,<sup>1</sup> and we were working on creating the curriculum map for Ghost Middle School in University Town. We were provided the state assessment documents, and Margaret was furious that we were not given the state standards. She insisted that it was inappropriate to call what we were doing "standards-based instruction" because we were actually designing our curriculum around the assessment. I did not agree that the standards and the assessments were necessarily different, and we completed the task with the documents provided, much to Margaret’s chagrin.

This experience piqued my interest to the point that I conducted a systematic comparison of the verbs of the standards where I demonstrated that, indeed, the state standards and state assessments generally asked students to demonstrate very different skills. Since that time, the state of Georgia has extended its contract with McGraw-Hill to continue to produce the state assessment through 2014, has abandoned the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) that were in place, and has adopted the Common Core State Standards, which the State Department of Education has integrated as the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Still, I could not help but wonder

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms selected by the participants.

through this experience - does Margaret's conviction that the assessments and the standards are different still ring true?

### **Story of my Research**

This experience illustrates a common issue I have come across as a teacher in Georgia. Throughout my career I have found that I consistently get mixed messages concerning the importance of standards, assessments, and critical thinking. Every administration I have worked for has been tasked with the difficult responsibility of ensuring that teachers meet personal, community, and state educational goals, which are not always the same. I originally felt that some of this was due to a general misalignment of my own educational goals - grounded in a personal idea to promote critical thinking and exploration throughout a school year - with my community's goal of specifically preparing students for college and beyond. As an educational researcher, I arrogantly assumed that the community and I had similar goals, but we grounded them in different vocabularies. However, as my experience grew, and as I worked under administrations with various levels of agreement with my assumptions, I recognized the limitations of my perspective.

### **An Early Experience**

Due to my studies at UGA and my participation in the National Writing Project, I have philosophical issues with the teaching of grammar in isolation (Calkins, 1980; Hillocks, 2006; Hillocks, 1986; Hillocks & Smith, 1991; Krashen, 1993; Weaver, McNalley, & Moerman, 2001). On more than one occasion, I have had a parent question my approach to teaching grammar in the context of student writing. This parent believed that since grammar is tested in isolation, it should be taught as such. I generally respond

by explaining my perspective and professional opinion as well as the wealth of research I have collected in support of my practice.

On one such occasion, my demeanor offended the parent and she reported my unwillingness to teach to her standards to my principal. This was the second principal in as many years who had received this complaint from the same parent. I had assumed my new leader, similar to her predecessor, would trust my professional judgment and leave my teaching decisions up to me. However, once my administrator became aware of the situation, she required me to give my students a daily writing assignment that addressed this parent's concerns. At first, I believed the assignment was counter to my professional beliefs and against the best interests of my students. However, as the year progressed, I learned that the daily assignment allowed for more assessment, and I was better able to gauge whether or not my students were understanding and applying the grammar and writing concepts to my satisfaction. Although I was resistant to this intrusion into my classroom decision-making, it resulted in a positive practice that I have continued to use.

I use this story because it illustrates a time when an administrator was intrusive into my teaching and it served to improve my practice. When I have a curricular disagreement with my school's leadership, I argue my perspective, but when push comes to shove, I generally give in and follow administrative mandates. When my first principal did not challenge my instruction, her trust in my practice served to hurt my students. My practice did not change, and I was not as effective as I could have been. The second principal, who required me to reflect on my practice, helped me grow as a teacher.

However, other leaders have been so obtrusive into my practice that it was counter-productive. Amongst those experiences, I've had one administration mandate so

much grammar instruction that it was detrimental while another administration supported my decision to ignore a county requirement to use a certain textbook. As I reflect on these experiences, I find that my comfort with the administrative demands on me related to our conversations around the curricular decisions. The principal in my first story discussed my practice with me before requiring me to adjust my lessons. The administrator who mandated daily oral language in my classroom did so without discussing my teaching at all. The principal who blindly accepted my grammar practice never discussed it with me, instead he sent me an email informing me of the parent's displeasure with my practice. The principal who allowed me abandon the district textbook discussed this program with me repeatedly and required multiple drafts of a proposal, course outline, and rubrics before approving my curriculum for the year. As I look back, those situations that involved dialogue among the administrators, parents, and me were the most productive when it comes to positively affecting my praxis as a teacher.

Fecho (2011) discussed the creative force inherent in such a dialogue. He is specifically interested in the need for the literacy classroom to foster dialogue, based on his interpretation of Bakhtin (1981). Fecho argued, "dialoguing is a generative act. The intent of dialogue, rather than to destroy, is to create; without creation there can be no dialogue" (p.12). In the examples above, were two examples where dialogue was fostered and two where it was avoided. The principal who demanded I teach a specific unit exactly the way it was published refused to dialogue with me. My voice was ignored. There was also no dialogue when the administrator blindly accepted my practice and allowed me to teach grammar, or not teach grammar, without critically reflecting on my



pedagogy. My voice was overpowering. In both cases, my students were not fairly served.

On the other hand, the other two situations were filled with dialogue. While I was required to change my practice, this change was not done without considering my personal needs and my ideas about grammar instruction. Neither my voice nor my administrator's was the sole voice. I was allowed to shape the paragraph lessons as suited my personality and approach, but I was required to meet certain curricular mandates to suit the demands of the parents involved. Later, when I was allowed to not use the county's adopted textbook, but allowed to create my own reading packet based on fairy tales, that move was grounded in dialogue. The department head, district coordinator, and my teammates were all brought into the conversation, and after a great deal of assurances that the curriculum could and would be covered through the texts I had chosen to center the school year on, I was allowed to do so. In these cases, the dialogue was, as Fecho (2011) expressed, creative and served to promote learning. It is this generative role of dialogue that I am particularly interested in for this dissertation. Specifically, I am interested in how teachers position themselves in schools relative to state standards and mandatory high-stakes testing through dialogue, and the various forces that strive to promote and discourage dialogue.

Throughout my career some administrations have encouraged me to develop my pedagogy in ways that I was very comfortable with. Other administrations have felt my goals were counter to community goals, and they challenged me to change my classroom practices to better suit the community I worked in. In retrospect, I have had administrations that have given me too much freedom as well as principals who have not

allowed me to express my creativity at all. Both of these ends have been counter to the needs of my students. These experiences with various administrative responses to my practice fostered an interest in the transaction of state educational goals, administrative mandates, teacher practice, and student experience.

Based on my interest I decided to conduct a study exploring the various curricular requirements teachers face and how teachers respond to these? state, district, and school curricular mandates. I was primarily interested in how teachers responded to the state standards documents and the ancillary assessment documents, so I decided to ground my study in a document analysis of these documents. I then supplemented my analysis of these documents by interviewing seven teachers or administrators who were subject to the standards outlined.

### **Focus on Standards and Assessment**

My focus on the connection/disconnection among standards, state assessments, and teacher practices began with the story that opens this paper. As I explored the relationships between standards, teachers, and administrations, I went in search of experiences similar to mine: administrations forcing teachers to bow to a test that they disagreed with. I very quickly learned that I could not generalize my experience as I had previously assumed. I met teachers in more draconian schools facing greater controls on their classroom practices, but I also met teachers and administrators who fostered creativity in the classroom, maintaining a focus on the teaching standards while allowing a great deal of leeway as to how those standards were taught and assessed. Obviously, the issues at hand were significantly more complicated than I had assumed.

This transition has opened a unique research opportunity to explore how the state, districts, schools, and teachers adopt the new standards and work with standards and assessments. As I have conducted my research, I have found many different responses to the new standards. A principal in University Town School District, Clinton, looked upon the adoption positively as he says, "I think the CCGPS, and I know you must be excited as a language arts teacher, they just make a lot [sic]. They just make better sense.... I think our standards-based teaching is getting more focused." whereas Tiani, a teacher in New Urban City has responded less optimistically: "I was at a Common Core meeting led by a county personnel last Thursday. We were discussing the pacing for next and, and were told that we would probably change pacing from what the state had to better fit with CRCT testing. The focus seemed to be more on CRCT prep than what the standards said." Clinton was discussing the future promise he saw in the standards. He felt they were an improvement to the prior standards. Tiani generally agreed with Clinton's assessment of the new standards, but was dismayed by how her district was treating the standards. Instead of using the new standards to guide their instruction, Tiani explained that the school district was requiring her to continue her prior practice due to the fact that the major assessment was not expected to change. I find these contrasting experiences interesting and hope to understand what leads teachers who are under the same state curricular mandates to have such different experiences in adoption of the new standards.

### **A Need for Research**

While there is a great deal of scholarship concerning the role of standards and assessment in education (Ainsworth, 2003; Berliner, 2009; Goodman & Hambleton, 2004; Hillocks, 2002; Johnstone, Dickers, & Luedeke, 2009; Kaplan, 2001; Leistyna,

2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Skerrett, 2008; Smagorinsky, 2008; Thompson & Thompson, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), there is a dearth of research that explores the relationship of state standards to state mandated assessments. I conducted a Google Scholar search using various combinations of the terms “alignment”, “assessment”, “relationship”, “state standards”, “state mandated assessments”, and “standards”. I found several documents demonstrating how special education assessments must be aligned to state assessments (Stage & Jacobson, 2001; Wiley & Deno, 2005), and articles correlating teacher produced assessments with state assessments (Shapiro, Keller, Lutz, Santoro & Hintze, 2006), but only one article proposing a method for aligning standards to assessments (Webb, 2007). Webb (2007) provided a citation to another method of curricular alignment, but generally, the research provided does not question the relationship between standards and assessments.

It is important to understand the effect these assessments have on instruction and instructional practices because, while there is a significant interest among researchers, policy makers, and school leadership in assessing student performance, there has been little research conducted that addresses how the mandated assessments affect teachers’ curricula, how the messages teachers receive from these mandated assessments, and how this affects the curriculum. Outside of Hillocks’ (2002) comprehensive review of state writing standards and assessment, there have been no national comparisons of standards and assessments and their potential effect on teaching and learning. The few assessment reviews that do exist are generally focused on alternate assessments for individuals with disabilities (Flowers, Browder, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006; Browder et. al. 2004), and

generally are more concerned with the relationship of an alternate assessment to the core assessment than they are the relationship to standard and assessment.

Standard reform is currently undergoing a significant change in that 45 states and Washington D.C. have elected to participate with the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI, 2013). This initiative has included the input of teachers, teacher organizations, policy makers, content experts, and the general population (CCSSI, 2010). The production of these standards has been fairly transparent and open to public scrutiny.

Test production, on the other hand, is not as transparent (Ravitch, 2010). For example in Georgia, while curriculum guides consistently refer to the production process of the GPS and the CCGPS, there is little discussion of how the CRCT was created or of who created it. While CTB/McGraw-Hill produces, distributes, and scores the CRCT (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2010, para.8), the copyright on all testing materials is held by the Georgia Department of Education. All references to CBT/McGraw-Hill within the Examiner's document are references to test handling and management. In the examiners' handbook, CTB/McGraw-Hill is consistently referred to as the source and destination of the testing documents, but there is no explicit reference to their role as test designers within that document. The fact that CBT/McGraw-Hill produces and scores the test goes largely unstated in state testing documents.

The public nature of the production of standards and the guarded secrecy of the testing industry leads to a disconnect between standards development and test development. Historically, standards are publicly generated by each individual state, and have now been expanded to national standards through a purposely public process with strict rules regarding the participation of teacher organizations, state institutions, private

companies, and other education advocacy groups (CCSSI, 2012). On the other hand, testing development, which is usually outsourced to a testing corporation, is closely guarded by strict rules of privacy enforced through confidentiality agreements that all teachers must agree to prior to test administration (Georgia Department of Education, 2008).

Proponents of SBE argue that as long as teachers teach to the standards, their students will perform well on state mandated assessments (Ainsworth, 2003; Marzano, 2010; McMillan, 2008; Thompson & Thompson, 2000; and Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). However, in light of the relative secrecy of how the assessments are created, I find it difficult to trust in the recommendation of SBE advocates. As explained earlier, my doubts about the appropriateness of these assessments were further piqued when I was presented with testing domain descriptions by my administration rather than the state standards for lesson plan development. Based on my experiences, I felt that a systematic comparison of standards and assessment documents was necessary to understand if there are any textual justifications for the perceived double message. I believed at the time that the CRCT documents and the GPS documents did not match. I assumed that the test assessed skills that were not necessarily called for by the standards, but this understanding was grounded in a very cursory reading of the two documents. My beliefs lacked theoretical and structural support. I began this study in order to simply demonstrate a curricular match or mismatch, and how this affected instruction. As I conducted the study, and my understanding of the documents and shared experience of seven research participants, my study evolved to encompass a different scope.

## **Research Description and Questions**

In order to understand how various Georgia-mandated curriculum and assessment documents affect teacher planning and practice in Georgia, I conducted a qualitative research project (Glesne, 1999; Holliday, 2007; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005) using ethnographic (Brenner, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Seidman, 2006) and systemic functional linguistic (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003) tools in order to better understand the following questions:

- 1) What is the historical context for standards and standardized testing in Georgia, and what are the implications of that history?
- 2) What curriculum documents specifically designed to inform instruction are provided to teachers by state and local school districts, and who developed these documents?
- 3) How do these documents construct teachers, students, and instruction? (e.g. student identity, teacher role, methods of instruction?)
- 4) How and why do teachers and administrators select and privilege particular curriculum documents over others, and how do they use these documents to design and implement instruction? Subsequently, have their practices changed as a result of adhering or resisting particular curricular mandates?

### **Theoretical Framework**

My research involves the theoretical intersection of the works of Bakhtin (1981; 1986) and Halliday (1976; 1994) as well as the transactional theories posited by Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Rosenblatt (1995, 2005). The former theorists (Bahktin and Halliday) helped me understand the nature of culture and language in human experience

and development, and the work of the latter (Dewey and Bentley and Rosenblatt) provide a theory of human transaction that helped me understand the cultural and pedagogical implications of Bakhtin and Halliday. This section opens with an introduction to the theories and theorist I have grounded my research on, focused on the aspects of these theories that are particularly important to my research. This is followed by a discussion of how these theories dovetail together and inform my study.

This study is primarily grounded in Bakhtinian theories of dialogic and monologic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Fecho & Amatucci, 2008; Fecho & Botzakis, 2007; Fecho, 2011) and speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986; Knapp & Watkins, 2005), the transactional theory of language (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; and Rosenblatt, 1995, 2005; Stewart, 2011,2012)and theories of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2003).

Bakhtin's (1981) discussion of monologic and dialogic language provides the framework for my exploration and understanding of the way teachers, schools, communities, and policymakers work together to construct standards and assessments. While each state writes its own standards and assessment documents, these documents have a number of commonalities that help unify them as a genre. Speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986; Knapp & Watkins, 2005) provide a framework for identifying and discussing the common traits across these standards and assessment documents. SFL (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2003) provides an analytical tool for comparing and contrasting how student knowledge is constructed by curricular and assessment documents. Together, these analytical tools can be used to understand how the patterns of meaning in the curricular documents construct particular roles and identities of teachers



and students. Discussion of the interpersonal metafunction in SFL can be connected to Bakhtin's discussion of the addressee as well as Bakhtin's discussion of the responsivity of language. (Fairclough, 2003). Combined, ?? use SFL and Bakhtin to understand how teachers and students are constructed by the documents in question.

### **Theories of Culture and Transaction**

My conception of the role of culture as it influences human understanding and experience is grounded in Dewey and Bentley's (1949) and later Rosenblatt's (1995; 2005) discussions of transaction. These theorists found that the term interaction did not appropriately address relationships among people. Fecho (2011) compared the events of spraying a nail with a water pistol to spraying a student with the same pistol. Fecho explained that the nail will interact with the water in predictable ways. The table will get wet. The nail, if not galvanized, will rust. There is not much excitement in the occurrence. On the other hand, there might be a great deal of excitement when the student gets sprayed. "Would the student stare in disbelief, break out laughing, explode in anger, storm from the room, merely wipe the water from his brow, or do something else entirely?" (p. 27). Interaction is about the fixed predictable results when non-volitional bodies come in contact with each other. Transaction is about the mutual shaping that occurs when people are involved in any occurrence.

The concept of interaction is contrasted with transaction, which is grounded in the idea that "knowing is co-operative and as such is integral with communication" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 97). Interactions are stable and predictable. When water interacts with iron, the resulting rust is fixed. The history of the water and iron has no bearing on

the outcome of rust. Interaction represents an immediate relationship whose conclusion is obvious and fixed.

Dewey and Bentley posited that the opposite is true of transactions. They explained a transactional paradigm “excludes assertions of fixity and attempts to impose them. It installs openness and flexibility in the very process of knowing” (p. 97). When an individual reads a book, talks to a friend, or listens to a teacher, a particular outcome is not guaranteed. The results of any particular experience will be informed by the lived experiences and history of each person inhabiting said experience. Rather than a particular event shaping the understanding of people in specific, fixed, and predictable ways, transactional theory posits that each individual will shape the event according to his or her current and past lived experiences. In the end, everyone involved in the event will shape and inform each other.

Because the process of knowing and understanding is open, it is difficult for sciences, which generally explore the nature of interactions, to think about and explore teaching. Rosenblatt (2005) explained that a transactional paradigm requires researchers to abandon “stimulus-response, subject-object, individual-social dualisms” (3). Human activities and relationships are incredibly complex, and each individual is informed not only by the experience at hand but also by his or her past experiences and understandings. For this reason discussions of human interaction and understandings must be contextualized.

### **Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourses**

Bakhtin (1981) described language as naturally stratified or “heteroglot from top to bottom” (p. 291). Inherent in language is the fact that a single statement or utterance

can be imbued with multiple meanings depending on context. When Edward Fudwupper (Breathed, 2000) said, “I’ve been bad” his admission encompassed his genuine remorse for nearly destroying the entire planet with a lie. However, when Michael Jackson (1987) stood on his toes and announced, “I’m bad,” he declared his awesomeness relative to the rest of the world. Bakhtin’s theory of language and the forces that work to transfer meaning from one to another explains how a single word “bad” can have so many meanings.

Important to this paper are the three strata of the every day word, authoritative discourse, and internally persuasive discourse. The every day word is the natural flow of language that occurs in the vast majority of human transactions. Authoritative discourses are unitary discourses designed to prohibit dialogue and thus transmit a single unitary meaning from an authority to its subject. Internally persuasive discourse are those voices that mimic external dialogue and intentionally avoid generalization.

Bakhtin (1981) explained “when we attempt to understand and make assessments in everyday life, we do not separate discourse from the personality speaking it” (pp. 340-41). Generally we associate the words being spoken with the speaker, and as we transact with one another, there is a natural play in language that allows for mutual meaning making. “During everyday verbal transmission of another’s words, the entire complex of discourse as well as the personality of the speaker may be expressed and even played with” (p. 341). Participants in the dialogue exchange words and phrases in order to complete a communication task—be it tell a joke, establish a kinship, or give directions to the nearest restroom. Inherent in this structure is the task specific purpose of communication that are bounded by the situation and participants. The “representation is

always subordinated to the task of practical, engaged transmission” (p. 341). The every day word is the language dialogically situated to promote mutual shaping. Bakhtin (1987) argued that a speaker desires to make his or her meaning known to her or his audience and therefore presents a statement to an idealized other who will have an anticipated response. “The active role of the other in the process of speech communication is thus reduced to a minimum” (p. 70). However, the word presented is always geared toward a response and this natural flow of language from one response to another encompasses the vast majority of our transactions with other people and their words. However, there are authors who strive to control an audiences response, and in order to do this, they establish and use an authoritative discourse.

Authoritative discourse demands “that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally” (p.342). Authoritative discourse “cannot be represented—it is only transmitted” (p.344), and it can not be parsed. Authoritative discourse:

permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing various on it. It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. (p. 343)

On the other hand, an internally persuasive discourse is that discourse that is “tightly interwoven with ‘one’s one word.’ In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s” (p. 345). The internally persuasive word is constantly open to new relationships and understandings as it is placed in new contexts.

In baseball, a batter is constantly conducting an internally persuasive discourse. As the ball is hurled toward him he is consulting his knowledge of the situation and the rules. Is the ball over the plate? Is it between his knees and shoulders? How fast is the ball coming in? Even if the ball is not perfectly placed, can he make contact and possibly drive the ball into a gap where there is no defender? Even after the ball hits the catcher's mitt behind him, the batter is questioning whether he should have swung or not and guessing at the next pitch. The cry of "strike" and "out" behind him is an authoritative discourse. It is another's voice that does not invite dialogue. The batter can accept the decree and march back to the dugout upset with himself, or he can reject the decree and argue and possibly find himself ejected from the game. Regardless, the statement is void of dialogue. The pitch is past. The batter is out, and no instant replay, nor any dirt kicking from a manager is going to change the call. The conversation with the hitting coach once he gets back to the dugout is every day speech. The batter explains why he did not swing, and the coach explains what he saw and together they construct the at bat and hope to adjust the batter's approach for the next time he faces the same pitcher.

However ?? this discussion of baseball also illustrates another important element of language—that of speech genres (Bakhtin, 1987). I discuss speech genres more thoroughly, in the next section. However, with the example above, I assume my reader shares with me a basic knowledge of baseball. I assume that you understand the grammatical and vocabulary complexities of how the game is discussed by people familiar with the game. If you don't know what an out is or how a strike is defined, or that a batter, catcher, pitcher, and umpire are figures integral to the game of baseball, or that the phrase "hit the mitt" means that the catcher has caught the ball, the paragraph

above is an enigma. I assumed, when constructing my example that the reader shared this speech genre. If I was incorrect in this assumption, my examples of the various strata of discourse is useless.

According to Bakhtin's (1981) description of language, meaning exists in response. Bakhtin explains that the communicative goal of language can only be understood by examining the relationship of a given utterance with the response or rejoinder to that utterance. "One cannot excise the rejoinder from this combined context made up of one's own words and the words of another without losing its sense and tone. It is an organic part of a heteroglot unity" (p. 284). It is not enough to examine an utterance in itself. One must understand that each utterance will elicit a response, and it is the utterance/response relationship that must be explored when understanding texts and how they are used.

Documents, such as the GPS and CRCT, while positioned as authoritative documents to be used as the primary guide for instruction, were not created in a vacuum. Rather, they were created based on the transactions of several involved parties including teachers, parents, community members, administrators, and others. Furthermore, each individual reader will interpret the documents in different, nuanced ways.

However, Bakhtin also acknowledged that particular discourses, specifically authoritative discourses, are designed to resist dialogue. The purpose of authoritative, monologic, or unitary language, is to express a uniform meaning that serves to direct or control the response. Monologic discourse is "language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as world view, even as concrete opinion, ensuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (p. 271). The problem with a

monologic perspective on language is that it ignores “the realities of heteroglossia” (p. 270).

According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia is the natural multi-voiced state of language. A word’s meaning does not stand alone, rather, “it represents the co-existence of social-ideological contractions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth” (p. 291). Regardless of how researchers may want to talk about language in isolated incidents of communication, according to Bakhtin, this understanding of language is problematic. “Language—like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives—is never unitary” (p. 288). Instead, language is fluid and dialogic. No matter how monologic a document is designed to be, it is always open to dialogue and interpretation.

Bakhtin’s theory of language has been applied in a great deal of research exploring the ways authoritative discourses are used and/or dissuaded in the classroom (Britzman, 1991; Buty & Mortimer, 2008; Clark, 2003; Hayworth, 2006; Scott, Mortimer, & Aguiar, 2006) as well as the sometimes conflicting authoritative discourses teachers are required to face in their day to day practice (Fernsten, Lehr, & Lichter, 2007; Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, & Guembel, 2006; Larson & Phillips, 2005). Teachers are situated in schools under the supervision of building, district, and state administrations who promote various uses of the state curriculum. They constantly have to bridge the worlds of dialogic and authoritative discourse. In doing so, they are constantly faced with administrative and curricular pressures from school, district, and state structures, but they are also expected to work with other teachers, parents, and students in order to make sure

these curricular demands are shaped to fit each child. The classroom is an intersection where the needs of multiple children with varied experiences cross the social, political, and personal goals set by state standards, administrative demands, teacher's expectations, and the child's personal priorities.

Individual Education Plans are another often-discussed area of education that serve as a concrete example of the intersection between authoritative and dialogic discourses. (Clark, 2003; Ferri, Connor, Solis, Valle & Volpitta, 2005; Rogers, 2003). The Individual Education Plan meeting is designed as a space for teachers, parents, administrators, and councilors to work together to design an educational plan that best suits a specific child's needs (Clark, 2003). Ideally, teachers discuss what they are able to do; parents explain what they see at home; counselors discuss emotional and behavioral concerns; and administrators represent the structures established within schools. Each party within the group works to produce the final document outlining how that individual student is expected to fit within the larger structures of the school and classroom and what the school will do in order to ensure that student's continued growth and development. However, once that document is completed, it becomes federal law, and any person who moves away from that text and fails to follow the structures presented within it may be legally held responsible for failing to do so.

That said, the distinction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse within the IEP process is not so easily delineated. Research has continued to show how language is used in IEP meetings in order to promote the school's agenda and serves to place students where the school feels they belong regardless of parent and community input (Clark, 2003; Rogers, 2003). While the IEP is legally designed to admit



multiple voices for the development of student education plans, authoritative discourse is shaped by the very setting to privilege the voice of the educational institution.

There are similar ramifications with the move toward standards-based education (Britzman, 1991; Fernsten, Lehr, & Lichter, 2007; Hawoth, 2006) While teachers are encouraged to implement instruction based on their interpretation of the standards, district curriculum maps often influence and shape this interpretation (Larson & Phillips, 2005), and the school leadership will often exert their own administrative demands that affect how lessons are planned and assessed (Haworth, 2006). On top of this, the state assesses how well students learn the curriculum based on student performance on state-mandated standardized assessments. While the standards are open for interpretation, the assessments are often not available for teacher perusal or dialogue. If students are assessed by these mandated tests, which do not allow for teacher interpretation, teachers are tacitly required to make sure their lessons meet the instructional outcomes desired by that document.

### **Speech Genres**

The concept of speech genres is important in discussions of culture as it explains how utterances are cultural artifacts that can reflect meaning differently depending on the context of the speaker and audience (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). For Bakhtin, (1986) speech genres do not represent “a form of language, but a typical form of utterance; as such the genre also includes a certain typical kind of expression that inheres in it” (p. 87). They are expressions that are typical utterances that fill a “typical situation of speech communication” (p. 87). Speech genres explain how meaning-making within a cultural group is more easily conducted than across cultures. Knapp and Watkins (2005) asserted

“the genre, text and grammar model of language proposed here recognizes that while language is produced by individuals, the shape and structure of the language is to a large degree socially determined” (p. 16). These social rules/codes needed to unify language can be discussed as speech genres. Because language is tied together by speech genres, word meaning, while inconsistent across a broad spectrum of dialogues, can remain consistent within particular social language and thus meaning can be shared.

Bakhtin (1981) explained that each utterance is integrally linked to its “thematic content, style, and compositional structures” (p. 60). As language is used it “develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These we may call speech genres” (p. 60). Knapp & Watkins (2005) argued that genre “refers to the language processes involved in doing things with language” (p.21). Speech genres account for the way language is understood based on how it is culturally situated. The phrase “to the hole” has a very different meaning when used in the context of playing basketball than when yelled in an open field during a tornado. Speech genres are “formed out of the dynamics of social processes, rather than being determined by an overall social purpose” (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p 25). Speech genres account for the internal relative consistency of meaning within a given social sphere.

A simple example of speech genres are found in how they allow for various culturally-specific idioms. Speech genres account for the various linguistic metaphors that occur across languages—“How’s it going?” in English as it compares thematically to “Wie Geht’s?” in German, and “Ça va?” in French, all calling on the metaphor of moving and living. However, speech genres also account for the cultural specific codes that do not translate well, like “What’s up?” in English lacks its synonymous relationship with

“How’s it going?” when translated to French or German. Each of these statements are embedded and imbued with cultural meaning and expectations. An American English speaker knows to answer the question “What’s up” with a general statement of his or her current activities rather than looking skyward due to her or his participation and understanding of the speech genre of colloquial American speech.

This discussion of speech genres is important to my study because prior to the microanalysis of specific state standards and assessment documents, I need to understand the basic genres of standards and assessments. By understanding the genres of teaching standards and assessment documents, I am able to identify common linguistic markers that work across the genres and make generalizations across the state documents. This allows me to identify specific exemplars of State standards and assessment documents to be explored more thoroughly through SFL.

### **Systemic Functional Linguistics**

As discussed earlier, Bakhtin (1981) posited that everyday language is dialogic. “In the everyday speech of any person living in society, no less than half (on the average) of all the words uttered by him will be someone else’s words” (p. 340). Communication, for Bakhtin (1987) is wrapped up in the constant play between statement and response. “Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener” (p. 69). Everyday communication consists of the constant transaction of text from source to another and the speech/response chain.. However, some texts are specifically shaped to resist dialogue. These texts strive to use monologic language in an attempt to establish an authoritative discourse. This discourse resists individual interpretation and strives to ensure a single uniform interpretation

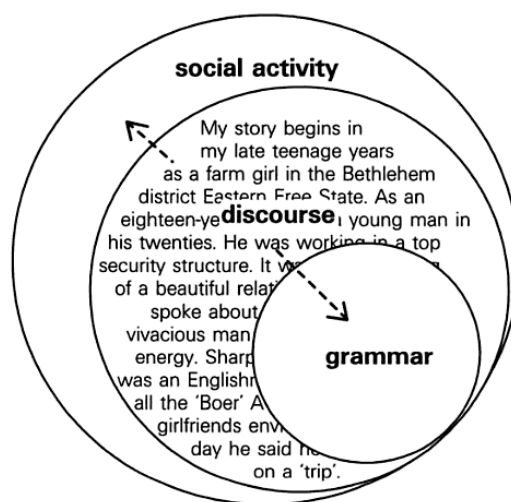
across multiple readings and audiences. SFL provides a theoretical framework to explore how language is used and constructed and helps researchers understand and demonstrate how texts are constructed to elicit or resist dialogue.

Martin and Rose (2003) explained that a researcher interested in discourse analysis finds himself caught between the worlds of a grammarian and a social researcher. People working within the field of SFL are interested in how given texts are situated within a given cultural context.

Discourse analysis employs the tools of grammarians to identify the roles of wordings in passages of texts, and employs the tools of social theorist to explain why they make the meanings they do. (p. 4)

With this understanding in mind, Martin and Rose discussed that there are three levels of language—grammar, discourse, and social context—as well as three functions of language—“to enact our relationships, to represent our experience, and to organize discourse as meaningful text” (p.3). Martin and Rose (2003) use the following diagram to illustrate the relationships among grammar, discourse, and social context:

Figure 1.1: Points of view on discourse:



(Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 4)

SFL provides a theoretical framework for stratifying language among the three levels to understand the functions of a specific text. Martin and Rose (2003) explained that SFL allows for work to be done between social theory and grammar. They argued that grammarians have too strict a focus on the clauses and phrases within an single text, ignoring the social contexts revealed through the grammar. On the other hand, social theories are more interested in how language is used across texts and “how social contexts are related to one another than in how they are internally organized as texts(pp. 3-4). SFL is a grammatical tool for exploring how social contexts are represented within a single text.

Figure 1.1 illustrates how a given discourse must fit within a social context, and how grammar is a constitutive element of the discourse. Grammar, from SFL perspective, is always related to meaning making so it proposes a very different construct than traditional views of ‘correct’ grammar (decide where to put this but make sure to include description of grammar from SFL versus traditional perspective or you throw your reader off... However, the discourse, while bound by the social context and grammatically structured, there is still a great deal of play within these relationships. The grammatical structure of the discourse is dependent on the social activity. However, while discourse is socially situated, it can describe, define, and/or critique the social context that it inhabits. This relationship is further complicated by the fact that social contexts change. Bakhtin (1981) discussed this fact as he explained that context can control and reshape meaning of a single repeated statement. “Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another’s utterance accurately quoted” (p. 340). SFL accounts for the social contexts when

analyzing a given text. SFL is concerned with the grammatical and discourse semantic structures and the choices made due to social constructs and authorial intent to communicate meaning.

While Bakhtin (1986) was concerned with how an individual's cultural and linguistic history serves to inform his or her understanding of a text, Fairclough (2003) applied this understanding to social life as he grounded his work in "the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language" (p. 1). However, rather than focusing on the interpretative resources of each individual reader, SFL is concerned with the choices authors and speakers make when constructing text (Yang, Ramirez, & Harman, 2007). According to SFL, a text is the representation of an author or speaker's conscious and unconscious choices made to communicate certain ideas to a reader in a particular socio cultural context.

Central to SFL is the underlying assumption that theory and methodology are inherently intertwined (Fairclough, 2003). Grounded in the 1960s work of Halliday, SFL provides a social semiotic approach to language that examines texts as they "simultaneously makes these three kinds of meaning: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual" (Yang, Ramirez, & Harman, 2007, p. 102). SFL, unlike more traditional linguistic theory, is concerned with "the relationship between language, and other elements and aspects of social life, and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of text" (Fairclough, 2003, p.5). While SFL provides an analytical tool for understanding the relationships of social contexts, discourse, and grammar, I am interested in SFL because it can provide a framework for

teasing out the political understandings and linguistic authorial decisions made by specific authors in order to express a specific meaning, and analyzing, understanding, and unveiling the social hierarchies and power relationships inherent in the production of a given text.

A basic understanding of SFL is that “texts are shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which they are produced” (Hughes, 2009, p. 555). By unpacking the structure of language in use in various communicative genres, SFL allows researchers to explore the cultural underpinnings and understandings that inform the production of a particular text. According to Martin and Rose (2003), SFL specifically explores the semantics of discourse. Fairclough (2003) explained that texts are related to the social contexts and practices that informed the production of the text as well as being related to other texts produced within similar and disparate social contexts. However, there are also “internal relations” of elements within a text (p. 36) that can be examined and understood. Fairclough argued that connecting the internal and external relations of a given text require an understanding of meaning making and how these internal and external relationships are used to express, or fail to express, a given understanding. The production of texts requires authors to make specific choices in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax that are grounded in the cultural understandings of the authors, readers, and the cultural world each inhabits. SFL provides a framework to explore these choices and understand the cultural norms and understandings that are established within a given text.

### **Theories of Language and Culture**

Bahktin (1987) and Halliday (1994) provide a theory of culture and language that largely informs this project. Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Rosenblatt (1995, 2005)

bolster my understanding of the Bakhtin, and Halliday, by providing the concept of linguistic and cultural transactions, which explains how culture and language inform each other. Wells (1999) makes a number of important connections between these theorists focused on his initial discussion of Bakhtin's (1986) understanding of dialogue, and Halliday's (1994) linguistic theory. Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Rosenblatt (1995, 2005) provide for me a way to understand how these are embedded in the human experience. Central to Halliday is the idea that language is "a human 'invention' used to achieve the goals of social living" (Wells, 1999, p. 6).

Bakhtin's (1986) conceptions of the "utterance" and the "dialogic" provide a bridge that allows one to use linguistic tools to understand the psychological underpinnings of meaning and meaning-making (Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1991; 2002). Rosenblatt's (2005) discussion of transactional relationships explains how participants in a discussion are "constantly being helped to gauge and to confirm, revise, or expand the text. Hence the text is shaped transactionally by both speaker and addressee" (p.5).

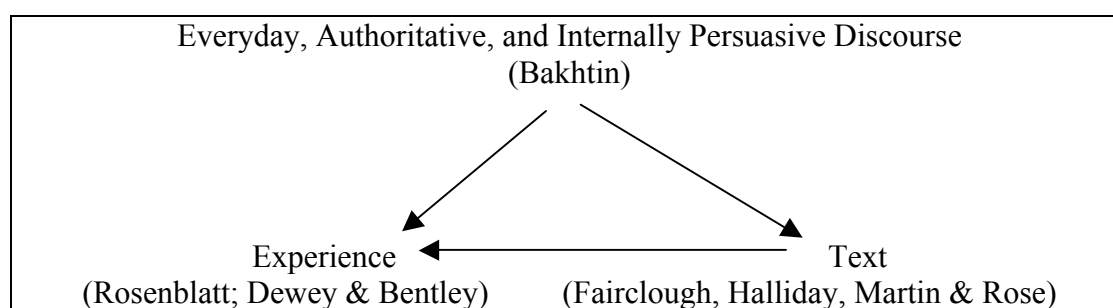
Through Bakhtin (1981) and Rosenblatt (2005), this relationship of speaker and addressee is also applied to the relationship of reader and text as the reader is constantly providing his or her past and current experiences and understandings in conjunction with the text he or she is reading. This is a very complex relationship representing how social contexts, texts, and the grammatical structures of these texts are intertwined and related (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1994; Martin & Rose, 2003) However, there are certain textual and social structures that are specifically designed to resist dialogue. To return to my example of an IEP earlier in this paper (Clark, 2003; Rogers, 2003), the IEP requires that parents, teachers, and administrators participate in a discussion concerning how best



to serve a child with individual needs not normally accounted for in a school setting. However, both Clark (2003) and Rogers (2003) independently show how the structure of that meeting is such that the parent's voice is largely muted. The IEP meeting and discourse of the IEP meeting is shaped to promote the school's authoritative discourse. The way a specific child is served by a special education program in a given school is largely shaped by the school and not the parents (Rogers, 2003). The meeting is designed to resist dialogue, and this resistance is what I am interested in exploring in this dissertation. While the role of authorship and authoritative discourse is not always present, Halliday (1994) explains how authors can shape texts to illicit specific responses, and generally work to supply specific background knowledge, focused tones and vocabularies, in order to help control the reader's experience and transaction with the text. For this dissertation, I am interested in how the standards and assessment documents are specifically shaped to resist dialogue and how teachers respond to this shaping.

### **How These Theorists Organized my Thoughts**

Figure 1.2: Theoretical Frame:



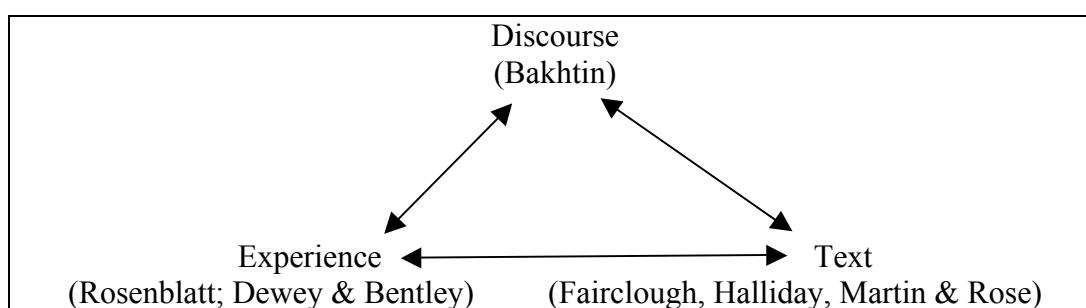
I believe Bakhtin's (1981) exploration of the utterance and the role of response in meaning-making provides a theoretical perspective on how meaning is made through dialog. Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Rosenblatt (1995, 2005) provide a vocabulary for

understanding human transactions rather than interactions, and Halliday (1999) explains how one can use linguistic tools to understand the multi dimensional nature of language use (e.g. context of culture and situation realized through genre and register) that informed the creation of that text. Simply, language is a social act, our social understandings and relationships inform our experiences, which in turn inform our social understandings and relationships (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Rosenblatt, 1995, 2005), and these social understandings are evident in our texts (Halliday, 1999). This progress of theory as understood by Wells (1999) has been used in some way or another in the research discussed in the next chapters.

The theories used in this dissertation are more complex and encompassing than my use of them. I am specifically interested in how discourse is used to express experience as well as how an authoritative discourse is used to shape a text and how this text then informs experience. One could argue that the arrows above are inaccurate.

Instead the image should be:

Figure 1.3: Revised Frame



In this visualization, discourse informs the text informs the discourse, just as the discourse and experience mutually shape one another, and the text and experience mutually shape each other as well. However, that is not the relationship I identified in this

study. Rather, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, I found that an authoritative discourse was used to construct a text and this text was used to shape teacher experience along with the teachers everyday and internally persuasive discourse.

### **Next Chapters**

The purpose of this study is to explore how various Georgia-mandated curriculum and assessment documents affect teacher planning and practice, and improve understanding of the following questions:

- 1) What is the historical context for standards and standardized testing in Georgia, and what are the implications of that history?
- 2) What curriculum documents specifically designed to inform instruction are provided to teachers by state and local school districts, and who developed these documents?
- 3) How do these documents construct teachers, students, and instruction? (e.g. student identity, teacher role, methods of instruction?)
- 4) How and why do teachers and administrators select and privilege particular curriculum documents over others, and how do they use these documents to design and implement instruction? Subsequently, have their practices changed as a result of adhering or resisting particular curricular mandates?

Chapter two of this paper outlines prior research that has been conducted in this field, specifically exploring the roll of standards and assessments in the history of education and the current American move toward a national curriculum. I also explore how SFL has been used to examine curriculum documents and how transactional analysis has been used to understand teacher experiences with standards and teaching.

Chapter three is dedicated to outlining my specific research practices. I outline my decision to focus on experience as I examined curricular and assessment documents and how I hope to understand the transactional relationship and my understanding of the interviews I have conducted with the various participants.

Chapter four includes a discussion of specific data and how they have informed my understanding of teacher experience.

Chapter five concludes the paper with an outline of what I have learned while conducting this study.

### **Acronyms Not So Anonymous**

I have used a number of acronyms throughout the following chapters. In order to make it easier to keep up with the various acronyms, I have provided the following figure:

Figure 1.4: Common Acronyms

Acronym	Term
CCGPS	Common Core Georgia Performance Standards
CCSSI	Common Core State Standards Initiative
CRCT	Criterion Referenced Competency Test
GPS	Georgia performance Standard
SBE	Standards Based Education
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
QBE	Quality Basic Education

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several important and rich research traditions that inform the background of this study. I am interested in using Bakhtinian (Bakhtin 1981, 1986) theory with the research tools of Transitive Analysis (Stewart 2010, 2011) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2003) to explore the separate discussions of curriculum reform, SBE, and assessment occurring in the U.S. Currently, there are three research traditions focusing on curriculum reform in the United States. First is the demand for and promotion of curriculum reform in the United States (Applebee, 1996; Common Core Curriculum, 2011; Franciosi, 2004; Lortie, 1975/2002; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Meier, 2000). The second is the language of Standards Based Education (SBE) (Ainsworth, 2006; Brown, 2004; Marzano, 2010; McMillan, 2008; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Third is the discussion of how teachers feel inappropriately pressured by the adoption of national testing (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Giordana, 2007; Hillocks, 2002; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Stewart, 2010). These three research traditions are often written in response to one another, but there is very little dialogue among them in the US. In this chapter I hope to use Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Transitive Analysis to facilitate a discussion among and across these traditions.

The use of SFL has been fairly limited in the United States (Rogers R. , 2003; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berke, Mosley, Hui, & O'Garro Joseph, 2005). However, in the

U.K. and Australia, SFL has been used to explore every aspect of curriculum and assessment (Coffin, 2006; Coffin, North, & Martin, 2009; Fang, 2005; Hughes, 2009; Macken-Horarik, 2006). Bakhtinian research has been generally accepted and used throughout the U.S. Bahktinian theory as applied to language and classroom research (Britzman, 1991; Buty & Mortimer, 2008; Clark, 2003; Fernsten, Lehr, & Lichter, 2007; Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, & Guembel, 2006; Haworth, 2006; Larson & Phillips, 2005; Scott, Mortimer, & Aguiar, 2006), but has been limitedly applied to a discussion of educational standards and assessment.

The curriculum reform movement is concerned with assessment only as it pertains to the new curriculum. Past standardized assessments are found wanting not because they are assessments, but because they assess and promote an antiquated curriculum that should be abandoned. While assessment is a key piece of SBE, formal standardized assessment is often treated as an afterthought. A key assumption of SBE is that as long as teachers ground their instruction in the state, local, and national standards, the assessment will be standards-based as well. Critics of standardized national assessment are not critical of SBE or curriculum reform. Instead, they argue against standardized assessment and the woes of using them as a sole measurement of teacher and school success. Finally, SFL has been used to discuss all of these levels of curriculum and assessment, especially in Australia; however this discussion has not been explored in the U.S. and this tool is largely ignored in American research.

As stated at the end of my last chapter, Bakhtinian theory (1981, 1986) greatly informs my understanding of cultural and linguistic transactions. For this reason, I will begin this chapter by conducting a brief overview of how Bakhtinian theory has been

used to inform multiple research traditions. I will then follow this with an overview of each of the four research traditions discussed above and I will explain how this project serves to use SFL to answer an area of concern across the three research threads of educational reform, standards, and assessment within the U.S. in a similar fashion to how it has been used internationally.

### **Pertinent Research Grounded in Bakhtin**

Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) discussion of language and discourse is often used to understand the political ramifications of language in the classroom (Britzman, 1991; Buty & Mortimer, 2008; Clark, 2003; Fernsten, Lehr, & Lichter, 2007; Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, & Guembel, 2006; Haworth, 2006; Larson & Phillips, 2005; Scott, Mortimer, & Aguiar, 2006). Of particular interest to this research are how Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, and Guembel (2006) used Bakhtin to discuss how curriculum is selected and taught based on various authoritative discourses. According to their study, they found that a teacher's willingness to dialogue with the text book was directly related to how well versed they were in the mathematical concepts being explored. Parental, district, and curriculum demands all privileged a textbook centered approach to math curriculum where correctness of answers were often considered more important than student understanding of the mathematical concepts. Teachers with stronger math skills were less likely to accept the authoritative discourse of the math texts, and as such were less likely to focus more on whether or not the student got the correct answer instead of the student's understanding the mathematical concept in question. They wanted teachers to resist the authoritative discourses that privileged math textbooks and found that a stronger understanding of the concepts being taught led to better teaching practices. They found

that teachers are often pinched among the curricular demands of the state, the privileged position math textbooks play in informing instruction, and teacher identity with math. Combined with student identity and parental pressures, Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, and Guembel explored how teachers deal with these various and often conflicting authoritative discourses in their math classrooms.

Scott, Mortimer, & Aguiar (2006) further used Bakhtin to understand the intersection between authoritative and dialogic discourse in the science classroom as well as the affect on learning. Specifically, they examined the shift between authoritative and dialogic discourse in Brazilian science classrooms as instruction began with teachers presenting information grounded in authoritative discourses, but then encouraged students to dialog about the presented information to promote understanding of the curriculum. They defined the authoritative discourse as those times when teachers used direct instruction to introduce or define a specific concept. The teacher told the student the concept or the expected experimental outcome rather than conducting an experiment and then discussing the scientific ramifications of the outcome. They found that both authoritative discourse and dialogue were necessary for scientific learning. One led to the other and back. The teacher would tell the students a scientific “fact” and demonstrate it. Then the class would conduct a number of experiments related to this fact and adjust their understandings of the science and at the end, they would establish the initial statement as universally correct. This is a very different relationship of authoritative and dialogic discourse than elsewhere discussed in this paper because the authors agreed that students must submit to certain authoritative discourses. The idea that weight has no affect on



gravity's pull on an object was not in question in this study. Instead, they questioned how this authoritative discourse was communicated and reinforced with the Brazilian students.

Larson and Phillips (2005) examined the often disconnected and contrary authoritative discourses of teacher education programs and school administrations and how pre-service teachers are caught between these contrary perspectives. Ferri, Connor, Solic, Valle, and Volpitta (2005) use Bakhtin's (1981) theory of discourse to examine the way teachers with learning disabilities deal with the various complex and often contradictory discourses of disabilities, and how their experience teaching served to inform their understanding of their own learning disability. Of particular interest is how these scholars described the disconnect among the discourses of popular culture, the scholarship of academic theorist, and the lived experiences of teachers with learning disabilities concerning living with disabilities, and how each perceives and depicts disabilities in different, often conflicting, ways.

These highlighted studies speak directly to my research in both theory and subject. I am particularly interested in the authoritative voices—especially the contradictory authoritative voices—that exist in curriculum development and implementation. Each of these studies highlights the complexity of teaching as they explore the contradictory authoritative voices that teachers, students, and administrators work with. I also find the ways teachers deal with these conflicting authorities fascinating and worthy of exploration. These studies tend to explore the disconnection of more traditional authoritative discourses: textbook to curriculum (Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, and Guembel, 2006), teacher education programs and school administrations (Larson and Phillips, 2005), or the disconnect among popular culture, theory, and lived experience

(Ferri, Connor, Solic, Valle, and Volpitta, 2005). What is not discussed is when contrary authoritative discourses originate from sources that are expected to be more in line with one another. As my experience from chapter one concerning grammar instruction and Gadanidis, Kotsopoulos, and Guembel (2006) outline, it is not uncommon for parents and teachers to approach education from different authoritative discourses. The disagreement between teacher education programs and school administrations is also a common example of when authoritative discourses clash. However, in my study, one would assume that the standards and the assessments based on those standards reflect the same authoritative discourse. Both the assessment documents and curricular documents of Georgia are produced by the Georgia Department of Education. How then do teachers and administrators deal with inconsistencies among these texts that should share the same authority and perspective?

### **History of Curriculum Reform in America**

In order to understand the authoritative voices that permeate the standards documents, one must understand this history of American education curriculum reform. The historical study of reading education in American schools began with Banton Smith's (1934/2002) exploration of the American reading curriculum. The roots of many modern debates among reading education researchers can be traced to her exploration of America's reading curriculum. Central to her text is the understanding that the reading curriculum is found in the reading textbooks of their day. For the majority of America's history, the text was the curriculum.

Banton Smith (1934/2002) original research in reading education culminated in her dissertation that was published in 1934 by Silver Burdett publishing. The IRA

updated her research in 1964 and 1986 and published the most recent update in 2002 (Robinson, 2002). Throughout the history of reading education there were a number of shifts in the philosophy and approach to teaching reading. Banton Smith's (2002) volume traces the structure of education reforms through the regional shifts tracing "what seems to be an almost endless pendulum swing from one extreme position to another" (p.xii). Central to the nature of the education reforms discussed in Banton Smith's volume is the regional nature of their calls and implementation.

However, since the launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 there have been four major national calls for educational reform. Each of these political movements demand a panacea expected to finally cure American educational woes (Hunt, 2005). Despite important gains made in educational policy and pedagogy through the various reform movements (Hunt, 2005), policy makers and media sources generally focus on the failures (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The post-Sputnik reforms did not radically change pedagogy as they sought to do; the Reagan era response to "A Nation at Risk" did not improve NAEP reading scores (Fullan, 2009), and the recent No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation did not significantly close the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and is critiqued for being overly focused on assessment (Fullan, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). The Race to the Top educational reform movement is currently in action. While the Department of Education (2013) claims Race to the Top encourages states to promote a highly qualified teaching force that promotes rigorous standards by "ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform" (online), Ravitch argues "Race to the Top is having its intended results: the destabilization, fragmentation and privatization of

the public schools” (online). Viewed in this light, large-scale education reform in America is problematic at best.

### **Calls for Reform**

America often traces part of its economic and intellectual promise to public education (Franklin, 1789; Jefferson, 1784); however throughout American history, policymakers and academics consistently call for education reform (Carey, 2010; Fusarelli, 2005; Grant & Murray, 1999; Hunt, 2005; Labaree, 2004; Lortie, 1975;2002). The national desire to critique schools and education is readily apparent in our popular culture as music, essays, and literature consistently critique the nature and needs of American schools (Goodman 1963, Butchart & Cooper, 1987, Twain 1876) Among my favorite literary moments are Mark Twain’s constant critiques of schools and schooling. From his description of schools as ineffective stations of childhood torture in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) to his often quoted remark “in the first place God made idiots. This was for practice. Then He made School Boards” (Twain, 1897), he helps establish an national attitude toward schools that can be found throughout American history. However, these are mostly local complaints pointing out local problems and promoting local solutions.

National education reform did not become a major national issue until Sputnik (Yager, 2000). Francosi (2006) explained that “the history of American school policy is the story of repeated waves of reformers, each bemoaning the present state of schools and offering a list of measures sure to bring improvement” (p. 2). However, these reforms were largely conducted on the local and state level until education became a national issue with the Soviet launching of Sputnik. With the passing of America’s first national

law concerning public education, The National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) (1958), the U.S. Department of Education began its shift from monitoring and administering support to the nation's land grant colleges and universities to promoting K-12 excellence (US Department of Education, 2011). Since this time, there have been three additional demands for national educational reform (Fullan, 2009).

While *A Nation at Risk* generated a national interest in large-scale reform, there was very little policy change. Fullan (2009) related, "in the 1980s when accountability schemes were introduced, the pressure for reform increased, but not the reality" (p. 103). This failed reform movement served to set the tone for the two major reform movements that followed, and the focus on standards and accountability have since become law with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and President Obama's recent "Race to the Top" initiative.

### **Core Educational Reform Goals**

Most national education reform movements begin with a call for quality teachers (Duncan, 2009, 2010; *A Nation at Risk*, 1983; Obama, 2009; Paige, 2002, 2003;). The initial idea behind the NDEA was to use national incentives to get America's top college students into the field of education (USDE, 2011). Lortie's (1972/2002) groundbreaking exploration of schoolteachers demonstrated how educational schools generally fail to affect teaching and learning. Lortie (1972/2002) explained that rather than use the teaching philosophies and practices promoted in teacher education programs, teachers generally use the methods popular when they were students. He labeled this the long apprenticeship of observation explaining that the 14 years of traditional direct instruction observed over a typical teacher's education from first grade through college had a greater

roll in informing teacher practice than the collaborative models promoted in education schools. When NCLB was in its early stages, the department of education consistently decried the quality of America's teacher education program (Bess & Galley, 2002). Discussing the lack of teacher preparation became a major sound point of then Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Chief among his complaints was that "far too many teachers are not trained in the subject they're teaching" (p.7).

The current administration, while critical of NCLB, does not differ in its discussion of teacher training and of teacher quality. This is evident in Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's (2009) remark that "many if not most of the nation's 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom." (para. 3). And this idea was echoed a year later when Duncan (2010) continued to assert that teachers are "not generally being taught to use data to differentiate and improve instruction, and boost student learning" (§ 3). Teacher quality, and teacher education programs then are consistently lambasted for their role in the perceived decline in America's education system.

Consistent among all the major educational reforms in the last 30 years, from the Reagan era "A Nation at Risk," to the current "Race to the Top," has been a call for explicit, rigorous, testable standards with matching assessments (Fullan, 2009; Fusarelli, 2005; Nelson, McGhee, Meno, & Slater, 2007). In order to help schools, districts, and state education departments address these needs, a number of education administration theorists have responded by providing guidelines on how best to develop standards-focused curriculum and assessment (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Marzano & Kendall,

1996; Marzano, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It is the local adoption of the theories posited by these theorists that has had the greatest effect on me as a teacher.

### **Current Goals**

The current educational reform movement “Race to the Top” has seven major focal areas: pay for teacher performance; standardized assessments; mayoral control of failing schools; longer school days/years; alternative teacher certification routes; charter schools; and stronger teacher evaluation measures and supports (Ungerer, 2010). While this program has strong opposition from teacher organizations and unions (O’Donovan, 2010), and has been critiqued for its capitalist paradigm (Ahlquist, Gorski, & Montaño, 2011), it is receiving a moderate amount of praise for its focus on teacher efficacy, rigorous standards, and targeted assessments (Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2010; O’Donovan, 2010; Ungerer, 2010; Whitmire, R, 2009). The program works by demanding schools make particular changes and then fiscally rewards those state school systems that make the most deliberate moves toward the stated changes.

### **Effects of Educational Reform**

An important issue of discussion here is that while critics of education consistently reflect on past reform movements as general failures (Duncan, 2010; Grant & Murray, 1999; Hunt, 2005) they each systemically changed the American education curriculum in significant ways (Emery, 2007; Franciosi, 2004; Fullan, 2009; Meier, 2000). Academicians often argue that while there can be no grand policy change to finally “fix” education in America, each reform movement has brought about a needed change that has helped further the discipline (Grant & Murray, 1999; Hunt, 2005;

O'Donovan, 2010). The post-Sputnik reforms led to an overhaul of the science and math curriculum as designed by the scientific community, and positively reformed American text book materials and content (Yager, 2000). "A Nation at Risk" inspired the first student and teacher accountability schemes, which served to inform future reform movements (Fullan, 2009). NCLB led to a national overhaul of the curriculum, often establishing better-organized curriculum maps focused on sequencing with added rigor (Fullan, 2009; Fusarelli, 2005; Nelson, McGhee, Meno, & Slater, 2007). While all major reform movements have failed to "cure" all educational woes, they have led to a national conversation on education that has generally promoted positive reforms that have helped advance the field.

Proponents of Standards Based Education (SBE), Fullan (2009) and Marzano (2010) each separately paint the past education reform movements as taking incremental steps toward the current standards-based education reform movement. Emery (2007) traced how corporate needs and demands have served to promote particular structural and curricular changes to how schools are run. Franciosi (2004) examined the economic and political factors that influence our classrooms such as who teaches our students, how much money is invested in education as well as the quality of the texts used in our classrooms. Generally it is agreed that while education reforms often call for a new paradigm of teaching and for an increase in teacher quality and accountability, they serve to change the curriculum rather than the methods of instruction. The proponents of SBE see current moves as a positive step toward genuinely improving American classroom instruction.



These proponents of SBE often cite *A Nation at Risk* as a major factor of the modern standards movement (Marzano, 1996; Shepard, 1993). State governments started questioning and resisting textbook information and began to establish their own standards (Yager, 2000). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics published their curricular standards in 1989 (NCTM, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education began awarding grants for the development of national standards in 1992 (IRA & NCTE 1996) and from this initiative the IRA NCTE standards for teaching English (IRA NCTE, 1996) and National Research Council's National Science Education Standards were developed (NSTA, 2011). This work had little effect on the state standards through the 1990's (Fullan, 2009; Marzano, 1996); however they became major resources for the standard reviews and revisions demanded by NCLB (Fullan, 2009; Nelson, McGhee, Meno & Slater, 2007), and have been a major resource for the current Common Core State Standards initiative (CCSSI, 2010; NCTM, NCSM, ASSM, & AMTE, 2010; Williams, 2010). Proponents of Standards Based Education see the last 20 years of education policy shifts as promoting a vast improvement to the way American schools are run and evaluated.

### **Understanding Educational Reform and Implications for my Study.**

Based on my understanding of the prior research literature, I have made the following assumptions. While education reform is often couched as a call for better teachers and teaching, it has yet to change those who go into the field. From Banton Smith (2002) through Lortie (1972/2002) to Fiestritzer (2011), the typical teacher is a young white female with a masters degree. Fiestritzer (2011) has shown how the teacher population, while opening up among races with white teacher going from 91% of the

total teaching population to 84% today, the field has become more feminized with 84% of all teachers being women in 2011 compare to 69% in 1986. While policy makers debate the reasons behind these relatively stable demographic trends, I accept Lortie's (1975/2002) dated, but still theoretically sound assumption that most policy makers do not understand the psychological reasons teachers go into the field, and rely too heavily on market forces to promote individual reform movements.

That said, each reform movement has changed education, and some of these changes have improved the field. The current wave of education reform has had the outcome of establishing national standards that will be taught throughout each grade level. While it calls for market-based reforms to improve teacher pay based on "significant" education gains, I believe that these calls will largely die out for two reasons. First, it underestimates the psychological rewards teacher receive from their job, and second, the states are generally unwilling to fund these programs to a level where teacher pay could compete with private fields.

However, one change that I feel will have a lasting effect on the field of education is the move toward standards (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Marzano, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). While there are researchers critiquing the current move toward the Common Core (Berliner, 2009, 2014; Ravich, 2013), I believe that the current trends have developed strong positive educational standards, and I feel the CCSSI is an appropriate step toward improving education in America. As the movement has grown over the last three decades, teachers are being required to incorporate standards in their planning and are being held accountable for

how students perform relative to these standards. I do not see this trend shifting any time soon, and for this reason the role of these standards will be discussed in the next section.

### **Standards Based Education**

The national demand for rigorous standards in our schools can be found in Diane Ravitch's (1983) early call for such. Ravitch traced the history of educational standards from 1945 through the 1980s and identified the post-Sputnik era of educational reforms as a model for educational improvement. She characterized the promise of an American Education as the great social equalizer, but explained that there was a great inequality inherent in the American education system because no standards were taught across various classrooms, schools, school systems, and states. The local control of schools allowed many Americans to get the best possible education found anywhere in the world, "but there were also poor schools with narrow offerings, located in poor areas where few students prepared for college" (p. xii). After recognizing the various racist traditions that failed to ensure a quality education for all students, she advocated for rigorous educational standards to foster achievement for all students. Her ideas were echoed by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which critiqued the American education system by outlining and called for, among other things, a national curriculum privileging the subjects of English, math, science, and social studies to be implemented in American schools.

While these early calls for SBE were resisted and critiqued (Applebee, 1996; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Cuban, 2009; Hillocks, 2002; Meier, 2000), Ravitch continued to call for standards-based education throughout her early career, and her 1995 text *National Standards in American Education* became the cornerstone in the SBE

movement. She critiqued educational norms as she railed against “traditional planning” where education goals were characterized as being entirely teacher based, and teachers taught lessons because they liked them rather than because they had a larger educational goal in mind. SBE has since been picked up by major education reformers (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Marzano, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) who continue to argue good pedagogy is ground in state and local standards rather than teacher whim. Eventually, “the consensus among many politicians was that students were not obtaining the level of knowledge and understanding needed to be competitive with other countries” (McMillan, 2008, p. 3), and SBE gained a large political following throughout the country.

### **Redefining and Co-opting the Teacher**

In light of the early failures of SBE due to teacher pushback, the current wave of SBE documents is based on the idea that teachers are professionals (Brown, 2004; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Meier, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). Meier (2000), in her critique of SBE, discussed the need for SBE to identify teachers as professionals because the SBE movement “rests on deep assumptions about the goals of education and the proper exercise of authority in the making of decisions” (p. 5). These assumptions serve to identify the teacher as a manager, which Meier rejects by comparing teachers to poets. On the other hand, proponents of SBE embrace the analogy of teacher as manager.

Ravitch (1995) began the call for “the professionalization of teacher training” (p. 34), as she supported Rosenbaum’s (1989) call to increase teacher authority within the field of education. Marzano and Kendall (1996) explained that the classroom teacher is the most important element in a child’s education. They worked to include teacher input

throughout SBE implementation from the design of the standards to the development of assessments. Glasser (1998) discussed the important role teachers play in the development of student achievement, highlighting the success of Jaime Escelante--a “high quality teacher”--who promoted a rigorous but caring learning environment (p. 99).

Glasser (1998) recognized various parallels among the classroom teacher and an industrial manager but was quick to point out how much more difficult a teacher’s role is because “industrial workers are more likely than students to do quality work because they are more concerned with survival” (p. 69). Also, industry as a setting is designed so that after a worker learns to do a job well, she or he can easily continue to perform at that level. Once a student has mastered one goal, he or she is required to move on to the next goal, and this constant working toward a new goal can cause students to burn out and shut down. Glasser called for quality teachers who can serve as emotional as well as intellectual coaches to help students remain invested in their own learning throughout their growth. Wiggins and McTighe (2006) identified teachers as curriculum designers and compared teaching to the fields of “architecture, engineering, or graphic arts” (p.13). Teachers, according to Wiggins and McTighe, are more than classroom managers, but are responsible to the total development of lessons from the early stages of interpreting the standards to the final assessment of each child’s progress.

### **Outline of Standards Based Education**

Texts promoting SBE are generally grounded in the same basic ideology. They identify teachers as professionals whose purpose is to help students develop (Brown, 2004; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; Meier, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). They identify education as goal oriented with the final product being an educated student

(Glasser, 1998; Marzano, 2004; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). They identify standards as written expressions of social goals designated for student mastery (Brown, 2004; Marzano & Kendal, 1996; Marzano, 2010; Meier, 2000). Finally, they identify a strict assessment protocol developed to help monitor student progress and establish student mastery of each specific goal (Ainsworth, 2006; Glasser, 1998; Marzano, 2010; Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001; Reeves, 2002).

A core responsibility of the teacher within SBE is that of curriculum and lesson design. Curricular planning reform has consistently followed early criticisms of lesson design and included a reversal of “traditional” methods of lesson planning (Ainsworth, 2003; Kaplan, 2001; Marzano, 2010; Ravitch, 1995; Smagorinsky, 2008; Thompson & Thompson, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Traditional lesson design is generally defined as the teacher beginning with his or her personal interest and grounding lessons in the various texts that teachers are required or desire to use. Ravitch (1995) felt that teachers relied too heavily on textbooks and their personal interest to design lessons, and Marzano & Kindall (1996) critiqued the reliance on textbooks as they argued that “even when highly structured textbooks are used, teachers commonly make independent and idiosyncratic decisions regarding what should be emphasized, what should be added, and what should be deleted” from specific lessons (p. 13). Therefore, each of these policy critics made a call for state education standards to be designed and implemented.

Marzano and Kindall (1996) and Reeves (2002) each independently designed a protocol to help school administrations to implement local, and later state standards across their classrooms. Smagorinsky (2001) advocated for teachers to develop lesson

plans by identifying important themes and building lessons that support the educational goal of students exploring texts and thinking around that theme. Thompson and Thompson (2000) developed their “Learning Focused Schools” program to provide staff development protocols as well as teacher and administrator tools to promote the use of standards in lesson design and assessment.

Rather than beginning with the materials that teachers want to teach and work toward developing assessments, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) argued for a “backwards design” where teachers begin by unpacking the standards they are expected to teach, develop assessments based on these standards, and then select materials as they necessarily help students fill the needs identified for students to master the standard (p. 42). Central to all of these lesson planning programs is that lesson design begins with identifying key concepts that must be taught, developing assessments that will help students develop and demonstrate their understanding of the key concepts, selecting texts to facilitate student understanding of the key concepts, explicit lesson planning grounded in the established goals, and then the implementation of the lesson.

### **Assumptions of SBE**

While teacher professionalism and agency is a central tenant of SBE, it is all predicated on the assumption that teachers are grounding their lessons in local, state, and national standards. Wiggins and McTighe (2006) explained that standards “specify what students should know and be able to do. These standards provide a useful framework to help us identify teaching and learning priorities and guide our design of curriculum and assessments” (pp. 13-14). McMillan (2008) asserted that standards “represent the levels of performance defined in the content standards that establish specific expectations and

examples of what it means to be ‘proficient’ or ‘adequate’ in what is demonstrated by the students” (p. 3). The Common Core State Standards Commission (2010) mirrored this description as they explained standards “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them” (para. 1). Throughout SBE literature, there is very little discussion of the content of standards outside of each state’s standards and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as content standards promoted by various professional associations. However, within SBE standards are presented as fundamental educational goals (IRA & NCTE, 2006) an educational framework (Marzano, 2010), benchmarks (Reeves, 2002), a road map (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006). Regardless of the metaphor established by the author, educational standards are seen as the foundation of SBE.

Counter-intuitively, the bulk of the literature on SBE is not focused on classroom instruction. Thompson and Thompson (2000) explain that the movement toward SBE is less about adjusting the ways teachers provide instruction, and more about making sure teachers are grounding their lessons in the standards. The texts focusing on teaching within an SBE setting focus on a Mastery Education model (Brown, 2004; Cox, 2009; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002), Marzano (2004) outlines the educational triumvirate of standards, instruction, and assessment. The standards dictate what is to be taught, the instruction—based on identifying similarities and differences, summary, teacher feedback, practice—transmits this information, and the assessment documents mastery of that standard. Outside of these texts focusing on “best practices,” SBE literature directed toward teachers focuses on unpacking standards to develop appropriate lessons (Brown, 2005; Reeves, 2002;



Thompson & Thompson, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and progress monitoring and feedback (Ainsworth & Viegut; 2006; Clarke, Stow, Ruebling & Kayona; 2006; Glasser, 1996; Marzano 2010; McMillan, 2008; National Research Council, 2001; Tognolini & Stanley 2007; Valli & Renert-Ariev, 2002) which are both dealt with through appropriate assessment. This segues nicely into my next section. However, prior to discussing the role of Assessment in SBE, I feel that it is important to discuss some of the major criticisms of SBE.

### **Critiques of Standards Based Education.**

SBE is resisted along two closely related arguments: one, that SBE serves to deemphasize teacher efficacy and ignores many of the reasons teachers enter into the profession (Applebee, 1996; Cuban, 2009; Hersh; 2009; Meier, 2002; Ravitch, 2010), and two, SBE is overly dependent on assessment, which serves to distort the curriculum (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Giordano, 2007; Hillocks, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). It is important to recognize that Ravitch (2010), one of the original and most vocal proponents of SBE, has been very critical of the movement in her most recent publications.

Meier (2002) and Ravitch (2010) separately critique the SBE metaphor of teacher as manager. Both authors explore Lortie's (1975/2002) ethnography of the typical schoolteacher and how teachers tend to enter the profession due to a call to serve rather than a desire for economic advancement. Teachers rely more on the psychological rewards from nurturing successful students than on traditional economic rewards. While Lortie makes connections to clerical calls to service, Meier (2002) compares teachers to artists, describing them as "poets in their personalities: they love the unpredictable.

That's why they're drawn to children and not business school" (p. xi). The management focus of SBE can be interpreted to deemphasize this nature and work counter to how teachers generally relate to their students. Applebee (1996) supplemented this critique by explaining that while "standards of accomplishment" are important, simply relying on these as the goal of education is short-sighted (p. 115). Education, he argued, is about extending and enriching student experiences and understandings through conversations that allow for disagreement, student self-discovery, and alternate understandings. These discussions that foster continued growth and development beyond school, are not deemed appropriate in most SBE systems.

The most prevalent critique of SBE is that it is overly focused on assessment, and specifically standardized assessment (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Giordano, 2007; Hillocks; 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Ravitch 2010). After tracing the history of the testing movement Giordano (2007) identified various fiscal and political rewards that have been created and continued through implementation of SBE and the subsequent development of a testing industry. Berliner and Biddle (1995) critiqued SBE as a "Manufactured Crisis" through the way education was covered in the media, represented in film, and discussed by politicians. Cuban (2009) explained that the demands for SBE, while usually grounded in the rhetoric of providing a quality education for all students, generally fail to acknowledge social and economic forces that hinder educational attainment.

While still embracing the information that can be gained from standardized assessments like the NAEP, Ravitch (2010) documented the growth of the testing industry from a million to a billion dollar industry from the 1990's to 2007, and

questioned the motives of these tests and the impact they have on instruction as she repeated the “maxim among educators that ‘what gets tested gets taught’” (p 235). Ravitch praised the level of the curriculum, but questioned the quality of the tests. Berliner (2006) argued that by shifting political focus from social concerns in schools to testing results, there is a rhetorical and political shift where teachers can be held accountable for the results of all students. Hillocks (2007) explored how having strict testing demands of teachers directly influenced instruction as teachers adjusted their instruction, generally for the worse, so that students are prepared for the exam, and Nichols and Berliner (2008) concluded that when teacher pay and employment are connected to test scores, teachers, administrators, and states are more likely to cheat to ensure appropriate gains will be met. With these criticisms in mind, assessment is a central tenant of SBE, which brings me to the next section of this literature review.

#### Understanding Standards Based Education and Implications for my Study

While overt calls for a national curriculum did not begin until the 1980’s, the field of education has been slowly moving toward SBE since the Sputnik-era reforms in the math and sciences curriculum. Generally, teachers are unable to argue against SBE because many of the injustices of the education system can be traced back to a general lack in education standards.

That said, the standards movement has also been used to restrict teacher autonomy and often positions a teacher’s willingness to allow students to openly explore ideas on their own as bad pedagogy. Under SBE, teachers are expected to direct instruction according to the curriculum, and deviations from that can be punished. SBE reforms often couch their discussion of Standards Based Instruction in the rhetoric of

“best practices,” and they often provide walk through protocols designed to help administrators assess teacher efficacy with five minute walkthroughs designed to make sure certain key instructional strategies are prevalent. For example Thompson and Thompson’s (2000) walkthrough checklist includes a posted standard, a posted essential question, the use of some graphic organizer or another, and when a student is asked, “what are you learning today,” he or she will respond with a paraphrase of the posted standard.

As I have seen SBE implemented in three separate school districts, it has been narrowed down to a pedagogy of appearance where if everything on the checklist is marked off, it is assumed the students are learning. I feel it is generally important for teachers to have a developmental goal in mind when planning instruction, and SBE certainly answers that need. However, often the transition to SBE is implemented in the form of a standardized lesson plan, and this serves to undermine the creative reasons leading many people to enter the field.

Also, while the focus of SBE is to ensure that students are learning common core ideas, student mastery of these ideas has been tied to student performance on standardized assessments. Critics’ major concern with SBE is how it is tied to assessment. My concern is how these assessments are produced and aligned with the individual state curricula. Assessment is an integral part of SBE and this relationship is further explored in the next section.

### **Assessment**

As a major component of SBE, assessments are divided into numerous subgroups based on the purpose of the assessment, and while there are some similarities across the

various taxonomies of testing, each researcher generally puts his or her own spin on it. Wiggins and McTighe (2006) defined assessments based on their purpose, including diagnostic assessments, longitudinal assessments and rubrics, evaluative assessments, and performance tasks. Diagnostic assessments are used to determine what students already know and what should be covered more thoroughly in class. Evaluative assessments are those provided at the end of a unit to demonstrate student mastery of specific standards. Longitudinal assessments and rubrics are designed to show how a student has grown over a specified amount of time, and performance tasks are designed for students to demonstrate understanding of standards by completing tasks that require an applied understanding of the curriculum.

Although he relied heavily on Wiggins and McTighe's paradigm of assessment, Brown (2004) focused his attention on who gives the various assessments, discussing the need for repeated self-assessment where students express how they are doing and how comfortable they are with the material; peer assessment, where they get feedback from others without fear of reprisal from a superior; and teacher assessment, where an experienced other evaluates the student's mastery of the standard.

Clarke and Clarke (2000) promoted performance-based assessments that represent "authentic" experiences that closely mirror out-of-school business and workplace tasks. Rather than focusing on the various types of assessments, Clarke and Clarke argued that students should understand what they should be learning by completing each assessment, and as they develop these understandings, students will be more inclined to participate in school. They also placed a high value on parents and administrators understanding the classroom assessments and helping the children complete the tasks.

Ravitch (2010) separated assessment from evaluation, arguing that teachers should use various evaluations to ensure student mastery of standards, and that assessments, characterized by Ravitch as national, normed or criterion referenced, multiple choice tests, are but one evaluation tool teachers should use. Although she argued that large-scale assessment systems are a valuable tool, she was concerned about the assessment industry and how assessments can have negative effects on curriculum.

However, most SBE researchers (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Marzano, 2010; McMillan, 2008; Reeves, 2002) divided assessments into two types depending on their purpose: formative and summative. Marzano (2010) explained that summative assessments are conducted when instruction is concluded, while formative assessments are continued throughout an instructional period. In the end, formative assessments are used to guide student growth while summative assessments are designed to demonstrate student mastery of the standards. SBE advocates have produced a great deal of literature helping teachers and administrators develop formative assessments, implement systems of continuous assessment, and interpret formative assessment data. Marzano (2010) asserted that student performance is highly correlated with quality teacher feedback, explaining that assessments are the most common form of teacher feedback. Along with other SBE researchers (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; McMillan, 2008; Reeves, 2002), he created protocols to help teachers provide useful feedback through the development of formative assessments. However, for the sake of this study of state standards and assessment, that literature is largely irrelevant. However, it is important to understand SBE's focus on assessment. Within SBE, assessment is the driving force for instruction. All decisions are to be based on student data, which is found in student tests scores on

prior standardized assessments as well as new formative assessments. My study is important in that he examines the relationships between the assessment documents and the Standards they are derived from.

Of particular interest to this study is the use of summative assessments to demonstrate student mastery of the standards, and specifically what McMillan (2008) described as the “large scale” assessments (p. 119), or the state and national standardized assessments that are most commonly used to judge student, teacher, school, and district performance.

### **Standardized Assessment**

Since the implementation of NCLB, the topic of standardized assessment has been a constant topic of research and discussion (Goodman & Hambleton, 2004; Johnstone, Dikkers, & Luedeke, 2009; Leistyna, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Skerrett, 2008). Central to the call for testing is a national audit culture (Smith & Hodkinson, 2007). “The audit culture is dominated by attempts to measure the success and value of everything. Thus, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, education establishments are increasingly judged comparatively” (p. 431). An audit culture wants institutions structured to produce and provide near-immediate feedback on the successful implementation of a program and constant adjustment based on these assessments.

While Berliner (2009) and Nichols and Berliner (2008) argued that the NCLB demand for testing has seriously damaged the educational system, Johnstone, Dikkers, and Luedeke (2009) provided a different view of testing in American schools. They accounted for national concerns about how testing obscures the educational process while pointing out that testing has “had positive effects on previously marginalized students,

such as students with disabilities” (p. 14). However, their main concern is how the national trend toward high-stakes testing and the focus on test scores has changed educational leadership. According to Johnstone, Dikkers, and Luedeke, superintendents have had to change their approach to leading school districts to promote growth in test scores or lose federal funding.

Proponents of standardized testing in our schools point out the sheer amount of data that these assessments produce. McMillan (2008) explained that large scale assessments allow teachers, parents, and policy makers to “monitor student performance from year to year,” to “give feedback to students and parents,” to “compare schools and students,” to evaluate teachers and principals, and to accredit schools and school systems (pp. 119-120). Standardized testing provides a numerical resource for politicians, communities, and parents to audit and comment on school performance that feels more authoritative than the traditional dinner table questions about what the child learned at school that day (Smith & Hodkinson, 2007). Critics of assessment (Bandyopadhyay, 2007), however, use this same fact to argue that these standardized assessments dehumanize students by reducing them to numbers on a page.

Because much of the critique of SBE is grounded in its reliance on assessment, those criticisms must be reviewed here. The most common critique of standardized assessments is how they serve to lower standards rather than raise the bar on student performance (Graves, 2002; Hillocks, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Graves (2002) argued that standardized assessments tend to cater to what is most easily and cheaply scored, especially privileging computer-based scoring. Ravitch (2010), while a proponent of SBE and testing, nonetheless raised a number of concerns about the amount of money being



generated in the business of state assessments, and she questioned how valid these tests are. Hillocks (2007) thoroughly explored the writing assessments of all 50 states and then examined the effect on instruction. He found that prompt-based writing had significantly shifted the ways writing was taught throughout the country and that students were not being prepared to think independently but were being taught how best to respond to general prompts rather than to write to learn or express one's thoughts.

Outside the field of special education (Flowers, Browder, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006; Rupp & Lexaux, 2006) and English language learning (Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2006; Young, Cho, Ling, Cline, Steinberg, & Stone, 2008), where assessments are being adjusted, and limited studies in the field of math education (Webb, Hermann, & Webb, 2007), there are very few studies outside the testing industry that reflect on how closely state standards and assessments align. The most touted of such studies is Hillocks' (2007) examination of writing instruction and assessment where he documented a heightened focus on writing assessment negatively affected classroom instruction. These results are closely mirrored by Agostino, Welsh, and Corson (2007), who found that teachers whose instruction most closely mirrored the methods found on various assessments performed better on said assessments, and Ravitch's (2010) claim that what is tested is what will be taught.

It is repeatedly argued that if teachers will simply teach to the standards, students will perform well on standardized assessments (Ainsworth & Viegut; 2006; Clarke, Stow, Ruebling & Kayona; 2006; Marzano 2010; McMillan, 2008; Tognolini & Stanley 2007; Valli & Renert-Ariev, 2002). However, it has been well documented that teachers feel a constant pressure for their students to perform well on these assessments (D'Agostino,

Welsh, & Corson, 2007; Hillocks, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Ravitch, 2010; Stewart, 2010), and will adjust their teaching accordingly. As will be examined in my next section, my initial review of Georgia's standards does not support SBE assumptions about standardized assessments. Georgia's assessments in reading and language arts were not as rigorous as the standards, and they often did not assess the major skills and understandings outlined in the standards.

### **Understanding Assessment and Implications for my Study**

The majority of the critiques of SBE are grounded in the idea that standardized assessments are counterproductive. SBE does little to answer these critiques as they assume that standardized assessments are inherently tied to the curriculum and necessary to fulfill the requirements of the audit culture promoted by SBE. The heart of the problem is that neither the critics nor proponents of SBE are listening to one another. I ground this assumption in the fact that these researchers do not cite one another. Outside the works of Diane Ravitch, there are few names that cross the reference lists of both SBE proponents and assessment critics. The major critics of assessment (D'Agostino, Welsh, & Corson, 2007; Hillocks, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Stewart, 2010) do not cite the major proponents of SBE (Ainsworth & Viegut; 2006; Clarke, Stow, Ruebling & Kayona; 2006; Marzano 2010; McMillan, 2008; Tognolini & Stanley 2007; Valli & Renert-Ariev, 2002). The only name that is found on both lists is Diane Ravitch. Her early work is highly cited by SBE proponents, but her current work is not found in recent articles promoting SBE. According to a Google Scholar search, of the 3,000 current articles concerning SBE published since 2012, only 75 of them had references to Diane Ravitch, and of them 29 referenced her text critical of SBE. All 29 were critiques of SBE. Thus,

these two camps travel in separate and distinct research communities, rarely citing across research traditions.

Proponents of SBE consistently demand appropriate alignment between instruction and assessment, but they fail to critique the structures of standardized assessments and the effect these assessments have on instruction. They encourage teachers to shape class assessments toward instruction, but do not examine the political ramifications of demanding teacher success on assessments the teacher has neither the ability to create nor critique. While standardized assessment is designed to audit teacher ability and effectiveness, there are no audits of the assessments being used outside of the industry producing those assessments.

My research project will examine these standardized assessments and demonstrate how they are, or are not, aligned to the standards they are assessing.

### **Pertinent Research Grounded in SFL**

While the use of SFL has been fairly limited in the United States (Rogers R. , 2003; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berke, Mosley, Hui, & O'Garro Joseph, 2005) it has found some acceptance within the work of Critical Discourse Analysis (Aguirre-Muñoz, Park, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2007/2008; Gales, 2009; Huang & Mohan, 2009; Knapp & Watkins, 2005) That said, in international contexts, especially in the UK and Australia, SFL has been used to explore every aspect of curricular design (Coffin, 2006; Fang, 2005) implementation (Coffin, 2006; Coffin, North, & Martin, 2009) and assessment (Hughes, 2009; Macken-Horarik, 2006).

SFL is generally used to represent the ideological underpinnings that inform the development of a text (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003). Social

linguists use SFL to understand the cultural worlds that influence the production of a particular text and expose and comment on the underlying meanings embedded in a text that can only be understood by associating the rhetorical choices made in the production of a text with the culture from which that text originates. To this end, Alfonso and Germani (2007) used SFL to examine the common themes from separate texts produced by postcolonial minority authors. Based on SFL's representation of how culture informs communication, Armstrong and Ferguson (2010) argued that an SFL approach could help researchers and educators better understand and assist people with aphasiology, the study of linguistic problems resulting from brain damage. Coffin, North & Martin (2008) used an SFL analysis of electronic teacher/student conferencing as well as interview data to understand how conferencing could help focus lessons in argumentation.

Coffin (2006) also collected student work and conducted a number of semi-structured interviews to understand the writing demands of Australian secondary students. She concluded her study by advocating for teaching students how to use SFL in order to understand school writing demands and better respond to the institutional demands of the Australian National Assessments. While Coffin's work directly speaks to my research interest, her desire to connect assessment to the standard is contrary to my own research purposes. She explores how SFL should be used to ensure thematic continuity between standard and assessment, while I believe that the types of mandated standardized state and national assessments promoted by education policy makers are disconnected. (nice underlying of how your study differs and enriches her approach) (transition sentence here) Ravich (2010) explored the economic forces behind the politics of assessment and how the national assessment movement is rife with decisions grounded

in what benefits these assessment companies rather than what is best for schools.

Macken-Horarik (2006) used SFL to analyze three papers submitted for A-levels, a UK final assessment, marking thematic characteristics that distinguished the paper that scored higher than the others, and advocated teaching students to understand the “hidden requirements of the [assessment/writing] situation” (p. 27). She specifically uses experiential analysis as a tool to examine the choices students made when constructing responses to an open ended question. By focusing on how students described their experiences, Macken-Horarik discussed how some students were better able to adjust their voices to suit the genre of an A-Level paper than others as they embedded the questions into their responses in ways that poorly performing students did not. Hughes (2009) advocates using an SFL analysis of curricular documents to produce assessments that better match the curricular goals of educational institutions (specifically the Australian National Curriculum). Fang (2004) used SFL to understand the writing demands of scientific writing and advocated direct instruction in the vocabulary and grammars of scientific writing. Fang was primarily interested in how “language is indeed an open-ended yet interlocking system of options” (p. 336), and how the structure of scientific language limits reporting options. He focused on the noun clauses and abstractions of scientific writing and demonstrated how these structures vary significantly from everyday text and present a barrier for students. He advocated for students to be taught how to conduct SFL analysis and engage in an SFL analysis of scientific texts to better understand these papers.

### **Implications for my research**

My understanding of human transaction is grounded in my understanding of Rosenblatt and Bakhtin. Bakhtin's discussion of authoritative discourse underlies my assumptions about how these standards and assessments are generated and how teachers transact with these authoritative discourses. According to Bakhtin (1981), the authoritative discourse "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us" (p. 342). The power imbedded in the authoritative word comes from "a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past" (p. 342). Because authoritative discourse is embedded through history and policy with so much power and weight in an individual's mind, it cannot be played with. "One cannot divide it up—agree with one part, accept but not completely another part, reject utterly a third part" (p. 343). According to Bakhtin (1981) one must accept or reject the entire discourse. I believe that the authoritative discourses of the Georgia standards and assessments are in many ways contrary to one another, and the ways teachers, administrators, and students transact with these standards fascinates me. My exploration of how teachers transact with standards and assessments will be ground in my assumption that one must wholly accept or reject an authoritative discourse and my analysis will have a personal lean toward discovering which discourses are accepted and which are rejected.

Central to the SFL research discussed in the prior section, the researchers collected two separate levels of data. First, they collected texts that were appropriate to their research interest. Second, they conducted some form of ethnographic research, usually semi-structured interviews, in order to understand the cultural world in which the

selected texts were created, disseminated, or used. In the tradition of each of these studies, I collected curriculum and assessment texts from the State of Georgia, individual school districts, and the teachers and administrators who I interviewed. I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to better understand how these teachers and administrators situated themselves and their classroom according to these documents. These discussions of how teachers and administrators understand the curricular and assessments documents and expectations that education policy makers set through these curricular documents helped me understand and unpack the assumptions that are culturally embedded in the various documents. Once I better understand these embedded expectations, I was able to unpack the political implications of each document.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the following:

- 1) What is the historical context for standards and standardized testing in Georgia, and what are the implications of that history?
- 2) What curriculum documents specifically designed to inform instruction are provided to teachers by state and local school districts, and who developed these documents?
- 3) How do these documents construct teachers, students, and instruction? (e.g. student identity, teacher role, methods of instruction?)
- 4) How and why do teachers and administrators select and privilege particular curriculum documents over others, and how do they use these documents to design and implement instruction? Subsequently, have their practices changed as a result of adhering to or resisting particular curricular mandates?

In this chapter, I have tried to answer the first question by providing a discussion of the history of curriculum reform in the U.S. The traditions built around school reform in American history have had a great influence in development of national educational standards and the need/desire/demand to assess student progress through these standards. The current SBE movement was very slow to start. Thirty years after the initial demands for SBE, first mentioned during the Eisenhower response to Sputnik and repeated in the “A Nation at Risk” publication, Marzano (1996) called the movement nearly dead. Little did he know that within ten years of this pronouncement, his paradigm would be the prevalent paradigm in education (Marzano, 2010; Ravitch, 2010). This progression is generally seen as educational progress (Duncan, 2009), and I am not sure that the pedagogical ramifications of this national movement have been thoroughly explored.

In the following chapter I will discuss my research methods and methodology used to think about and dialogue with these questions. Question two will be answered in chapter four as I use SFL to analyze specific curricular and assessment documents, and in chapters four and five I will explore my data in order to understand questions three and four. I will then discuss the implications of my research in chapter six.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In the prior chapter, I explored the historical contexts that produced the current wave of educational standards in the United States. I also discussed how authoritative discourse has been defined and studied in educational settings as well as how Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2003) has been used to trace the socio-cultural implications embedded in the production of various texts. Based on these understandings, I conducted a research project examining the authoritative discourses of Georgia current standards and the state produced assessment documents. However, I was also interested in how Georgia teachers responded to the authoritative voices embedded in the curricular and assessment documents, so I used the tool of transactional analysis (Stewart, 2010, 2011) as a framework for conducting interviews with teachers and administrators in Georgia. In this chapter, I outline how these tools were used to collect and analyze data.

As I conducted this research, Bahktin's (1981) exploration of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse informed my understanding of how teachers transact with the standards and the various documents teachers use while developing their classroom curriculum. In this study I am particularly interested in the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) (Cox, 2007), the Georgia Criterion Reference Competency Test Domain Descriptions (Barge, 2012; Cox, 2007), and the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (Barge, 2012). It is important for me to understand how teachers transact with

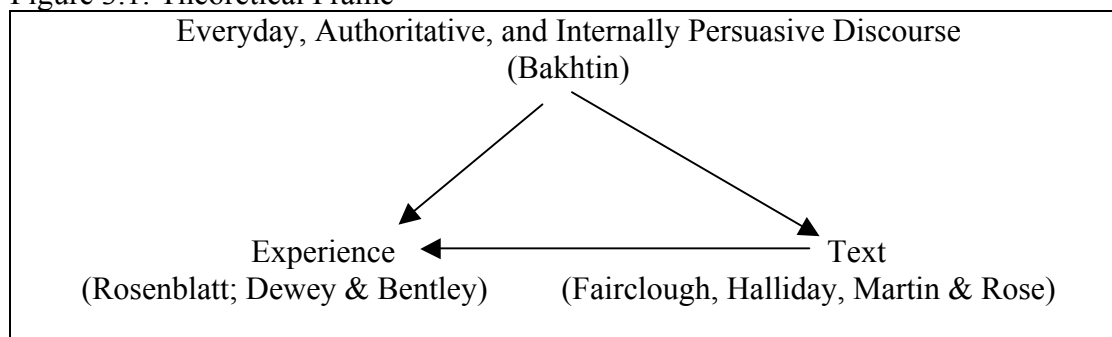
the curriculum within their various settings and how this transaction informed their instruction. For this reason, I grounded this study in the qualitative research tradition of Transactional Analysis (Stewart, 2010, 2011) using ethnographic tools (deMarrais, 2004; Glesne, 1999; Holliday, 2007; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005) as well as document analysis methods—specifically those related to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2003).

In this chapter I explore my general methodology as well as outline the methodical steps taken to explore the various standards and assessment documents as well as understand how the teachers I worked with related with each document.

### Methodology

This chapter might be confusing because I have two separate data collection and analysis tools described herein. To explain this, I refer back to the following chart from chapter one:

Figure 3.1: Theoretical Frame



The text I explored were designed to affect teacher experience. Because I understand these two elements to be distinct from one another, I was unable to find a single analytical tool to examine them both. I was interested in how the text shaped teacher experience, but I am also interested in the teacher's entire experience that included the standards and assessments, but also encompasses a much larger social context. I used

SFL (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2002; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2003) to understand how an authoritative discourse was produced and disseminated in the texts, and I used Transactional Analysis (Stewart, 2010,2011) to understand how teachers responded to these texts as well as the other authoritative discourses and their own internally persuasive discourse.

While I used two separate research tools, I found that my process was generally the same. I designed my study. I collected data, and then I analyzed this data. Therefore this chapter will follow this structure. I begin with a general overview of each methodology, followed by a description of my research methods. The methods section will begin with the data collection protocols and analysis tools used for the documents, followed by a discussion of how research participants were recruited, a description of each participant and a discussion of Transactional Analysis methods. I then discuss the limitations of this study. The structure of this chapter mirrors the structure of the dissertation with me beginning each section discussing SFL and ending it by discussing Transactional Analysis.

### **Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Halliday (2002) began to provide the framework for SFL by exploring systems of language and culture and then by tracing how these systems influence specific situations and texts; however, he was also quick to call this entire framework into question.

The system is not some independent object, it is simply the potential that lies behind all the various instances. Although the actual texts that you process and produce will always be limited, the potential (for processing and producing texts) has to reach the stage where it is unlimited, so that you can take in new texts that

you haven't heard or read before, and also interact with them. (p.8, parenthesis in original)

For example, the myriad ways Shakespeare's "To be or not to be" speech from Hamlet is presented in film and on stage. Olivier's (1948) angst ridden presentation from the top of a parapet contrasted with Branagh's (1996) angry diatribe yelled within a hall of mirrors, or Gibson's (1990) almost jovial recitation set in a catacombs, or an Alliance theatre's 1988 production where the actor portrayed Hamlet drunk in the throne room. In each case, it's the same words, but the setting, enunciation, and body language of each actor significantly affects the meaning. The words "To be or not to be" have never changed, but the meaning is totally different in each setting.

Exploring text is complicated because any given text is constantly situated in a moment, culture, and language that serve to inform the understanding of that text. One must tease out the given culture, situation, language and text in order to understand language in use; however, the dichotomies of language and text, and culture and situation are not separable. Rather they are reciprocal (Halliday, 2002). The language informs the text and the text reflects on the language as a whole. The situation cannot be separated from the culture in which the situation occurs. Knapp and Watkins (2005) contended that SFL "accounts for meaning being determined by the language system and structures of texts. Texts are produced in, and determined by, social contexts, so that it is possible to identify the determining social elements in the structure and grammar of individual texts" (p. 22). SFL theorists (Eggins, 2004; Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1994; Martin & Rose, 2003) have established a rigorous methodology grounded in linguistics for breaking down, interpreting, and understanding the complicated nature of language in use.

Specifically, SFL allows me to trace and understand how an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) permeates the standards and domains descriptions and understand how these documents construct teachers, students, and learning.

SFL allowed me to conduct a microanalysis of the state assessment and standards documents and identify the key experiences students are expected to have at each grade level. After breaking down the various standards and assessment documents from each state, SFL allowed me to compare the various documents and identify how well the documents match expectations from standards to assessments.

### **Transactional Analysis**

Transactional Analysis (Stewart, 2010, 2011) is a data analysis tool used to help a researcher make sense of interview data (Seidman, 2006) by accounting for the co-constructive nature of dialogue. Stewart (2011) explained that language is a “dynamic force that cannot be understood without being attentive to the transactions that occur between individuals and cultures” (p 284). He continues that if this is the case—that one accepts a Bahktinian perspective on language and transactional understanding of dialogue—“in order to communicate and understand the experiences expressed by participants, researchers must be cognizant of the connotations that words, previously uttered by others, bring with them to dialogue” (p. 285).

Stewart (2010, 2011) argued that a thematic analysis of data can help a qualitative researcher account for the transactional spaces that exists in human dialogue. In order to do this, he proposed a multi-step process for collecting and analyzing data. This process includes writing dialogic memos after completing an interview, mapping the interviews after they are completed, using narrative analysis to identify and explore themes

embedded in the interview data, revisiting the interview data in order to identify themes that are consistent across interviews, and use these findings to understand the data by focusing on the transactional processes occurring throughout this data collection and analysis process.

### **Methods**

In this section, I describe the tools I used to collect, organize, and analyze the data necessary to understand how the documents in question construct teachers, students and learning as well as how teachers respond to these constructions. I begin by explaining the documents I selected to analyze and the SFL tools I used to understand them. I then follow this with a discussion of how I selected seven research participants to discuss the curriculum and assessments and the transactional analysis tools I used to explore this data.

It is important for me to note that all of these methods can be connected to a Bakhtinian discussion of dialogue and discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). SFL relies on Bakhtin's theory to think "about the dialogic nature of discourse, even in text we traditionally think of as monologues (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 44). Transactional analysis (Stewart 2010) tries to account for the mutual experience building that occurs during dialogue and works to resist the move toward a monologue when conducting educational research.

### **Document Selection**

For this project, I collected standards and associated assessment content descriptions from the Georgia Department of Education. All documents were collected from that department's website and were the current curriculum at the time of collection. The teachers were transitioning from the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) toward

the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and were preparing students to take the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) connected to the GPS while preparing to teach the CCGPS the following year. It was a convoluted task that the department of education of Georgia was demanding of these teachers; therefore, I felt it was important to include all of these documents in my analysis. The following chart outlines the documents collected as well as publication dates, a brief description of the documents as well as the appropriate corollary documents.

Figure 3.2: Documents Examined

Document	Year published	Description of documents	Correlated to:
Georgia Performance Standards	2006	8 documents: 1 per grade level, each containing all language arts and reading standards for each grade	CRCT Domain Descriptions (2007)
Common Core Georgia Performance Standards	2012	1 document covering language arts and reading standards for each grade	CRCT Domain Descriptions (2012)
CRCT Domain Descriptions	2007	2 documents: 1 covering content domains for all grades in reading, 1 covering content domains for all grades in language arts	Georgia Performance Standards (2006)
CRCT Domain Descriptions	2012	2 documents: 1 covering content domains for all grades in reading, 1 covering content domains for all grades in language arts	Georgia Performance Standards (2012)

### Data Analysis

My analysis process can be described as convoluted at best. Before I found a process that helped me understand how the authoritative discourse of the texts are shaped, I had four false starts. However, each of these attempts served to inform my larger study. I begin by explaining these false starts and how they led to the analytical process used in

chapter four. I then explain the three SFL tools that inform my analysis, and I conclude this section by providing an outline of my analysis process using a single example pulled from my data.

I conducted an appraisal analysis for my first attempt to understand the curricular and assessment documents. According to Martin and Rose (2003) appraisal is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiate in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned” (p. 22). This analysis went nowhere. I realized that the expected experiences outlined in the documents were far more interesting and important than the appraisal of these experiences, so I began an experiential analysis of the documents.

Martin and Rose (2003) define ideation as focusing “how our experience of ‘reality’, material and symbolic, is construed in discourse” (p. 66). Martin and Rose identify three types of figures that represent the various ways experience can be communicated: doing, signifying and being.

Figure 3.3: Ideation types of figures

doing	middle effective	he was <u>working</u> <u>five policemen viciously knocked me down</u>
signifying	saying sensing	I can't explain the pain I <u>saw</u> what was left
being	quality class part identity existence	he was <u>popular</u> he was an <u>Englishman</u> goanna have <u>flattish bodies</u> the <u>narrator</u> was <u>Helena</u> there is <u>the penalty</u>

(Martin & Rose, 2003, pp. 82)

By tracing the ways experience is described in a text, one can outline how the various participants within a text are defined. “Over the course of a text, the qualities, classes and parts ascribed to participants in each figure build up a picture of them. This picture is



construed by the whole set of qualities, classes and parts ascribed to theme as a text unfolds” (p. 91). I limited my ideational analysis to the level of experience and thus conducted an experiential analysis. I began this analysis to understand how knowledge, teachers, and students are constructed by the various documents. However, I soon realized that the structure of the text was such that this analysis was difficult and hard to outline. As I tried to trace the ideas, I kept getting lost in the different participants and therefore decided to trace these participants through an identification analysis.

Identification analysis is concerned with tracing how the various participants are introduced and tracked through a document (Martin & Rose, 2003). I found that by tracking the various participants, I was able to outline their roles and relationships with one another and tease out the power structures promoted. As I began this analysis, I realized that the participants were presented in fairly straightforward ways. The identification was not confusing, and that this analysis was not going to be helpful in my general understanding of the texts. I realized, that I was not confused with tracing the participants through the documents, but by the way the information flowed. This led me to a Periodic analysis (Knapp & Watkins, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2003).

Periodicity (Martin & Rose 2003) or a thematic progression analysis (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008, Fries, 1995) allows a reader to trace how information flows through a document. Fang & Schleppegrell (2008) explain that a thematic progression traces the progress of Themes and Rhemes through a given text. The Theme is “the element which serves as the point of departure for the message, that which orients the clause within its context (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004, p. 64) quoted in (Fang & Schleppegrel, 2008, p. 31). Fries (1995) explained that the theme is not the topic of a sentence but “functions as

an orienteer to the message. It orients the listener/reader to the message that is about to be perceived and provides a framework for the interpretation of that message” (p. 318). Fang & Schleppegrel (2008) then explained “the remainder of the message, the part of the clause in which the Theme is developed, is called the Rheme. Thus, the Theme can be identified with the first experiential element (most often, though not always, a noun or noun group) in a clause; the Rheme is the remainder of the clause” (p. 31). The periodic analysis did not provide any great insight into the data, but it did allow provide an organizational structure that facilitated a productive experiential and appraisal analysis of the various documents. It was at this point that I was able to see patterns within and across the documents and understand the structural implications of them more thoroughly.

### **An example of the process**

As I explain how I used thematic progression, ideation, and appraisal analytical tools to understand the texts in question, please refer to the two figures below.

Figure 3.4: Reading CCGPS

<b>ELACC7RL1:</b> Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	<b>ELACC7RI1:</b> Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<b>ELACC7RL2:</b> Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.	<b>ELACC7RI2:</b> Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Figure 3.5: Reading GPS

<p><b>ELA7R1 The student demonstrates comprehension and shows evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.</b></p> <p><b>For literary texts, the student identifies the characteristics of various genres and produces evidence of reading that:</b></p>
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- a. Distinguishes between the concepts of theme in a literary work and the author's purpose in an expository text.
- b. Interprets a character's traits, emotions, or motivations and gives supporting evidence from a text.
- c. Relates a literary work to information about its setting or historical moment.

**For informational texts, the student reads and comprehends in order to develop understanding and expertise and produces evidence of reading that:**

- a. Analyzes common textual features to obtain information (e.g., paragraphs, topic sentences, concluding sentences, introduction, conclusion, footnotes, index, bibliography).
- b. Identifies and uses knowledge of common graphic features to draw conclusions and make judgments (e.g., graphic organizers, diagrams, captions, illustrations).
- c. Applies knowledge of common organizational structures and patterns (i.e., logical order, cause and effect relationships, comparison and contrast, transitions).

Figure 3.4 contains the first two reading standards for informational and literary reading under the CCGPS as presented in the original document. Figure 3.5 contains the first reading standard for the GPS as well as the sub-standards concerning literary and informational texts as well as three elements of each substandard.

I began my analysis by identifying the themes of each standard and their connected rhemes:

Figure 3.6: Theme/Rheme breakdown of CCGPS

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
(The student)	<b>Cite</b> several pieces of textual evidence <b>to support</b> analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text
(The student)	<b>Cite</b> several pieces of textual <b>evidence to support</b> analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
(The student)	<b>Determine</b> a <i>theme</i> or central idea of a text and <b>analyze</b> its development over the course of the text
(The student)	<b>Provide</b> an objective summary of the text
(The student)	<b>Determine</b> two or more central ideas in a text and <b>analyze</b> their development over the course of the text
(The student)	Provide an objective summary of the text

Figure 3.7: Theme/Rheme breakdown of GPS

<b>Place</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
Standard	The student	<b>demonstrates</b> comprehension and <b>shows</b> evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.
Literary substandard	For literary texts, the student	<b>identifies</b> the characteristics of various genres and produces evidence of reading that:
Element a	(the student)	<b>Distinguishes</b> between the concepts of theme in a literary work and the author's purpose in an expository text.
Element b	(the student)	<b>Interprets</b> a character's traits, emotions, or motivations and gives supporting evidence from a text.
Informational substandard	For informational texts, the student	<b>reads and comprehends in order to develop</b> understanding and expertise and produces evidence of reading that:
Element a	(the student)	<b>Analyzes</b> common textual features to obtain information (e.g., paragraphs, topic sentences, concluding sentences, introduction, conclusion, footnotes, index, bibliography).
Element b	(the student)	<b>Identifies</b> and uses knowledge of common graphic features to draw conclusions and make judgments (e.g., graphic organizers, diagrams, captions, illustrations).

Using this structure I was able to conduct an experiential analysis where I connected and compared experiences within and across the various documents.

Figure 3.8: Experiential Analysis of CCGPS

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>
The Student	Cites	several pieces of textual evidence
The Student	supports	analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text
(The student)	determines	a <i>theme</i> or central idea of a text
(The student)	analyzes	its development over the course of the text
(The student)	provides	an objective summary of the text

Figure 3.10: Experiential Analysis of GPS

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>
The student	demonstrates	comprehension and
	shows	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.
For literary texts, the student	identifies	the characteristics of various genres and produces evidence of reading that:
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Being</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
(the evidence)	distinguishes	between the concepts of theme in a literary work and the author's purpose in an expository text.
(the evidence)	interprets	a character's traits, emotions, or motivations and gives supporting evidence from a text.

I was able to make intra-textual discoveries such as how the CCGPS treats informational and literary reading similarly. For example, the only skill—cite, determine, analyze—that is not expected across the CCGPS is the summary of informational texts. I was also able to make inter-textual connections and demonstrate how the GPS treats texts differently than the CCGPS and constructs learning differently. These discussions will be explored more thoroughly in chapter four, but you can see how I used a theme/rheme reshaping of the text to promote my experiential analysis.

For this reason, the bulk of the diagrams in chapter four follow this theme/rheme layout while the majority of the commentary is centered on the experiences discussed in the documents. However, by using the structure that best helped me understand and discuss the documents, I am able to represent the findings more completely.

This concludes my discussion of SFL in this chapter, but hopefully outlines the approach used in chapter four to analyze and discuss the various standards and assessment documents. In the next sections of this chapter, I outline the processes used to select participants, produce and analyze the interview data explored in chapter five.

### **Participant Selection**

I used a purposeful selection design (Maxwell, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Seidman, 2006) specifically using snowball or chain sampling (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Seidman, 2006) to recruit seven research participants. I recruited two participants with administrative duties and six teachers—Alice of Senator Middle School had both administrative and teaching responsibilities—who met the following criteria:

Teachers:

- Middle school reading/language arts teachers who have taught for at least 10 years in Georgia
- Special consideration was given to department heads and individuals who had served on curriculum and assessment committees at either the school, district, or state level.

Administrators:

- Have been a teacher or administrator for at least 10 years in Georgia
- Special consideration was given to administrators who had served as curriculum directors, served as the testing coordinator of his/her school, or who had taught reading/language arts prior to entering leadership.

Each participant completed a brief survey describing his or her teaching/administrating experience and participated in two semi-structured interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) from August 2011 to September 2012. There were two

exceptions made: Tiani has only taught for 8 years, but was included due to her longevity in a school system with high turnover and based on the recommendation of another teacher in the study, and Sandy who, due to a change in position, was not available for the second interview.

### **Description of Participants**

I interviewed seven individuals working in five schools across three school districts. I interviewed Tiani and Sandy who worked together at City Middle School in New Urban School District; Elizabeth who worked at Two Story Middle in Middle Small Town; Leigh and Alice who worked at Senator Middle School also in Middle Small Town; Clinton, principal of County Middle School, and Margaret, a teacher at Ghost Middle School, both in University Town. After I have briefly introduced each participant, I supply a table that I used throughout my research to help me keep the participants and settings straight.

#### **Tiani**

Tiani has taught for 8 years at City Middle School in New Urban Schools. Throughout her career she has taught 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts and reading and, at the time of our interview, was teaching gifted 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts. When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said, “I feel like I’m always learning, always growing...I believe a lot in one on one [interaction with children] and letting the kids know that you care beyond the classroom, beyond just what you’re supposed to teach them because you’ll get a lot more out of kids that you have a relationship with.” She is a leader in her school and helped develop certain aspects of the curriculum map that her

school uses. That said, there were many amendments to this map that she greatly disagreed with, and she often felt powerless to affect change in her school.

### **Sandy**

Sandy has taught for 8 years at King Middle School in Old Urban School district south of Southern Urban City and 2 years at City Middle School in New Urban Schools. She has taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts and Georgia Studies (social studies). When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, Sand said, “You know, I come from a school of thought with teaching where it is what you decide to make it to be....I came in when standards came in, so I don’t know anything different. I don’t know what it was like to have QCCs, even though I’ve seen them, I don’t know about that world. All I know is standards based teaching and that is one of my strong points. I can do it, and I don’t struggle to do it because it is what I was taught to do.” Sandy was not happy at City Middle. She constantly compared her experiences at and New Urban to Old Urban, and was quite vocal in her displeasure with her current school. She repeatedly explained how New Urban had poorly designed and implemented curricular demands by discussing how Old Urban had done it and positing Old Urban’s policies and practices as superior to New Urban. Sandy had already resigned her position at City Middle effective at the end of the school year and had arranged to move to a bordering state. When asked why, she explained, “I would like to be in a Union state.”



## **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth has taught for 12 years. She taught for 1 year in Middle State School District and has worked for 11 years in Middle Small Town. She began at Geographic Middle School but followed her principal and helped open Two Story Middle. She has taught 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts, science, social studies, special education courses, and P.E. At the time of our interview, she was teaching a remedial reading course for students who had failed the CRCT the previous year. When asked to describe herself as a teacher, she said, “I did not want to teach, I went into history thinking I would, that was something I wanted to be, and my mom said that I like history, and I love to help people, I needed to be a history professor, and I was like, ugh uh. I decided I was going to be a high school history teacher. I was told that I needed to pick another field because high school is flooded with teachers and told, ‘Why not middle school?’ I was like, no. I did my student teaching in a high school, it was a wonderful experience. I was taught how to use humor in the classroom, which was something a serious person like me needed. I got a job as middle school P.E. teacher. . . . I wanted to move closer to Atlanta, and I had some college roommates who had worked with students with disabilities. It started my mind working toward that. I had a friend who worked at Geographic Middle. He said I might want to work up this way, so I applied and got that position.” She was incredibly happy at her school and with her principal. She repeatedly referred to her principal’s leadership, and at one time said, “She [the principal] is a visionary. She isn’t the only person driving this place by any means, but she has a clear vision, and she pushes and pushes and pushes. Motivates you in such a way that you want to be the very

best that you can be, and you don't want anything less for your students or for yourself or for our school.”

### **Leigh**

Leigh has taught language arts and reading for 27 years. She taught at Three Counties Private School for four years. She moved to Senator Middle School after that and has taught for 23 years there. During that time she has taught 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts. At the time of our interview, she was teaching 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade gifted language arts. When asked about herself as a teacher, she told the story of her career. Two points that stood out were when she first was asked to teach 7<sup>th</sup> grade. “I was teaching 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade at Three Counties, and they asked me to pick up a 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. I thought that I could do that. 7<sup>th</sup> graders should be a lot like 8<sup>th</sup> graders. It took me about three seconds to figure out that was wrong. But I fell in love with them.” Later she was discussing how the school had grown and they needed her to drop one of her grades and she said, “My principal came to me and said, ‘why don’t you give up the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They’re the hardest,’ and I said, ‘but they’re my favorites.’ I didn’t want to train them in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, give them up in 7<sup>th</sup>, and have to retrain them in 8<sup>th</sup>, so I said I’d take them in 6<sup>th</sup>. Train them, and get them started right. Keep them through 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and give them to somebody else in 8<sup>th</sup>. Leigh is not happy with the current trends in education. She explained “I would say [the field of education is] worse. It’s all the control. There’s more paperwork and less creativity. I think one day it’s going to come to here’s your script, read it.” When I asked why, she quickly responded, “The CRCT.” She feels strongly that the state, district, and school have become overly focused on the assessment and traces all of the current problems in education to the test.

## Alice

Alice also started her teaching career at Three Counties Private School where she worked for 3 years. She has taught at Senator Middle with Leigh for 20 years. Over the course of her career, Alice has taught 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science, math, social studies, language arts, and computer applications. At the time of our interview she taught gifted 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, 1 course of gifted 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts, and served as her school's testing coordinator. When asked to describe herself as a teacher, Alice said, "I started at a private school because I did not have certification. I came here because my friend Leigh Robbins, she left Three Counties a year ahead of me, and she called me and said we have a job here, and you need to get it. I've taught a little of everything. I started out in science and have switched over as I've needed to." She was asked to be the school's testing coordinator because of her attention to detail, her willingness to hold other teachers accountable, and her compassion concerning the sensitive issue. "Lord, the teachers are as bad as the children. The children are stressed by the test. The teachers are stressed by the test. I had, oh lord, this kid got off by one question and he had to erase everything on the test and redo it, and the teacher. She wrote me a dissertation, and I was like, 'it's ok. It'll be alright. They aren't going to fire you. They aren't going to fire me. It'll be alright.'" She was highly critical of standardized testing. "I had a class, and the professor had us read a chapter from a book on standardized testing, and it said that it was dangerous to use a single measure. At the end of class he gave us the copyright page, and it was written in the 1940s. My professor said, "Yep, that's education. We like to beat dead horses." We've always known that standardized testing is dangerous, but it's easy. It's easy and it's cheap."

## **Clinton**

Clinton taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies and language arts for 10 years prior to becoming an administrator. He was an instructional lead teacher for 6 years at Ghost Middle School, a principal and Chancellor Elementary school for 8 years, and at the time of our interview, was in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year as principal of County Middle School. When asked about himself as an administrator, he simply recited his years of experience at each level. One of the most telling moments to me about Clinton happened when I asked him about the transition from being an administrator at an elementary school to a middle school, and he said “I’m shocked at the failure of middle school to--elementary school does a really good job of ‘here’s a reader, here is where you are. How are we increasing your reading level each year?’ So, even if somebody is way below grade level, they are at least tracking ‘are we increasing their reading level?’ Then they come to middle school, and it seems to me like all that’s thrown out the window. We don’t really systematically evaluate reading levels. Are we increasing for those most fragile readers? It’s suddenly, you know, what seems like to me, we really push, which makes sense, increasing—trying to increase their motivation to read, which is important, but I think we still need with six graders. They’re coming in and reading at a fourth grade reading level, that teacher needs to know that and needs to have a plan.” His perspective as a leader is very goal oriented, and his understanding of the CRCT matches this. In Chapter 5, I show how Clinton does not question the test scores. Rather, he takes ownership of his students’ poor performances and strives to help them improve.

## Margaret

Margaret has been teaching for 26 years. She taught for 10 years in Southern Border State, and moved to University town where she took Clinton's teaching position when he was promoted to instructional lead teacher at Ghost Middle School. She has taught 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts and social studies over her 16 years at Ghost. When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said, "I never wanted to be a teacher. I was going to be anything but a teacher, and here I am. I frequently come home with the 'I can't stand my job' blues, and my husband will look at me and say, 'Do something else,' and my answer is, 'There is nothing else I want to do. I want to teach.' The days that I can teach are what keep me going through all the days that I can't." She is currently very happy at Ghost Middle School. Her school has recently had an administrative change that has significantly changed the school culture to one that she feels more comfortable with. Her school is adopting an International Baccalaureate (IBO, 2013) curriculum, and this shift has brought a new focus to the curriculum that Margaret agrees with and is thrilled to be working under.

Figure 3.11: List of Teachers and Settings

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Margaret</b>	Ghost Middle School	University Town	Teacher
<b>Clinton</b>	County Middle School	University Town	Administrator
<b>Leigh</b>	Senator Middle	Middle Small Town	Teacher
<b>Alice</b>	Senator Middle	Middle Small Town	Teacher/ Administrator
<b>Elizabeth</b>	Two Story Middle	Middle Small Town	Teacher
<b>Sandy</b>	City Middle School	New Urban City	Teacher
<b>Tiani</b>	City Middle School	New Urban City	Teacher

## Data Analysis

As stated throughout this paper, I understand language in action to be a cultural exchange involving a transactional, shared creation of the experience by each participant.

My interest in language in action and the transactional nature of language (Fecho, 2011; Fecho & Meacham, 2007; Stewart 2011) led me to try and understand how my involvement in the dialogues occurring during the interviews served to construct each participant. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) focused on the relationship of language and culture in that the dialogical moment is one of mutual shaping. Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Rosenblatt (1995, 2005) explain that these cultural moments involve more than a simple cause and effect relationship, but rather promote a cultural and intellectual transaction where the role of meaning making is shared rather than proprietary. Fecho (2011) worked to combine these theoretical frames into a single theory of language while Stewart (2011) accounted for the transactional spaces that exists in any given dialogue when collecting and analyzing interview data.

Stewart (2011) explained that language is a “dynamic force that cannot be understood without being attentive to the transactions that occur between individuals and cultures” (p 284). He continues that if this is the case—that one accepts a Bahktinian perspective on language and transactional understanding of dialogue—“in order to communicate and understand the experiences expressed by participants, researchers must be cognizant of the connotations that words, previously uttered by others, bring with them to dialogue” (p. 285).

Stewart (2010, 2011) argued that a thematic analysis of data can help a qualitative researcher account for the transactional spaces that exists in human dialogue. In order to do this, he proposed a multi-step process for collecting and analyzing data. This process includes writing dialogic memos after completing an interview, mapping the interviews after they are completed, using narrative analysis to identify and explore themes

embedded in the interview data, revisiting the interview data in order to identify themes that are consistent across interviews, and use these findings to understand the data by focusing on the transactional processes occurring throughout this data collection and analysis process.

Each interview was conducted around open-ended questions designed to promote dialogue and narrative accounts of their experiences with the curriculum and assessments (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008). The first interview focused on the participants' backgrounds, lesson planning protocols, and relationships with the standards and assessments. The follow-up interview focused directly on the participants' experiences with the state assessments and their reflections on potential changes in the assessments due the change in curriculum.

After each interview, I completed a brief dialogic memo (Stewart, 2010, 2011) in order to solidify in my mind the ideas that I felt were important during the interview and to begin to identify themes that existed in each interview and characterize the specific dialogic experience. I then mapped the interviews for important moments and compared these maps with my initial memos. These memos, maps, and transcripts all served as data sources for my analysis.

Through this process, I was able to discuss three themes: the relationship of teacher with the standards and assessments; how teaching scripts were created, mandated, used, and ignored; and how teachers expected to help the students "cram" for the CRCT. Examining these themes as they appeared across my various data sources allowed me to better understand the roll of administrations and school districts in the relative shaping of what documents are perceived as important to the various participants as well as

understanding how these administration necessarily affected the ways the participants approached their curriculum and classroom. All of this is explored more thoroughly in chapter five of this dissertation.

### **Limitations**

A major concern with research is the relationship of the researcher with the research participant or reflexivity (Glesne, 1999; Holliday, 2007; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Roulston, 2004). When interviewing participants, I am inherently asking them to relate the participant's experience, and this is problematic in that "they not only explain reality but also constitute reality" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 101). This is particularly problematic when I am asking people to relate a shared experience. While I was primarily interested in my participant's experience, due to the transactional nature of the dialogue, I cannot help but influence my participant's response. Several times, my participant would say "I hope this helps," or "I hope this is what you want."

This was particularly problematic in that I was not coming to these participants as an outsider—a college researcher from the ivory tower—but as a colleague. I am currently a middle school teacher having to deal with the state curricular mandates, and this share experience could not be avoided before, during, or after the interview. When discussing our practices after an interview, Leigh said, "So, you teach in much the same way that I do." These experiences cannot be denied, and according to Holliday (2007) should not be. Instead:

Both the researcher and the people in the research setting enter into a relationship of culture making as they construct the culture of dealing. It is therefore evident



the researcher culture has significant influence on the research setting, making qualitative research an interactive process. (p. 140)

While I must be aware of how my own personal biases and understanding informed and affected my data collection, I must also acknowledge that the data I collected is in some ways privileged by my participation.

Stewart (2010) argued that the concept of “uncorrupted data is a fallacy” (p. 81) and supported this with Freeman, deMarris, Preissle, Roulston, and St. Pierre’s (2007) argument that “there are no ‘pure,’ ‘raw’ data, uncontaminated by human thought and action” (p. 27). As a researcher, I elicit certain responses to questions that others do not and others elicit responses that I do not. Instead of focusing on the limits of the data and the biases imbedded in a research moment, a research must acknowledge these limitations, but look beyond them for themes that are consistent throughout the data and examine where these themes come from and their implications.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have introduced my methodological practices as grounded in systemic functional linguistics and transactional analysis. I provided a brief background of these research traditions as well as explained how these traditions informed my data collection, analysis, and reporting.

In order to better understand my data, I have divided my data discussion into two chapters. In the fourth chapter, I report on my findings from my SFL analysis of the various standards and assessment documents. The fifth chapter then contains a review and analysis of the interview data. I conclude this paper by exploring the theoretical implications of these findings and propose future areas of study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

“Georgia law, as amended by the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000, requires that all students in grade one through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics.” –CRCT Content Descriptions, 2012.

This opening sentence to all five Georgia CRCT Content Descriptions documents establishes by law in 2000 that the state has power over all the parties involved with testing in Georgia—parents, teachers, schools, students, boards of education. These assessments were originally designed to assess student progress in the Quality Core Curriculum established by the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985; however the Georgia Curriculum in Reading and English/Language Arts have been adjusted twice since the passing of the A+ Education Act by State Board of Education policy. First the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) were adopted in 2002 and implemented beginning in 2005 followed by the adoption of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in 2010 and implemented in 2012.

As discussed in chapters one and three, texts are structurally embedded with messages of power and authority designed to have a particular effect on an audience. In this chapter I use Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to explore the social and political messages found in Georgia’s curriculum and assessment documents. I am particularly interested in how the texts are or are not constructed to resist dialogue and thus promote an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) designed to influence instruction

in Georgia. In order to do this, I begin with a brief history of Georgia's curriculum and statewide assessments. I follow this discussion with an SFL analysis focusing on how learning is constructed and defined by each document as well as how teachers, students and learning are positioned in the Georgia's curriculum documents and the current assessment domain descriptions. While, I was originally interested in how the definition of knowledge were used to position the state, teachers, and students relative to this document, I found this discussion limiting and soon realized that the approach to learning outlined by the document was a far more interesting question. This discussion of the standards and assessments leads into Chapter 5 where I explore the effect these documents have on the teachers I interviewed.

### **A Brief History of Georgia Curriculum and Assessment**

The vast majority of state educational law in Georgia is grounded in establishing and funding a state wide educational system for all citizens. While Georgia mandated a free education for all state citizens in its original constitution of 1777, it was never funded and by the adoption of Georgia's second constitution in 1789, education had been abandoned as a statewide goal (Joiner, Bonner, Shearouse, & Smith, 1979). While Georgia made progress toward funding education in the late 1840's passing the poor school law in 1843 (Joiner, Bonner, Shearouse, & Smith, 1979), all of this work was derailed and abandoned when Georgia seceded from the United States and was subsequently defeated in the Civil War. This necessitated the passing of new public school laws in 1866, 1869, and 1870 designed to reestablish and rebuild Georgia schools. The first laws, produced by a Republican administration, were largely ignored, and public

education in Georgia did not begin to truly develop until the appointment of Gustavus Orr as the state superintendent of schools in 1872 (Orr, 1950).

Statewide public education in Georgia became a priority in ensuring Georgia's reinstitution into the United States during reconstruction (Orr, 1950). A statewide education system was established in the late 1870s; however it would remain largely unfunded until the passing of a liquor tax in 1883 and a general property tax passed in 1888. This tax act was followed quickly by a teacher licensure act in 1889 thus beginning the Georgia tradition of tying school funding directly to teacher accreditation (Joiner, Bonner, Shearouse, & Smith, 1979). This remained the case through the 1985 passing of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act (Grant, 2007). While the QBE Act of 1985 was primarily concerned with school funding and teacher accreditation, it greatly affected education in Georgia because it established, for the first time, a statewide curriculum called the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). I find it interesting that the curriculum and teacher licensing portions of this law have been greatly amended; however, the QBE continues to dictate educational funding in Georgia.

As explored in chapter two, the United States mandated statewide testing in 2002 with the No Child Left Behind Act. With the exception of Mississippi, all Southern states established state mandated assessments prior to this law. In fact, Georgia's 2000 passing of the A+ Education Act makes it the last pre-NCLB assessment mandate in the South (Dee & Jacob, 2010). Since the state mandate of testing in grades 1 through 8 in 2000, Georgia has changed its curriculum on two occasions. Due to a 2002 Phi Delta Kappa audit of the QCC, the state adopted the GPS in 2005 followed by the adoption of the CCGPS for Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics in 2010 (Grant, 2007).

Other than the QCC, no statewide curriculum has been mandated by law. Rather, the GPS and CCGPS were adopted by the State Department of Education instead of legislative mandate.

Since the passing of the A+ Education Act of 2000, Georgia has legislatively amended the law only once. Prior to 2005, Georgia mandated the release of each years CRCT questions at the end of the school year; however this was amended in 2005 for cost purposes to allow the test designers to reuse questions from year to year (Kox, 2009). Although fiscal reasons have motivated the office of the governor to abandon testing of first and second grade students each year since 2010, the law requiring such testing remains on the books, despite public desire to see testing only in grades three through twelve (Downey, 2010).

### **Documents Examined**

I conducted my study while Georgia was transitioning from the GPS to the CCGPS. My first round of interviews was conducted prior to the administration of the 2012 CRCT, which was correlated to the GPS. My second interviews were conducted after the administration of the 2012 CRCT but prior to the beginning of the implementation of the CCGPS and the correlated assessment. As we talked about the curriculum, teachers were constantly referencing both the GPS and the CCGPS. They were stuck in a world between the standards, and discussed how they were feeling bound to not one, but both sets of documents. For this reason, I have included the following documents in my analysis: The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS,) the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), the 2011-2012 CRCT Domain Descriptions (GPSCRCT), and the 2012-2013 CRCT Domain Descriptions (CCCRCT)..

I was primarily interested in how teachers understood these documents and felt constrained, defined, or guided by each document. Because the participants were undergoing staff development for the rollout of the CCGPS, it constituted the primary curriculum document during the majority of our conversations. For this reason, my exploration of the CCGPS and the connected CRCT Domain Descriptions make up the majority of my textual analysis.

Unfortunately, these documents create a confusing array of abbreviations. For the sake of ease, I have created the following table to help connect the various abbreviations with the appropriate document as I discuss each throughout this chapter. CRCT, GPS and CCGPS are common acronyms used throughout the Georgia teaching community. The GPSCRCT and CCCRCT are acronyms that I have used here to differentiate between tests given prior to 2013 and the new test developed in 2012 to be administered in Spring 2013.

Figure 4.1: Common Acronyms

Abbreviation	Document
GPS	Georgia Performance Standards used from 2005- Spring 2012
CCGPS	Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. Adopted in 2010, but not implemented until Fall 2012
GPSCRCT	The domain descriptions for the CRCT administered from 2005 through 2012
CCCRCT	The domain descriptions for the CRCT that will be administered for the first time in 2013.

### Exploring the Texts

The purpose of this chapter is to use Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2005) to analyze Georgia assessment and curricular documents and better understand how the curriculum and assessment documents construct teachers, students, and instruction. In order to understand this textual

construction, as I discussed in chapter three, I began with a thematic progression analysis (Fang & Schleppergrell, 2008) followed by an experiential analysis (Martin & Rose, 2003). , periodicity “is concerned with information flow: with the way in which meanings are packaged to make it easier for us to take them in” (p.175). This is done by tracing the Themes and Rhemes through a given text. The theme is the given. The point of departure from the text, and the Rheme is “the remainder of the message, the part of the clause in which the Theme is developed” (Fang & Schleppergrell, 2008, p. 31). So my initial analysis followed this structure:

Figure 4.2: Theme/Rheme Breakdown of GPSCRCT 7

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Information and Media Literacy	<b>refers</b> to key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within informational text.	<b>New theme</b>
The Information and Media Literacy standards	<b>place</b> equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read.	<b>New but related theme</b>
Students	<b>must also show</b> a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of <i>text</i> , including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between <i>texts</i> , considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in <i>texts</i> .	<b>New theme</b>
Texts	<b>may include:</b> articles, informational essays, biographies, subject-area texts, reference sources, business letters, how-to articles, book/film reviews, web pages, advertisements, journal entries, workplace materials, and consumer materials.	<b>Element from prior rheme (text) becomes theme</b>

From this I moved toward an experiential analysis of the texts. Ideation is concerned with “the ‘content’ of a discourse: what kinds of activities are undertaken, and how participants in these activities are described, how they are classified and what they are

composed of” (p. 66). I did this by reframing the sentences focusing on how experience is presented in the document. I did this by breaking this section into the **being** process of “referring” and the **doing** process of “placing” and “showing”

Figure 4.3: Experiential Breakdown of GPSCRCT7: Being

<b>participants</b>	<b>being</b>	<b>attribute</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Information and media literacy	Refers	to the key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within informational text	<p>Definition of term “information and media literacy.”</p> <p>Structure is convoluted. Subject, verb, compound complement (to..., of... within...)with multiple compound objects—the object of to is ideas, details, craft, structure, integration, the objects “of” are knowledge and ideas.</p> <p>This creates a number of structures that do not make sense. For example, one of the structures inherent in this section is the idea that (elipting adjectives) “literacy refers to ideas of ideas within text”</p> <p>Largely void of action. Literacy is not an active, but...this definition does not define literacy in any way I’m familiar with the term.</p>
Texts	may include	articles, informational essays, biographies, subject-area texts, reference sources, business letters, how-to articles, book/film reviews, web pages, advertisements, journal entries, workplace materials, and consumer materials.	<p>This is a non standard use of the verb include. It does not define things that go along with text or are a part of texts, but what texts are included on the test. The verb “include” generally signifies parts to a whole. That is not the relationship established in this sentence.</p>



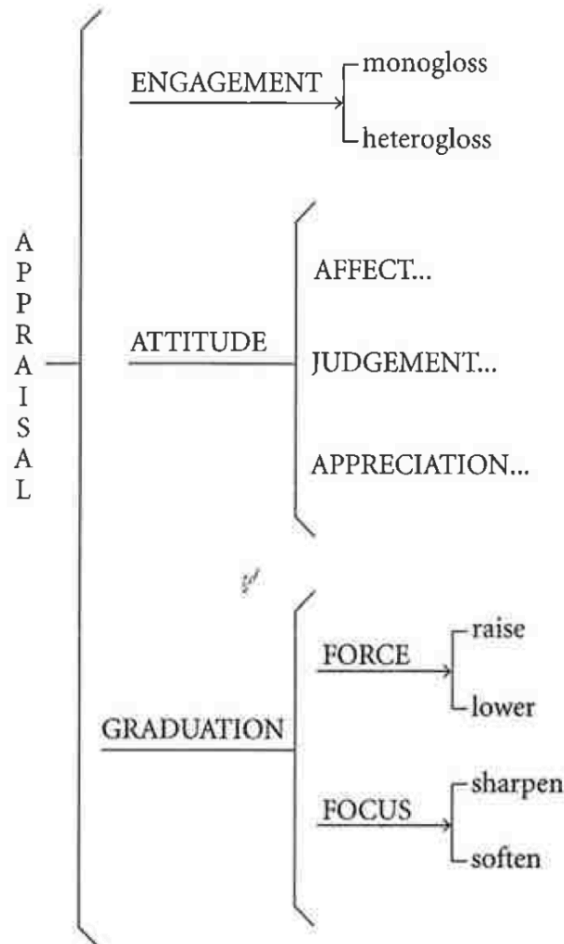
Figure 4.4: Experiential Breakdown of GPSCRCT7: Doing

actor	process	goal	Commentary
The information and media literacy standards	<b>Place equal emphasis</b>	on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read.	<p>Intertextual connection to the standards. This sentence is identifying what is valued by the standards, rather than what is valued by the assessment. It bows to the authoritative discourse of the standard.</p> <p>Compound complement—on sophistication and Skill—each object has a complement—sophistication of..., skill with...</p>
Students	<b>must also show</b>	a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of <i>text</i> , including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between <i>texts</i> .	<p>I don't understand how this can be done with a single multiple choice test. (editorial)</p> <p>grammatically, many ideas—two texts. Among is more than two. Between is two.</p> <p>Unclear about what it means to “discern ‘more’ from text”</p> <p>This structure privileges the test. The important aspect is the “showing” of the skill, not the skill itself. The core activity is the demonstrative act, not the discerning, using, or making.</p>

In this examples provided, I have included my entire analysis process; however I soon found that the vast majority of the discourse of the standards and assessment documents focused on **doing** rather than **being**. I also selected this section of text because it is one of the few sections of my data that elicited an appraisal analysis. Appraisal is concerned with evaluation as expressed through texts (Martin & Rose, 2003), and generally these documents do not lend themselves to this form of analysis. An appraisal analysis focuses on how a text engages its audience, reflects specific attitudes, or grades (as in levels) the

information. Coffin (2003) uses the following diagram in figure 4.5 to outline the various levels of appraisal

Figure 4.5: Appraisal



(Coffin, 2003, p. 225)

Figure 4.6: Appraisal Breakdown of GPSCRCT7:

text	commentary
Information and Media Literacy refers to <b>key</b> ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within informational text.	Judgment: these ideas the most important ideas
The Information and Media Literacy standards place <b>equal</b> emphasis on the <b>sophistication</b> of what students read and the skill with which they read.	equal: amplification: rather it equates importance of what is read to reading skill sophistication: appreciation: establishes that one text can be more complex than another and that this complexity is inherently better.

<p>Students must also show a <b>steadily growing</b> ability to discern more from and make <b>fuller</b> use of text, including making an <b>increasing</b> number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a <b>wider</b> range of textual evidence, and becoming <b>more sensitive</b> to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts.</p>	<p>These modifiers all serve to amplify their objects. They all serve to define learning as progressive. Students presumably begin with a lower ability, making few connections, with limited textual experiences. As they grow in each of these areas. They don't know more, instead, they are able to do more with what they already know.</p>
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There were not a lot of opportunities to use appraisal analysis because evaluation assumes an other. One way to prevent a heteroglossic engagement is to avoid moments of evaluation. By not amplifying a statement with adjectives and adverbs, one avoids the risk of comparison. A “better” standard insinuates other standards, and if this given standard is better than a past standard, then it is possible for others to be better than the document presented. By avoiding these comparisons, a text can be presented the sole authoritative voice. However, the domain descriptions sometimes invite comparison to the standards, and in these rare moments, I use an appraisal analysis to understand this invitation. SFL then is a tool to understand how the various participants in education—specifically teachers, students, and state level administrations—are positioned by the Georgia curriculum and assessments and what each participant’s role is within the field.

Because I am primarily interested in how teachers, students, and instruction are constructed, I discuss how each of these is presented and discussed separately. This chapter begins by exploring how each document constructs learning, followed by a discussion of how students are constructed. This is followed by an analysis of how teachers are discussed, and this chapter ends with a discussion of interesting patterns

within and across these documents that provide a general overview of the worldview presented in these documents.

The textual data is be presented throughout this document in text boxes using the spacing, punctuation, and textual emphasis (i.e. italics and bold faced font) as it appears in the original documents. Tables representing the manipulation of the data are single spaced, but italics and bold font reflect my emphasis rather than the original texts.

### **Constructing Learning**

In this section I explore how learning is constructed in each document. I do this by examining how learning is generally discussed in all the documents with a close analysis of the assessment documents followed by an analysis of the standards documents.

Learning is discussed in two ways in these documents. First, it is introduced as a global construct. Each document presents a theory of what learning is and how students learn. Second, there is a discussion of specifically what should be learned each year. These two understandings of learning are in constant dialogue with each other and both can reflect the cultural and intellectual structures that define each. For this dissertation, I am primarily interested in the global discussion of learning.

### **Macro Learning in the CRCT**

While the specific skills assessed each year are fairly different between the two documents, the GPSCRCT and the CCCRCT use the exact same language when discussing learning. Both documents open with the exact same sentence: “The CRCT is designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the GPS.” Embedded in this description of learning is a distinction

between the activity of learning and the objects of that activity. “Acquisition and understanding” describes the activities of learning while “knowledge, concepts, and skills” describes the object of learning. These objects—knowledge, concepts, and skills—are things that can be gained, kept, and applied.

However, central to the discussion of learning in these documents is the idea that the CRCT does not claim to be an all encompassing definition of learning. “Only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the GPS will be assessed on the CRCT.” This statement assumes that there is knowledge, concepts and skills that are not reflected in the GPS. This assumption is further developed in the final paragraph of the introduction, “It is important to note that some curricular standards are better suited for classroom or individual assessment rather than large-scale, paper-pencil assessment.” Inherent in this statement is the idea that even if the standard covered the entire breadth of human knowledge and understanding, the tests described in this document are not fit to assess all of it. This admission, however, is followed by:

While those curricular standards designed for classroom/individual assessment are not included in the Content Descriptions, the knowledge, concepts, and skills outlined are often required for the mastery of the standards that are assessed.

Therefore, while the CRCT is not able to assess all the “knowledge, concepts, and skills” outlined by the standards, all of the standards are assessable.

A Theme/Rheme analysis of this description can be diagrammed in the following way:

Figure 4.7: Theme/Rheme of CRCT Introduction

Theme	Rheme	Commentary
The CRCT	is designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the <b>knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the GPS.</b>	New Theme: defines learning in Rheme.  Definition of learning limited to knowledge, concepts and skill in GPS
Only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the GPS	will be assessed on the <b>CRCT</b>	Definition of learning is theme—a given.  GPS connected to CRCT in Rheme
The CRCT	Does <b>not assess all of the standards</b>	CRCT is limited in this Rheme
Those standards not included	Are best assessed in the classroom	This Rheme posits that the assessment is structurally below the classroom.
Those standards not included	are often required for the mastery of the standards that are assessed [by the CRCT].	This sentence reverses the hierarchal structure of the prior two.  The final Rheme—the information privileged in this construction—positions the knowledge not on the text as supplemental skills to those that are on the test.  The iterative structure serves to further devalue this Theme. The given (Theme) is not as important as the new (Rheme). The “newest” concept is the final Rheme: the often test measures more complicated skills than those not on the tests.  There is modality here: “Often”

The Theme/Rheme structure opens with the hierarchal structure of the opening Rheme becoming the next Theme until the end where the Theme of standards not included is

reiterated with the separate Rhemes of certain skills are best assessed in the classroom, and the idea these standards are “often” sub skills of the standards that are assessed on the CRCT.

In this last statement, it is made clear that certain sub skills are important to the development of other macro skills. It is then stated that generally, the skills not accessed are “required for the mastery of the standards that are assessed.” Inherent in this construction is the assumption that the CRCT assesses the major rather than the sub skill. The modality of “often” reflects that this is not always the case, but generally—according to this structure—the most important skills are assessed by the CRCT.

### **Micro Learning in the CRCT**

While the CCCRCT and GPSCRCT use the exact same language to describe the global discussion of learning, the micro definitions are very different.

Figure 4.8: GPSCRCT Reading Grade 3 Introduction

<p><b>Reading</b>  <b>Grade: 3</b>  <b>Domain:</b> Reading for Information</p> <p><b>Domain Description</b>  Reading for Information refers to the skills required to read, recall, and analyze details and information from various texts. Texts may include: nonfiction articles, biographies, subject-area texts, and reference sources.</p>
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As seen in figure 3, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the GPSCRCT identifies reading for information as referring “to the skills required to read, recall, and analyze details and information from various texts.” The task in the GPSCRCT is much simpler than those identified in the CCCRCT. The GPSCRCT identifies three skills: Reading, recalling, and analyzing; two objects: details and information; and four texts: Nonfiction articles, biographies, subject-area text, and reference sources.

Figure 4.9: CCCRCT Reading Grade 3 Introduction

<p><b>Reading</b>  <b>Grade:</b> 3  <b>Domain:</b> Reading for Information</p> <p><b>Domain Description</b>  Reading for Information refers to key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within informational text. The Reading for Information standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read. Students must also show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts. Texts may include: nonfiction articles, biographies, subject-area texts, reference sources, web pages, journal entries, letters, recipes, maps, and posters.</p>
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The CCCRCT, on the other hand, posits that reading for information refers “to key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within informational text.” The only activity identified in the CCCRCT is reading, but it has a much more complicated description of that activity than the GPSCRCT.

Figure 4.10: Appraisal Analysis of CCCRCT Reading Grade 3

attitude	affect	<b>sensitive</b> to inconsistencies
	judgment	<b>key</b> ideas and details <b>poor</b> reasoning in texts
	appreciation	the <b>sophistication</b> of what students read
amplification		<b>equal</b> emphasis a <b>steadily growing</b> ability make <b>fuller</b> use of text making an <b>increasing</b> number considering a <b>wider</b> range of textual evidence <b>more</b> sensitive to inconsistencies
source		<b>informational</b> text considering a wider range of <b>textual</b> evidence

There are two significant shifts from the CCCRCT documents to the GPSCRCT documents that must be discussed. First, the lack of appraisal in the GPSCRCT compared to the CCCRCT, and second, the broader definition of reading provided in the CCCRCT when compared to the GPSCRCT. The only adjectives in the GPSCRCT are “various”



“nonfiction,” and “references,” and I could argue that nonfiction and references are actually part of a compound noun group. Regardless, there is no judgment in these phrases. The CCCRCT, on the other hand as shown in figure 4.10 is rife with appraisal. The CCCRCT invites comparison and evaluation in ways that the GPSCRCT does not. By presenting these various evaluations within the CCCRCT, the document opens itself to engage a larger world of texts. In doing so, it promotes a more heteroglossic view of language and literacy than the GPSCRCT. By limiting the evaluative moments in the GPSCRCT, that document presents a more monoglossic view of the standards.

As illustrated in figure 4.10, the idea of “equal” emphasis being placed on the “sophistication” of material as well as the reading “skill” inserts evaluation into the CCCRCT documents. The quality of the text read is as important as the quality of the reading. This document does not tell you what it means to be a quality text, but it does explain what quality reading is: “a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts.” The description of learning as “steadily growing” indicates a gradation of skill. Martin & Rose (2003) used the terms “force” and “focus” as they explained, “force involves the choice to raise or lower the intensity of gradable items, focus the option of sharpening or softening an experiential boundary” (p.54). Steadily is a word of force describing reading ability as constantly improving. The term is devoid of setbacks. Progress is assumed within this structure and there is no space for students who are not successful.

The scope of the GPSCRCT is not as broad as the CCCRCT. The GPSCRCT identifies “nonfiction articles, biographies, subject-area texts, and references sources” as the text. All of these are fairly traditional texts that use language as its primary tool. However, the CCCRCT expands this scope to include “web pages, journal entries, letters, recipes, maps, and posters.” Not only has the description of reading been broadened, but the concept of text has been expanded as well. This broadened view recognizes maps and posters as texts, and as such draws in the concept of visual literacy (Kress, 1996) as an important element of reading. It also identifies non-academic writing, “web-pages, journals, and recipes” as texts. This is not done in dialogue with the GPSCRCT. Rather, it is a rhetorical shift where this authoritative discourse supplants the former. Under the GPSCRCT, reading is defined rather narrowly with academically oriented texts. The CCCRCT keeps these definitions and expands them. However, it does not hedge the definition. It does not say, “some people see” or “some will argue.” It asserts, with the authority imbued throughout this document that: “Reading is. . .”

As is illustrated in figure 4.11 below, a rhetorical separation permeates the two texts and is further highlighted by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade’s description of literary analysis. In the GPSCRCT, “Literary Comprehension refers to the skills required to comprehend literary works by identifying and analyzing elements of various texts.” In the CCCRCT, Literary Comprehension “refers to key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas within literary text.” The skills are the same within each document but different across the documents. Figure 3 Drawn from the key words of the recurring throughout the documents from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade illustrates how the standards are related.

Structurally, the GPSCRCT defines literary and information reading as different tasks.

Figure 4.11: Experiential Comparison of GPSCRCT and CCRCT

Type of text	GPSCRCT activity	GPSCRCT Object	CCCRCT Activity	CCCRCT Object
<b>Informational</b>	Read Recall Analyze	Details information	Recognize	Ideas, details, craft, structure,
			Integrate	Knowledge Ideas
<b>Literary</b>	Comprehend by: Identify Analyze	elements	Recognize	Ideas, details, craft, structure,
			Integrate	Knowledge Ideas

Inherent in this data is the idea that informational and literary reading are two very different tasks in the GPSCRCT, but this is not the case in the CCCRCT. In the CCCRCT, reading is reading. The difference is the object of your reading. However, it is important to understand that the CRCT documents are auxiliary documents subject to the standards each is claiming to assess. The question is does this reflect a change in the standards or does it reflect a change assessment itself? If the GPS defined informational and literary reading differently while the CCGPS defines them as using the same skills with different object, then the shift from the GPSCRCT to the CCCRCT reflect an adjustment of the assessments to the standards. If not, then this shift needs to be further explored. Regardless, this cannot be answered until after the next sections.

### **Macro Learning in the Georgia Performance Standards.**

In order to understand the structure of learning in the GPS, I found it helpful to produce a Experiential analysis of the text tracing the specific skills expected of each student. In the Figure 4.12, I have provided a experiential analysis of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading standards.

Figure 4.12: Experiential Analysis of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading GPS

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>goal</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension	<p>This document privileges assessment. Rather than identify the specific skills students must demonstrate, it highlights the demonstration of those skills.</p> <p>Structurally, the demonstrating, showing, or using is more important than the skill being demonstrated, shown or used.</p> <p>The student must “read aloud” Performance or demonstrative act.</p> <p>Four exceptions: understands vocabulary, understands &amp; acquires knowledge of Georgia Authors, Produced writing, realizes what usage involves. Vocabulary is hedged with “uses” standard—requires demonstration/assessment</p> <p>Emphasizes generative process of writing with writing standard.</p> <p>Acquiring knowledge of Georgia Authors is odd. There is no other discussion of acquiring knowledge in any other reading standard. Not sure what to make of this.</p>
The student	<b>shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.	
The student	<b>understands</b>	new vocabulary	
The student	<b>acquires</b>	new vocabulary	
The student	<b>uses</b>	it [new vocabulary] correctly in reading and writing.	
The student	<b>reads</b> aloud,	accurately (in the range of 95%), familiar material in a variety of genres, in a way that makes meaning clear to listeners.	
The student	<b>acquires</b>	knowledge of Georgia authors and significant text created by them.	
The student	<b>produces</b>	writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals a satisfying closure.	
The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	competence in a variety of genres.	
The student	<b>uses</b>	research and technology to support writing.	
The student	consistently <b>uses</b>	the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing.	
The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	understanding and control of the rules of the English language,	
The student	<b>realizing.</b>	that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats	

Please forgive the redundant structure of this table, but as I examined the iterative nature

of the Theme/Rheme structure of the GPS, I saw verbally the GPS depicted learning as

being demonstrative and productive. The standard “acquires knowledge of Georgia authors and significant text created by them” is actually an anomaly appearing only in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade standards. The rest of the language is consistent from the first through the eighth grade. Students are constantly “demonstrating,” “producing,” and “using.” The reading skills identified are always “reads aloud,” so even there, there is an inherent performative act. Learning, in the GPS, then is performative and demonstrable. Outside of the one case of acquiring “knowledge of Georgia authors” if the student does not demonstrate the standard, he or she has not learned it.

Also inherent in the GPS is the same basic idea, concept, or skill is taught at each grade level.

Figure 4.13: Experiential Analysis of GPS Reading Standard 1 from 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	knowledge of concepts of print.	Interesting progression in that the skills that must be demonstrated become more generalized—demonstrations of “knowledge of concepts of prints” becomes “The ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and express” which becomes “comprehension.” from the 4 <sup>th</sup> through 8 <sup>th</sup> grade, the working is the exact same. Assessment is privileged. Rather than directly identifying the skills required, the standards require a demonstration and showing that can then be assessed.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and expression.	
4 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension	
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.	
5 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension	
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.	
8 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension	
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.	

In the early grades, students are learning about the structure of texts and the ability to read regardless of understanding. However, by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students are repeating the same skill each year with attention to specific elements and depth. Basically, after the fourth grade, students continue to develop the same skill of demonstrating comprehension and showing “evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts” with, presumably, more complicated texts.

### **Micro Learning in the Georgia Performance Standards.**

The specific knowledge, skills, and understandings taught required in the GPS are found in the elements of the standards. The standards reveal the macro ideas that permeate learning. The individual elements identify the specific knowledge, skills, and understandings that are outlined in the standards. For example, in the fifth grade “demonstrating comprehension” means that for a literary text a student “identifies and analyzes the elements of setting, characterization, and conflict in plot.” In the eighth grade it means a student “identifies the difference between the concepts of theme in a literary work and author’s purpose in an expository text.” These are very different skills inherent in the same standard at the different grade levels. The standard is uniform from third through eighth grade. The elements, or specific knowledge associated with each standard, is different.

The dynamic nature of learning is not explicit in the standards, but it is inherent in the elements of each standard. Inherent in this structure is the idea that a student “demonstrates comprehension and shows evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts” regardless of age. However, a younger student will do this at a more basic level than an older student. There is a clear

delineation between the macro concept of “what it means to learn” and the micro concept of “this is what a student learns each year.”

### **Macro and Micro Learning in the Common Core**

While the standards in the GPS tend to draw a line between the concept of learning and the steps of learning, this is not the case in the CCGPS. As students progress through the CCGPS, the specific skills change while the focus of each skill remains the same. The basic skills identified in the standards are expressed differently from first through eighth grade. Students begin by asking and answering about texts, move through referring to text as they explain it, and end by citing the text to support an independent analysis. While the CCGPS posits, “rigor is infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades,” this is not necessarily the case. Structurally, there is no reason that student cannot use the same text from first through eighth grade and exploring it in more complicated ways. For example, a school district could chose a single texts: *Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big* (Breathed, 2000) and as students to “ask and answer” questions about the text in the first grade, and continue to use this text as the child grows so that by 8<sup>th</sup> grade, he or she is “citing textual evidence” to conduct and support a textual analysis of the picture book. While there is discussion early in the standards expecting texts be consistently more complex from year to year, there is nothing in the standard to restrict the practice I have outlined.

The way the same skill is developed from first through 8<sup>th</sup> grade can be seen in the following table:

Figure 4.14: Analysis of CCGPS Reading Standard 1 from 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Grade	Actor	Process	Goal	Commentary
1 <sup>st</sup>	Students	<b>Ask and answer</b>	questions about key details in a text.	<p>These standards privilege the activity over the assessment. Demonstration occurs in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, but beyond that, the activities of referring, explaining, drawing, quoting, citing, and supporting are highlighted instead of “demonstrating” and ability to do these things. Fundamental shift that deemphasizes assessment.</p> <p>Macro-micro skill constantly used. Ask and answer to demonstrate; refer when explaining and drawing; cite to support.</p> <p>Gradual increase in skills. Begin by asking about a text in the first grade, end by citing a text in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Verb progression Asking-&gt;Refer-&gt;Quote -&gt;Cite.</p> <p>Note amplification in later standards “explicitly” in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and “most strongly” and “explicitly” in 8<sup>th</sup>.</p>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Students	<b>Ask and answer</b>	such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how	
		<b>to demonstrate</b>	understanding of key details in a text.	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Students	<b>Ask and answer</b>	questions	
		<b>to demonstrate</b>	understanding of a text,	
		<b>referring</b>	explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.	
4 <sup>th</sup>	Students	<b>Refer</b>	to details and examples in a text	
		<b>when explaining</b>	what the text says explicitly and	
		<b>when drawing</b>	inferences from the text.	
5 <sup>th</sup>	Students	<b>quote</b>	accurately from a text	
		<b>when explaining</b>	what the text says explicitly and	
		<b>when drawing</b>	inferences from the text	
6 <sup>th</sup>	Students	<b>Cite</b>	textual evidence	
		<b>to support</b>	<b>analysis</b> of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	
7 <sup>th</sup>	Students	<b>Cite</b>	several pieces of textual evidence	
		<b>to support</b>	<b>analysis</b> of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	
8 <sup>th</sup>	Students	<b>Cite</b>	the textual evidence	
		<b>that most strongly supports</b>	<b>an analysis</b> of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	

Through my SFL analysis I found emphasis shifts through these standards as the child progresses through each grade. In first grade, it is enough for a student to ask and



answer questions about a text. In fifth grade, students are expected “to explain” the text and “to draw” conclusions from texts. In the eighth grade, the understanding of the text and the conclusions drawn from the text are not as important as the student’s ability to support his or her analysis of a text with details and inferences. The dynamic nature of learning is explicitly spelled out and dictated in the CCGPS in a way that is not seen in any of the other documents.

This nature is easily seen as the need to “refer” to a text when asking or answering questions in the third grade becomes the focus of the fourth grade standard. In the third grade, the primary skill assessed is “asking and answering” questions. “Referring” to details is a tool for asking and answering questions. In the fourth grade, the primary skill is “refer” to details and examples for the purpose of “explaining” the text and “drawing inferences.”

Also, in the CCGPS learning is not necessarily demonstrative. Of course, in the field of education, a student must demonstrate to his or her teacher that a skill has been mastered prior to promotion, but this relationship is not inherent in this document. Students are not required to “demonstrate” their ability to refer or quote or cite. They are required to refer, quote, and cite. Linguistically, the specific skill is more important than the demonstration of that skill.

It is impossible to draw a line between the micro and macro discussions of learning in the CCGPS because the line is purposefully not present. The authors equate the idea of what a learned person does based on his or her skills at a specific age with learning. Inherent in the CCGPS is the idea that the transactions a first grader will have

with a text are different from the transactions an eighth grader will have with that same text.

### **Structural Disconnections Between the Standards**

Before I can answer my earlier question in my discussion of the assessment documents--does the change in the CRCT descriptions reflect a change in the standards or does it reflect a change assessment itself--I need to examine a stark structural difference between the GPS and the CCGPS. Literary and informational reading are couched in the same standard of the GPS, but they are separate standards in the CCGPS. Based on a cursory exploration of the two documents, one would think that the GPSCRCT with its different approaches to literary and informational reading would be better aligned with the CCGPS while the single approach to both types of texts in the CCCRCT would better match the GPS. However, as you explore the content of the standards, you find that structure of the assessments actually closely match the structure of the appropriate standards.

While the GPS asks students to demonstrate comprehension and show evidence “of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts” the elements treat each of these skills very differently. The standard is provided with specific elements. Then the standard is further divided into literary reading and informational reading standards. Each section has elements that are supposed to match the elements of the main standard. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Informational Reading level B reads that students are expected to compare and contrast “genre characteristics from two or more selections of literature.” However, informational standard level B reads that students should apply, analyze, and evaluate “common organizational structures” for

informational texts. There is no match. At the micro level, GPS students treat literary and informational text very differently. See the figure 4.15 below for a further demonstration.

Figure 4.15: Experiential Comparison of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade GPS Reading 1 Sub-standards

	<b>Literary Reading</b>	<b>Informational Reading</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Standard	For literary texts, the student <b>identifies</b> the characteristics of various genres and <b>produces</b> evidence of reading that:	For informational texts, the student <b>reads</b> and <b>comprehends</b> in order to develop understanding and expertise and <b>produces</b> evidence of reading that:	Experientially, this document treats literary and informational reading very differently.
A	<b>Identifies</b> the difference between the concepts of theme in a literary work and author's purpose in an expository text.	<b>Analyzes</b> and <b>evaluates</b> common textual features (e.g., paragraphs, topic sentences, concluding sentences, introduction, conclusion, footnotes, index, bibliography).	Literary reading involves Identifying, producing, comparing, contrasting, analyzing, and evaluating.
B	<b>Compares</b> and <b>contrasts</b> genre characteristics from two or more selections of literature.	<b>Applies, analyzes, and evaluates</b> common organizational structures (e.g., graphic organizers, logical order, cause and effect relationships, comparison and contrast).	Informational reading involves reading, comprehending, producing, analyzing, evaluating, applying, recognizing, understanding, explaining, and using
C	<b>Analyzes</b> a character's traits, emotions, or motivations and gives supporting evidence from the text(s).	<b>Recognizes</b> and traces the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text.	Only producing, analyzing, and evaluating are repeated in both sub-standards, and there is NO match at the standard or element level.
D	<b>Compares</b> and <b>contrasts</b> motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting similar situations or conflicts.	<b>Understands</b> and <b>explains</b> the use of a complex mechanical device by following technical directions.	
E	<b>Evaluates</b> recurring or similar themes across a variety of selections, distinguishing theme from topic.	<b>Uses</b> information from a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents (e.g., job applications) to explain a situation or decision and to solve a problem.	Literary and informational reading are different skills.

Although these are elements of the same standard—they are both ELA8R1—there is no match at any level of the document. Literary reading and informational reading in the GPS are very different skills with very different purposes and very different descriptions.

In the CCGPS students “determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary” of a literary text. Or they, “determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary” of an informational text. The skill of using elements of a text to “determine the central idea” of that text is closely analogous. While the specific skills identified in the assessment do not always match the specific skills of the standards, the assessments do match the global assumptions of the standard they assess.

The GPSCRCT focus on very different skills being applied to literary and informational texts matches the structure of the GPS. The GPSCRCT and the GPS both treat literary and informational reading as distinct skills. The CCCRCT’s assessment of the same skill set being applied to informational and literary texts matches the CCGPS’s structure. Rhetorically, there is a strong match between standard and assessment at each level.

### **How Learning Is Characterized**

Regardless, while the micro discussion of what should be learned is different across these standards, the macro discussion of what is learning is largely the same. I argue that the creators of these documents all believe in a Piagetian stage theory of education.

Piaget (1997) promoted a stage theory of education where children naturally progress through specific learning stages that can be benchmarked to demonstrate growth. In all of these documents, the assumption is that learning is finite and assessable. Vygotsky (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Vygotsky, 1987) argued that learning was cultural, infinite in scope, and tool or artifact mediated. Those from a Vygotskian perspective might have problems working within the paradigms presented in these documents.

There is also little space in these documents for dialogue. By strictly defining the skills a student of a particular age must master, these documents have worked to define a child at each age. According to the CCGPS, a child who cannot ask and answer questions about a text is not qualified to move from the first grade to the second.

The structures in these documents lend themselves to promote a transmission model (Smagorinsky, 2008) of education, or as Freire (2005) expressed, a banking model. Teachers and students who do not share this world view may find participating in this educational structure problematic. This is to be discussed further in the final chapter of this book.

### **Constructing Students**

Students are difficult to discuss within these structures because they are not represented as developing individuals. Rather, they are discussed as developed individuals who have attained a certain level of knowledge. Students are positioned in three ways. They are positioned by the testing documents as being required to demonstrate knowledge or skill that they have mastered. They are positioned by the standards as individuals who will use specific knowledge or skill during a specific time frame, or they are presented by that same document as masters of all the knowledge and

skills outlined. As I demonstrate below, students are presented as having various levels of agency—from limited to complete agency—depending on the purpose of the document.

### Students and the CRCT

Students are first represented in the opening paragraph of the GPSCRCT:

Figure 4.16: GPSCRCT Introduction

Georgia law requires the development and administration of the CRCT in the content areas of Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Each spring students in grades 1 through 8 take the Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics CRCT, while students in grades 3 through 8 also take the Science and Social Studies CRCT. These tests are designed to measure student achievement of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS).

Structurally, students have the power in this sentence. The students actively “take” the exam. The use of active voice here with students is very different from use of passive voice with teachers throughout this document. This shift of voice is to be further discussed later in this chapter. The student’s relationship to the test is discussed in the following section

Figure 4.17: GPSCRCT Purpose Statement

#### **Program Purpose**

The CRCT is designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the GPS. The testing program serves as a measure of the quality of education in the state. Reports yielding information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, system, and state are produced annually.

The lack of modality here is striking. The test will measure student acquisition and understanding. There is no “whether or not” provided. The test will measure the student’s present level. It will not measure whether they have or have not learned anything. Instead, it measures what a student knows and this is, according to this document, readily measurable. It is assumed that the students will acquire knowledge and that this knowledge is measurable. Inherent in this construction, students will have a level of acquisition and understanding. The question is, how much do they have. This is further

qualified as the testing “program serves as a measure of the quality of education in the state.” The goal of the assessment then is not to determine the quality of the student; that is assumed—all students are equal in this construction. Rather, the student’s performance on the assessment will reveal how effectively the state has instructed the student. Inherent in this document is assumption that knowledge moves linearly from teacher to student. Alternate views of education and learning are ignored.

Martin and Rose (2002) explain that power relationships in texts can be explored through the use of active and passive voice. Through a passive construction, “the agent of effect actions need not be mentioned in the clause, but the meaning of agency is still there” (p. 73). However, the student is introduced as the theme or subject of a sentence in the active voice. The agency here is with the student. The student takes the test to see if the state has provided a quality education. This power is removed in the CCCRCT.

The CCCRCT opens:

Figure 4.18: CCCRCT Introduction

<p>Georgia law, as amended by the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000, requires that all students in grades one through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics. Students in grades three through eight are also assessed in Science and Social Studies. The CRCT are administered in the late spring of each year. These tests are designed to measure student achievement of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for Science and Social Studies.</p>
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Students are disempowered by the shift from being the subject of a sentence to being the object. While one might defend the practice by exploring the genre expectations of these assessment documents, I want to point out that this is a revision. The original served to empower students. When the domain description was revised, the sentence was restructured so that students are no longer the subject of a sentence but are the direct object of the sentence. This is most easily seen in Figure 4.19.

Figure 4.19: Students in GPSCRCT and CCCRCT Introduction

<b>GPSCRCT</b>	<b>CCCRCT</b>
Each spring students in grades 1 through 8 take the Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics CRCT, while students in grades 3 through 8 also take the Science and Social Studies CRCT.	Georgia law, as amended by the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000, requires that all students in grades one through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics.

Rather than students “take” the exams, implying some level of agency, the law “requires” students to take the exams. Again student achievement is measured by the exam and the sentence “the assessment program serves as a measure of the quality of education in the state,” implying that the test is a measurement of state efficacy rather than student effort. However, a paragraph was added to the CCCRCT that reads:

In accordance with Georgia law and State Board rule, CRCT in specified grades and subjects are used for promotion criteria. Third grade students are required to show proficiency on the Reading CRCT in order to be considered for promotion to the next grade level. Fifth grade and eighth grade students are required to show proficiency on both the Reading and Mathematics CRCT in order to be promoted to the next grade level. Students who do not achieve proficiency must be offered remediation and a retest.

The ultimate accountability outlined in this section is on the student. A student who does not demonstrate proficiency in certain areas will be retained. While the document does make certain demands of the school system, i.e. “remediation” and “retest,” this document makes it clear that students who are not successful will face consequences.

Since the implementation of the CRCT, Georgia middle schools have changed their structures. Every teacher I interviewed worked in a school that had cut class time



spent in “connections” or “exploratory” classes—including art, music, horticulture, band, P.E., business—in order to buy time for a new “enrichment” course or “extended learning time” which is an hour dedicated to core tested subjects such as language arts, reading, and math. Each school provided different experiences for those students who were successful on the CRCT, but students who failed the test were in an extra class devoted to the subject area they failed. This is a direct result of how this test can affect students and teachers working to help students succeed according to how this document defines success.

As I discussed in the prior section, the GPSCRCT and the CCCRCT have different micro approaches as to what counts as knowledge. However, while what counts as knowledge is very different between these two documents, the student’s relationship to that knowledge is unchanged. As each portion of the test is introduced, the text explains that the core concept “refers to a student’s skill in” and then defines the concept. Central to this construction is the idea that the student owns the skill. Again, learning continues to fall under the banking metaphor of learning much derided in the works of Freire (2005). Learning is a thing that a student can have. It is given, and once given it can be tested.

Inherent in this structure is the idea that all students of a certain age are the same. This document accepts the Piagetian (1997) idea of stage theory. They all own the same basic skills that permeate throughout that grade. This is an uncomplicated view of students. It promotes a monocultural perspective and identification of student. This is counter to several research traditions in education. Teachers promoting culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 1995; Fecho 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994) teachers grounding their practice in theories of Vygotsky (Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2007, 2009; Wertsch, 1991)

as well as the theories grounded in the work of Bahktin (Bahktin, 1981; Fecho, 2011; Stewart, 2011) are all resistant to the way education is presented in these assessment documents.

### **Students in the GPS**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the GPS is structurally very different from the other documents explored here. Unlike the other documents, the GPS is not a single document with information for each grade level. Instead, it is multiple documents, one for each grade level. Each of these documents opens with a general overview of the student the document is designed for. For example, the seventh grade GPS opens . . .

Seventh graders are comfortable with the middle school routine. Physical and emotional maturity does not vary as greatly as in other grades, and challenges related to the development of fine motor skills do not present a major problem.

Each document opens with a similar statement generalizing about the student at each grade level.

While the generalizations made about a student at each grade level can be problematic, as one reads across the documents, you find that students are represented as dynamic individuals who grow and develop according to a specific timeline. For example, “Students who enter first grade from kindergarten continue phonological development, making major growth in learning to read,” while “Third graders are making the transition from learning to read to reading to learn,” and “Fifth grade students read and comprehend texts from a variety of genres (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama) and subject areas (math, science, social studies, and English language arts), and they make new connections as they encounter new ideas and begin to study subjects in more

formal ways.” This structure promotes the stage theories of Piaget (2005). Instead of grounding learning in the cultural needs of the society or the dialogical nature of inquiry, learning is progressive and found in the student.

The generalizations made are highly suspect, and the problems with these assumptions is discussed later in this chapter, but at this point, it is important to understand that the document explicitly defines the quality of a student at each grade. Once this is done, it outlines the knowledge that each student should demonstrate. During this outline, structurally, although the student is the sole subject of every sentence in the standards, he or she is largely devoid of agency.

In order to understand the relationship of power in this section, I must revisit my discussion of how assessment is privileged in the GPS as outlined in figure 4.13. Figure 4.20 is an excerpt of the larger figure that will suffice to illustrate my point.

Figure 4.20: Experiential Analysis of GPS Reading Standard 1 from 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	knowledge of concepts of print.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and expression.
4 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.
5 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.
8 <sup>th</sup>	The student	<b>demonstrates</b>	comprehension
		<b>and shows</b>	evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.

A vast majority of the standards require the student to “demonstrate” a knowledge or skill. As discussed in the prior section, this reflects the idea that learning is to be assessed. The assessment of the ability is what is demanded in these standards rather than

the ability itself. Relating to how that serves to define student means that a student's purpose in school is to perform specific tasks for an unnamed agent. In first grade (2008), it is not enough for a student to “read orally,” instead, he or she must demonstrate “the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and expression” (p 3). In third grade (2008) “the student demonstrates competency in the writing process” (p.3). In Fifth grade (2008) “The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language” (p. 6), and in Eighth grade, (2008) “The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres” (p. 5). Inherent in this structure the student is constantly be evaluated by an outside, unnamed audience for whom the student is constantly performing.

There are a few exceptions—most notably in the speaking and listening portions of the standards, but by and large, students are not learning in the standards. Rather, they are demonstrating that they have learned. Students then are performers constantly demonstrating what they know. Individually, within each document rather than across them, the GPS do not present students as humans who are developing. Rather, they present each student at each grade as a static entity who can perform specific tasks.

### **Students in the CCGPS**

The introduction to the CCGPS reads:

Figure 4.21: CCGPS Student Discussion

As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the standards lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the skills and understandings students are expected to demonstrate have wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace. Students who meet the standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and in digital format. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and

responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, students who meet the standards develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language.

In order to understand this section, I conducted the following experiential analysis:

Figure 4.22: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Student Discussion: Being

<b>participants</b>	<b>being</b>	<b>attribute</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Indeed, <b>the skills and understandings</b> students are expected to demonstrate	have	wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace.	define the scope of the standards as being applicable beyond school.

Figure 4.23: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Student Discussion: Doing

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, <b>the standards</b>	<b>lay out</b>	a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century.	The standard provide a vision
<b>Students</b> who meet the standards	readily <b>undertake</b>	the close, attentive <b>reading</b> that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature.	Introduce students as agent and defines what a student, who meets the standards, does
<b>They</b>	habitually <b>perform</b>	the critical <b>reading</b> necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and in digital format.	Reading is not an action but an activity. Reading is a gerund here. A thing.
<b>They</b>	actively <b>seek</b>	the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews.	<b>Undertake</b> reading <b>Perform</b> reading  Reasoning is also a gerund. Students demonstrate reasoning.
<b>They</b>	reflexively <b>demonstrate</b>	the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is	

		essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic.	
In short, <b>students</b> who meet the standards	<b>develop</b>	the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language.	Rephrases/summarizes prior statement

As discussed earlier in this chapter, learning is first constructed in this section; however, it is also the first discussion of students in the CCGPS. Students are presented in this section from two distinct perspectives. In figure 2.22 the student lacks agency in that “students are expected to demonstrate.” My SFL analysis showed students are being acted on by an outside adjudicator. There is no discussion of how or to whom students demonstrate their skills or understandings. However, after this initial presentation of a student, we are introduced to “students who meet the standards,” and this person has a good deal of the agency.

Central to the representation of students in figure 2.22 is the lack of a discussion of learning. The student is expected to demonstrate specific skills and understandings. Once a student has demonstrated these things, he or she will have all of the abilities outlined in this paragraph, which by definition the student embodies “a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century.” Structurally, while the primary subject of this paragraph is “the student,” the paragraph is dedicated to defining knowledge, and what it means to be a learned individual. This paragraph is not expressing how a student progresses and grows. Instead, it is outlining what a student will

know and be able to do once he or she has completed his education and met all of the standards in this document.

In figure 2.23 students don't "read for understanding and enjoyment," rather they "undertake" reading to understand and for enjoyment. Students don't critically read through information, rather they "perform" critical reading." These activities are amplified as students "readily" undertake and "habitually" perform reading. Not only is the act itself amplified, but the material. It is not enough to read "literature." Instead, it must be "complex" literature and the information available is "staggering" in amount. These texts are further amplified as "high quality." These texts don't magically appear, rather, they are sought out by the student for the expressed purpose for "building knowledge," "enlarging experience," and "broadening one's worldview."

This paragraph drives to the penultimate sentence where the reasons for an educated student are outlined. The student who has met these standards "reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic." Again, "reasoning" is not a verb. It is a gerund. It is a thing. They "demonstrate" this thing. The action is demonstration not reason. This demonstration is "reflexive," meaning instant without requiring a cue. As we parse this sentence, it is clear that it is not enough to reason. The reason must be cogent, evidenced based, and purposeful—specifically for private and public reasons.

Inherent in this structure is the idea that someone who has not met these standards cannot be a responsible citizen. The reasoning outlined in these standards are "essential" to a responsible citizen. The ideal student then grows to become a "responsible citizen."

After this assumption of a completed student becoming a responsible citizen, the CCGPS presents a more nuanced view of the student. Students are discussed in three separate sections based on their grade level. Elementary: “fundamentally, students in grades K through 5 are focused on developing comprehension strategies that will enable them to manipulate grade-level texts of appropriate complexity, and communicate effectively both in writing and in speaking” (p. 18). Middle: “Instruction in grades 6-8 addresses students’ increasing maturity and the growing sophistication of their abilities, culminating in the development by the end of grade 8 of students who are ready to succeed in high school” (p. 18), and High school: “As students progress towards the successful culmination of their high school careers, they will consolidate and internalize all of the skills instilled through the full progression of the CCGPS. High school students will employ strong, thorough, and explicit textual evidence in their literary analyses and technical research” (p. 19).

My experiential analysis shows that students as discussed in these sections of the CCGPS document, are not static. They are “developing,” “extending,” “maturing,” “expanding,” and “progressing.” While the opening of the document presents the “completed” student, or the student who has “met the standards,” the rest of the document discusses the progress of the student from kindergarten through high school.

There are certain benchmarks that are identified. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade student is “ready to succeed in high school,” and “students will graduate [high school] with the fully developed ability to communicate in multiple modes of discourse demonstrating a strong command of the rules of Standard English” (p.18-19). However, generally, students are recognized as humans in progress, and this progress is not necessarily limited by age.



Finally, students are nominalized from the standards. Rather, the standards are listed as a number of predicates with no subject. For example, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade standard reads: “cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text” (p. 50). Structurally, this omitted subject will be interpreted differently based on the audience. A teacher may read the missing subject, “students will,” or “students,” which have an affect on the agency and developmental assumptions about students. A student can read this as an imperative sentence—a command to be followed. Regardless, skills are identified that students either have or will have, but the assumption of performance mandated in the GPS is not here. As discussed in the prior section, the demand for assessment is not embedded in this structure. Therefore, student autonomy and agency is indirectly confirmed.

### **Discussing Teachers**

The role of the teacher is largely left unexplored in these documents. Rather, the teacher is an agent being acted on by the document in question. The teacher is an addressee (Bakhtin, 1986). Inherent in any utterance is the expected response. “When constructing my utterance, I try actively to determine this response (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 96). These documents, however, are designed for the response not to return to the author of the document. Rather, teachers are expected to respond to this document by creating a curriculum grounded in the identified skills, knowledge, and understandings outlined in the standards. These documents are an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin 1981) designed to shape and direct the teachers’ response.

My discussion of teachers in these documents is limited to the CCCRCT and the CCGPS. Unlike students, who were structurally reframed from the GPSCRCT to the

CCCRCT, the language concerning teachers was totally unchanged with one minor exception. The penultimate sentence of the GPSCRCT is “Georgia law requires educators to teach the standards set forth in the state-adopted curriculum (i.e., the GPS).” The GPSCRCT replaces the “(i.e., the GPS)” with “(i.e., the CCGPS).” The attitude toward the teacher is completely unchanged; therefore, I ground my analysis on the more recent text.

Teachers were completely omitted from the GPS documents. There is no mention of “teacher” or “teaching” in any GPS document. Educators are presumably a primary audience for these texts, and are identified as such by ancillary documents. For example the webpage that housed the curriculum said that these documents were provided for “teachers, parents, and community members,” but none of these agents are addressed in the text proper. I can discuss the implications of this omission, but I can’t discuss how teachers might have been defined. They weren’t. A major reason teachers are not defined directly is that as an audience of the paper, they are expected to live in response to it (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986); Teachers are expected to accept the standards presented in the GPS and shape their curriculum accordingly. The standards are an authoritative discourse that resists dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981). Teachers are not engaged directly as an audience because such a direct acknowledgement would serve to invite dialogue, and that would be counter to the basic structure of the document.

### **Teachers in the CCCRCT**

Teachers are presented in the final two paragraphs of the CCCRCT.

Figure 4.24: CCCRCT Conclusion

#### **CRCT Content Descriptions**

The CRCT Content Descriptions are provided to acquaint Georgia educators with the content coverage of the CRCT. Only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the

CCGPS will be assessed on the CRCT. Committees of Georgia educators reviewed the curriculum and provided guidance for the assessment program.

It is important to note that some curricular standards are better suited for classroom or individual assessment rather than large-scale paper-pencil assessment. While those curricular standards designed for classroom/individual assessment are not included in the CRCT Content Descriptions, the knowledge, concepts, and skills outlined are often required for the mastery of the standards that are assessed. Therefore, the CRCT Content Descriptions are in *no way* intended to substitute for the CCGPS; they are provided to help educators better understand how the curriculum will be assessed. Further, the CRCT Content Descriptions *by no means* suggest *when* concepts and skills should be introduced in the instructional sequence; rather, their purpose is to communicate when concepts and skills will be assessed on the CRCT. Georgia law requires educators to teach the standards set forth in the state-adopted curriculum (i.e., the CCGPS). The CCGPS is located at <http://www.georgiastandards.org>.

The conclusion of the CCCRCT structurally positions the teacher as an object in the sentence, “the CRCT Content Descriptions are provided to acquaint Georgia educators with the content coverage of the CRCT.” A restructuring of this sentence in active voice would read, “the CRCT Content Descriptions acquaint Georgia educators with the content.” Instead of the direct relationship of this document to teachers, an outside agent “provides” these descriptions to acquaint educators. Linguistically, educators are doubly removed from the action. They are being acted on by the document, which is being provided by an unnamed agent. Again, this nominalization is designed to hide the primary agent (Knapp & Watkins, 2005)

This structure is repeated in the penultimate sentence of both documents “Georgia law requires educators to teach the standards set forth in the state-adopted curriculum.” The law, rather than community standards or teacher decisions, dictate what students are to learn. Structurally, teachers deliver a state mandated curriculum that is assessed through a state mandated test. Generally, they are not presented in these documents with agency. Teachers do not control what they teach nor how they are assessed.

The subordinate role of the teacher to the assessment is partially hedged in the sentence “committees of Georgia educators reviewed the curriculum and provided guidance for the assessment program.” There is a level of power linguistically granted to teachers by this audit power. This is the only sentence using teachers in the active voice where they are the primary actor. However, there are two issues with this authority.

First, teachers are introduced as an object being acted on by this very document itself. Second, an appraisal analysis of the verbs in this document tends to reflect how teachers are not expected to hold power. The verbs “require,” and “design,” are much stronger terms than “review” and “provide guidance.” In each of these relationships the object is the test. Georgia law requires the test. An unnamed agent designs the test. However, teachers review the curriculum, and they “provide guidance for the assessment.” Outside of any “guidance” they provide, teacher have no power over the test. Review indicates that the action occurs after the work of requiring and designing are completed, and a provided guidance does not indicate whether that advice was followed or ignored. The structure of this document serves to disempower the teacher.

### **Teachers in the CCGPS**

The CCGPS opens:

Figure 4.25: CCGPS Introduction

<p><b>Georgia Department of Education</b></p> <p>This Common Core Georgia Performance Standards Educator Resource is designed to provide teachers with clarification of the English Language Arts Common Core Georgia Performance Standards, including how they relate to and derive from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards and how the Literacy Standards for Social Studies/History, Science, and Technical Subjects are integrated into instruction. Included in this document are the three sets of standards in their entirety: CCR, ELA CCGPS, and Literacy CCGPS, along with detailed explication, research, and implementation guidance. The standards and associated resources were designed based on the input and collaboration of thousands of local and national language arts educators, with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards evolving through a precision review</p>
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process that spanned more than a year and involved the generous efforts of educators from nearly every county in the state. It is our hope that this document will serve not only as a handy daily resource for constructing curriculum, but also as a critical reference text that will assist users of the standards in building a strong, intrinsic familiarity with and enthusiasm for the scope and purpose of this promising initiative.

Figure 4.26: Experiential Breakdown of CCGPS Introduction: Being

<b>Participants</b>	<b>being</b>	<b>attribute</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
This Common Core Georgia Performance Standards Educator Resource	is designed	<b>to provide</b> teachers with clarification of the English Language Arts Common Core Georgia Performance Standards, including how they relate to and derive from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards and how the Literacy Standards for Social Studies/History, Science, and Technical Subjects are integrated into instruction.	Passive construction masks primary agent. Active Wording: Unnamed agent designed this document to clarify standards to teachers.  The document—“this resource is identified as an agent with power over the teachers.
Included in this document	are	the <b>three sets of standards</b> in their entirety: CCR, ELA CCGPS, and Literacy CCGPS, along with detailed explication, research, and implementation guidance.	
The standards and associated resources	were designed	<b>based</b> on the input and collaboration of thousands of local and national language arts educators, with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards <b>evolving</b> through a precision review process that spanned more than a year and involved the generous efforts of educators from nearly every county in the state.	Passive construction masks primary agent: Active Wording: An unnamed agent designed these standards based on educator input and collaboration.
It	is	<b>our hope</b> that this document will serve not only as a handy daily resource for constructing curriculum, but also as a critical reference text that will assist users of the standards in building a strong, intrinsic familiarity with and enthusiasm for the scope and purpose of this promising initiative.	Our?—only recognition of an authorial intent in all the documents examined.

There are three agents introduced in the opening of the document: The Georgia Department of Education, this resource (i.e. the document), and teachers. In order to track the flow of information presented in this document, it is easiest if I restructure the first sentence from the passive to the active voice. Again, the purpose of passive voice is to hide the power (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The active voice makes it much easier to trace the power relationship inherent in a sentence. Rewritten: The Georgia Department of Education designed this resource to provide teachers with clarification. The clarification flows from the Department of Education through this document to teachers. This clarification includes the history of the CCGPS as well establishing a relationship with the CCGPS to the “Literacy Standards for Social Studies/History, Science, and Technical Subjects.”

While it is explained that the CCGPS are “related and derived” from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, teachers played a role in the development of these standards. Now, the agency that developed the CCGPS is unnamed. The Georgia Department of Education produced this document to clarify the standards, not to report them. That means that they are not necessarily the author of the standards. They are the author of this document, but not necessarily the standards. That distinction is incredibly important. An unnamed agent “designed” the standards “based on the input and collaboration of thousands of local and national language arts educators.” Experientially, teachers, specifically “language arts” teachers, had power. They were involved in the development of the standards. However, this involvement is hedged as they are disconnected from the direct production of the standards. Teachers provided input, and this input was used to design the standards. There is a level of agency attributed to

teachers in this document that is not in the CRCT documents; however, teachers are not autonomous, and they are not the primary agent of this document.

I find the attribution of local and national teachers fascinating. I'm not sure what to make of these adjectives. This is a state document, so in that context, what does the term "local" mean? The term is clarified in the following sentence as it is explained that the standards "evolved" through "a precision review process" involving "the generous efforts of educators from nearly every county in the state." My appraisal analysis of this section focused on the terms "precision" and "generous." These adjectives serve to provide the author's judgment concerning the type of work "precise" and the ethical quality of the educators providing this work "generous." These judgments insinuate that the work completed was difficult requiring focus and was completed for ethical rather than monetary reasons.

There is not any other explicit discussion of teachers throughout the remainder of the standards documents, but teachers and teaching are often indirectly addressed. For example "Instruction in grades 6-8 addresses students' increasing maturity and the growing sophistication of their abilities" (CCGPS, p. 18). This is followed by a discussion of what a typical middle school student should be able to do once he or she has completed the eighth grade, but it is concluded with a discussion of text complexity with the explanation that "complexity levels are assessed based upon a variety of indicators which may be examined" (p. 18). While teachers are not explicitly mentioned, someone is providing the "instruction" and someone is evaluating the complexity levels of the texts presented these teachers.

Instruction implies a teacher's involvement, and the assessment of text complexity can imply the same thing. However, this implication can work for or against teacher agency. There are a number of implied powers granted teachers. It is implied that teachers can design curriculum. It is implied that teachers instruct, and it is implied that teachers evaluate texts, but the subjects of these sentences are intentionally left vague.

While the curriculum designers mentioned in the opening paragraph of the CCGPS can be teachers, it can also be local boards of education, groups of administrators, or outside software designers. There is no limit to that term. It is up to reader discretion. The same is true for instruction and text evaluation. Both of these can be provided by computer software.

Teacher agency in this document is intentionally vague. The teacher is the primary audience of this document as it outlines what he or she is expected to teach during a school year. This document maintains an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) that the teacher is unable to dialogue with. She or he is expected to accept the identified standards as the core of student knowledge and transmit that knowledge. A teacher has to ensure his or her students can do each of the things outlined in the standards.

This was even more apparent in the GPS where teachers were completely omitted. The GPS had no discussion of teachers, teaching, or instruction. It contained an outline of who the students are followed by a list of the things a student will be able to do once she or he completes the grade. There is no discussion of how these goals are met or who facilitates the growth implied.



### **Where the Power Lies**

An identification analysis of the GPSCRCT data demonstrates that structurally, there are five agents presented in the opening of the CRCT domain descriptions. The first agent is the Georgia law that “requires the development and administration” of this exam. The second agent is the students who “take” the exam. The third agent is the CRCT that “measures student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts and skills set forth in the GPS.” A fourth agent is this document that is “provided to acquaint Georgia educators with the content coverage of the CRCT.” A fifth agent is the committee of Georgia educators who reviewed the curriculum and advised the assessment program. Finally, the Georgia Department of Education, is an unnamed agent who produced this document and imbued it with the authority of that department. Knapp and Watkins (2005) explain that nominalizations are grammatical structures that remove the primary agent from a sentence. Normalizations are used to “effectively remove agency and time from statements and therefore render the propositions more difficult to refute” (p. 57). The sentences that should use the department of education as the subject, are structured to omit the noun, so as to provide emphasis to the statement.

Specifically, Georgia law mandates a test. This test accesses student achievement in the curriculum. This document tells teachers what is on this test. This structure matches the assumptions of SBE (Ainsworth, 2003; Johnstone, Dicker, and Luedeke, 2009; Marzano, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; McMillan, 2008). SBE divides learning into three parts: standards, instruction, and assessment (Marzano & Kendall, 1996). The state department controls two elements of this triad and effectively dictates specific structures, all grounded in SBE, for the third element: instruction.

I found it particularly fascinating that certain agents act while others are acted on. In figure 4.19 Georgia law “requires,” and students “take.” In figure 4.17 the testing program “serves.” In Figure 4.24 committees of Georgia educators “reviewed” and “provided.” In each of these situations, the sentence is constructed in active voice specifically identifying the subject of the sentence in the place of power.

On the other hand, many of these agents are acted upon. Rather than the active “the test measures student achievement” the sentence is structured “these test are designed to measure student achievement.” An outside agent is designing a test that then measures achievement.

However, this document grounds its power to assess in the GPS. As highlighted earlier in my discussion of how this document constructs knowledge, “only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the GPS will be assessed on the CRCT.” This sentence serves to subordinate this document to the GPS. This creates an interesting cycle of power that can be illustrated in the following chart

Figure 4.27: Theme/Rheme Analysis of GPS Introduction

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
Georgia law	requires the development and administration of the CRCT
The CRCT	is designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the GPS.
Only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the GPS	will be assessed on the CRCT.

The law requires the test. The test assesses the standards. Only the standards can be tested. With this structure, it is unclear if the ultimate agent is the law demanding the test or the GPS on which the test is based. Regardless, the power in this document does not rest with the students nor the teachers.

### **Power in the CCCRCT**

There are four significant changes between these two drafts that serve to establish the power of the assessment and diminish the power of the other agents involved. To begin with, this document provides a deeper authoritative tone by citing the law that requires statewide assessment. Students are disempowered by the shift from active to passive voice. Rather than students “take” the exams, implying some level of agency, the law “requires” students to take the exams. A second paragraph is added explaining that the test will not be administered to first and second grades due to “budget constraints,” and a fourth paragraph is added to outline how the assessment is tied to student promotion in grades three, five, and eight.

I find the second paragraph fascinating. The opening paragraph clearly states that the law requires that students in grades one through eight be tested; however in the second paragraph testing in grades one and two are negated due to budgetary constraints. There was no new law cited explaining the amendment to the original law. Instead, the paragraph outlines how the law is “subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.” The implication is that if there is no money, the law can be ignored.

The fourth paragraph is particularly disconcerting because it serves to disempower an unnamed agent that had no presence in the 2007 document. Specifically, the power of student promotion is not listed in the first document. There is no discussion of the process that dictates whether or not a student is promoted to the next grade at the end of a school year in either document. Rather, the processes and agents involved in that decision are intentionally omitted from both documents. However, this 2012 document clearly presents the fact that legally, before that unnamed agent can act, the student must

pass certain assessments in grades three, five and eight. The language of the document is presented in the passive voice disguising the power embedded in the Georgia law.

Rephrased, the document says “Georgia law requires the student to pass certain tests before he or she can be considered for promotion.” The important element here is that this is beyond a genre expectation as can be demonstrated by the fact that this sentence was not present in the original document. This revision was specifically placed in the new document.

The agency that usually dictates promotion requirements may not use this test among its promotion requirements. Rather, prior to considering whether or not a child is to be promoted, he or she must pass this test.

The power of the test to prevent student promotion is not mentioned in the 2007 document, but here it is explicitly laid out and inserted prior to any mention of teachers or the purpose of this document itself. Structurally implicit in this document is the idea that the assessment is more important than the teacher or any administration that previously had the power to control student promotion.

These additional paragraphs significantly affect the tracing of power through the document as is demonstrated in this chart:

Figure 4.28: Theme/Rheme Analysis of CCGPS Introduction

Theme	Rheme
Georgia law	requires that all students in grades one through eight take the CRCT
The CRCT	is subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.
The CRCT	will not be administered in grades one and two in spring 2013.
The CRCT	are designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the CCGPS.
The CRCT	are used for promotion criteria
Only the knowledge, concepts, and skills reflected in the CCGPS	will be assessed on the CRCT.

Structurally, the track of power through this document is very different from the GPSCRCT. It begins with the same hierarchical structure of “The law requires the CRCT,” followed by “the CRCT” but then “The CRCT” is reiterated three times with four unrelated Rhemes. Of these, only the Rheme “knowledge, concepts, and skills set forth in the CCGPS” becomes a theme in an hierarchical progression. The Rhemes, explaining how the CRCT “is subject to appropriation,” “will not be given,” and “are used for promotion” interrupt the normal hierarchical progression and serve to confuse the issue of where the power lies.

The law requires the CRCT, but it doesn’t have to if it cannot afford it. The CRCT gets its power from the CCGPS, but the students have to pass the CRCT. In this document, the power is intentionally confused.

### **Power in the CCGPS**

The final sentence of the CCGPS introduction is particularly fascinating. “It is our hope that this document will serve not only as a handy daily resource for constructing curriculum, but also as a critical reference text that will assist users of the standards in building a strong, intrinsic familiarity with and enthusiasm for the scope and purpose of this promising initiative.” There is a stark change in tone in this sentence that does not present itself anywhere else in the document.

The tone is epitomized by the use of the pronoun “our.” This is the only reference to the authors of this text in the entire text. Pronouns are used sparingly throughout this document, and they are used very differently here than anywhere else. “It” is often used to represent an idea repeated within the same paragraph. For example, In “the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when

circumstances encourage or require **it**” (p.11) it replaces “revisit and make improvements” from the containing sentence. The reference is within the text whereas, the use of “our” here represents the author who is, other than this one sentence, not directly referred to in any other part of this text. “They” is used throughout the text to generalize about students and their developmental level, but this pronoun use is different. This statement is personalized in a way that no other moment in the entire document is.

The authors have claimed ownership of this sentiment. Structurally, the author has identified two purposes for this document: a resource for constructing curriculum and a reference text promoting this document. This moment is also structurally distinct because it is one of the few moments with a concessive structure. Martin and Rose (2005) explain that the “not only—but” conjunctive pair serve to provide a counter expectation. The “not only” introduced the expected goal of serving as a resource for curriculum design, but the “but” interrupts that expectation and concedes this other goal.

This moment is striking to me because concession is a tool of heteroglossia. A concessive structure like the one presented here acknowledges an outside voice that is different and logically in dialogue with the text. This is not uncommon in language, but this document is primarily presented in an authoritative register. As I discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the role of authoritative discourse is to deny other voices. It strives to be the voice. Generally, it is a monologue to the reader. To structurally acknowledge heteroglossia in this setting is counter to the rest of the text.

However, before I celebrate the dialogic nature of this sentence, I need to parse its meaning and structural ramifications. As stated earlier, the “not only” conjunction introduces an expected response. It is expected that the authors hope for this document to

be used as a resource in curriculum design. It is expected for teachers—or somebody, the identity of the curriculum designer is intentionally ellipted—to design their curriculum based on this document. The unexpected response is “as a critical reference text that will assist users of the standards in building a strong, intrinsic familiarity with and enthusiasm for the scope and purpose of this promising initiative.”

An appraisal analysis of this sentence reveals a positive judgment embedded in a positive judgment, followed by a positive judgment. The text “assists” the user, and “builds familiarity and enthusiasm.” The familiarity is “strong” and “intrinsic,” and all of this is directed toward “the scope and purpose” of the implementation of these standards. Specifically, the authors’ greatest hope is that the reader will love the way these standards define teaching and learning.

This document completely claims the power. The students will learn the standards set out in this document. The teacher will teach the standards set out in this document. This document is the sole source of information for curriculum development, design, and implementation. Of course this gets complicated when one compares the tone of this document with that of the CCCRCT where the power is indeed placed in the CCGPS, but is hedged by controlling promotion—a power not found in the GPS, and being established in law—an entity that did not necessarily approve this document.

### **Conclusion**

To return to my discussion of authoritative discourse in chapter 2, Bakhtin (1981) explained that an authoritative discourse has three major qualities: the authority exists despite the text, the authority permeates the text, and the authority must be completely and totally accepted. These documents all embody an authoritative discourse. While it is

interesting to parse the places where these texts don't necessarily agree—specifically micro definitions of learning—the more important elements to my research lie in where the texts agree.

All of these documents promote a stage theory of development where students must exhibit certain knowledge, skills, and abilities in order to be promoted to the next grade. This is further complicated when the primary proponents of SBE are also proponents of mastery learning (model (Brown, 2004; Cox, 2009; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002). All of these documents agree that the teacher is not responsible for identifying these skills, but for transmitting them to the student, and all of these documents agree that the student is a shell to be filled with these learnings.

While there are a number of educational traditions that resist these assumptions (Cole, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Fecho 2004, 2011; Freire, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2007, 2009; Wertsch, 1991), these traditions are denied a voice in these documents. The question then is what about teachers who agree with those voices not represented in the documents? Are they able to work within the confines of these standards or do teachers faced with these standards and assessments change their paradigm to reflect that of the mandates? This is explored in the next chapter as I reflect on my interview data.



## CHAPTER 5

### INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

In the previous chapters, I have worked to understand the Standards Based Education movement (SBE) (Glasser, 1998; Marzano, 2004; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006) as it was initially called for post Sputnik (Yager, 2000), called for again with *A Nation at Risk* (Francosi, 2006), and finally gained national prominence under *No Child Left Behind*. (Fullan, 2009). The State of Georgia's response to this movement was to first mandate the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) in 2000, which began in 2002 (McCleod, 2013). After Phi Delta Kappa completed a scathing review of Georgia's Quality Basic Education curriculum, the state adopted a new curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) beginning in 2004 (GaDOE, 2011). Since then, the state of Georgia has abandoned the GPS in favor of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPA) in language arts, reading, and math (GaDoe, 2011).

In the previous chapter, I argued how the curriculum and assessment documents designed to inform instruction promote a specific philosophy of education grounded in a Piagetian stage theory of learning (1997). Central to this paradigm is the idea that learning is a commodity that can be passed from one individual to another, and once learned, it can be assessed. This is counter to other educational philosophies that promote a more collaborative model of learning (Cole, 1996; Fecho, 2011; Friere, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2008; Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch, 1991). However, this discussion the

discourse of the GPS, CCGPS, and the CRCT documents is incomplete without understanding how these documents are perceived, understood, and used by teachers and administrators.

In this chapter, I explore seven case studies of teachers and administrators who work under the Georgia curriculum and are held accountable, in one way or another, but their students' performance on the CRCT. During my interviews, we discussed each participants relationship to the curriculum, the assessment, SBE, and their individual teaching setting as it pertained to how the designed and implemented instruction. As I reflected on the data gathered through these interviews, my memos, and conversation maps, I found that the participants fell along a continuum of adoption concerning the state standards. Some participants, specifically Sandy and Elizabeth considered themselves standards based educators and were very excited about the new curriculum. They also accepted the basic practices of a master education model (Brown, 2004; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001), which the CCGPS and CRCT dovetail nicely with. Other participants fell on another end of the continuum. While they generally agreed with the need for standards and liked the changes made in the curriculum as the GPS was replaced by the CCGPS, Leigh and Margaret were not standards based educators as neither of them was concerned with the precepts of mastery learning. Both of them were more thematic teachers (Smagorinsky, 2008), and their discussion of the standards and assessments were heavily colored by this fact.

As I discussed the curriculum, assessments, and their praxis with each participant, a number of themes became apparent. Participants discussed their relationship with the

curriculum, their relationship with the CRCT, their relationships with the students, their goals as a teacher, and their relationship with their peers—specifically discussing the important role of collaborating with others as they plan and implement lessons. I have organized this chapter based on my understanding of how closely each participant accepts and adopts the political, philosophical, and educational ramifications of SBE. I begin by discussing the data generated from interviews with Elizabeth, Sandy, and Clinton—three individuals who had a high acceptance of SBE and the CCGPS. I then discuss my interviews with Leigh and Margaret—two teachers who questioned the mastery learning model that they identified with SBE, and problematized the paradigm. I end with Alice and Tiani who were in the middle. They agreed with much of the SBE paradigm, but they did not totally accept it. In fact they tried to dialogue either with the assessments or with the SBE structures, and in both cases this dialogue failed and created an uncomfortable space. Of my participants, they were in the middle of the two extremes reflected in my data.

I want to caution the reader against creating a pure dichotomy or a polar perception of how much SBE was accepted or rejected in each setting. While I do see Sandy as a total adopter of the CCGPS and SBE, I do not see Leigh nor Margaret as rejecters of this paradigm. Rather, I feel that these last two participants were more willing to openly reject or to dialogue with the standards, assessments, and SBE structures rather than accept them as the authoritative text that defines education today.

In the last chapter, I showed how both the assessments and standards documents were constructed to resist dialogue. They are written in an authoritative discourse that demands acceptance or rejection. However, I find that not everyone I worked with treated

the documents in this way. It is true that Elizabeth, Sandy, and Clinton all accepted the authority of the CRCT, the GPS, and the CCGPS. They did not dialogue with these texts. Instead that remained distant from it and made sure their educational goals matched each document. For them, the assessment and curricular documents were authoritative discourses.

Margaret did not feel that way at all. She did not reject the standards, but she also did not view them in a separate category. The standards were one element that informs her praxis, but she was willing to dialogue with the standards and amend them and bend them. This argument is much clearer at the end of the chapter after I have provided the data and discussion around that data, but I want to put this confusion in the foreground. I need the reader to understand that what is authoritative for one, is not necessarily an authoritative discourse for another. I believe that the effectiveness of an authoritative discourse is cultural and situational, and the data below supports this.

### **Participants Accepting Standards Based Education**

Every participant in this section identified him or herself as a standards based teacher or administrator. They clearly approved and appreciated the instructional paradigm promoted in SBE. I begin with Elizabeth who started teaching four years before the shift to SBE in Georgia, but felt lost in that curriculum. She discussed how SBE helped her focus her instruction and improve as a teacher. Sandy, on the other hand, explained that she has always been an SBE teacher, and she does not know how someone could do it otherwise. Her experience is one of someone who has only known SBE and totally accepts it. Finally, Clinton did not teach as an SBE instructor, but has adopted it as

an administrator. His data explores how the shift to SBE has improved his school and school district and the work that took place to make this shift.

### **Elizabeth**

As I stated in chapter three, over the course of her twelve years of experience, Elizabeth has taught across a wide range of subjects in all middle school grades. She has worked for her current principal for eleven years and feels that she is a visionary who pushes teachers to exemplary practice. She reports she is incredibly happy in her current teaching situation and feels that education is on the right track. When asked about her feelings about the progress of education over her career, she said “It’s good, but not great. I think we need more resources, I mean of the human kind. I think we need more teachers.” At the time of our interview, Elizabeth was teaching remedial reading courses for students in grades 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> who had not passed the CRCT the previous year.

When asked to describe her teaching practice, Elizabeth explained that,

I look at what the reading standards are, and then I look at what the reading across the curriculum standards are, or reading across the content areas, I guess is the phrase, and what are the basics that my—I want to identify how I can help my kids the most. What is it that they struggle with the most.

This beginning with the standards places her firmly in the school of SBE (Marzano & Kendall, 1996). She does not start with what she wants her students to know or what her students don’t know. Instead, she starts with what the students are expected to know by the GPS or CCGPS. Her instruction is grounded in the standard and then adjusted according to student need.

### **Elizabeth and standards based education**

Elizabeth's appreciation of SBE can also be found in her discussion of the transition from QCCs to GPS in 2004.

It [the transition from QCC to GPS] was great because I received training. When I started with QCCs, I had the state QCCs and I didn't have anything else. There was not a county curriculum map that I was ever aware of. There was not a person that I knew of that was in charge of social studies for the county or gave direction of what you need to do. I didn't have a scope and sequence, and I didn't really know how to make one.

As she reflected on this transition, what she appreciated most was the training that she received on how to design a lesson based on the standard. Core to this was the need for a curriculum map and a scope and sequence, which she found missing in the QCC and evident in the GPS "I guess why I like GPS and why I embraced it so much is that it gave me a how to break up my time to address these things [standards, core knowledge and skills]."

She intrinsically connects the GPS to SBE, and she relates SBE to mastery education. She does not understand how one can do the GPS without a mastery education approach. It is this connection that she finds most valuable about the standards. She did not discuss the curricular focus found in the GPS, nor did she discuss how the QCCs were assessed by Phi Delta Kappa to be too broad and not rigorous enough. Instead, she was concerned with the sequencing. "The QCCs... I didn't have—I could be at the Civil War in November or I could be at the Civil War in March." She highlighted how the

training for GPS taught her how to create a curriculum map and organize the curriculum for her students.

Based on our interview, Elizabeth accepts the GPS and the CCGPS as authoritative texts (Bakhtin 1981). She is excited about the CCGPS because “I really like how there is more emphasis, I feel there is more emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum. That there is some more accountability as far as the writing.” Inherent in this structure is the idea that the standards are a curricular mandate. She assumes that because the CCGPS has a section on writing across the curriculum, teacher in all subject areas will be required to use writing in their classroom. She does not permit dialogue with the text. The CCGPS is an authority that she attributes power, not only over herself, but with everyone who comes in contact with it.

#### **Elizabeth and the assessment**

Elizabeth acknowledged the need for assessment. She does not disapprove of the CRCT and she appreciates the ways the scores can be used to inform instruction. Her class is generated based on the tests scores, and she agrees that if students failed the CRCT they are deficient readers. She explained that her attitude concerning what struggling readers needs have shifted as she has taken over this reading class,

I went into teaching the class thinking that “Oh, I’m going to teach them reading strategies. They just don’t know the reading strategies,” and I started teaching my class and I realized that yes they do [use reading strategies]. They weren’t performing. So when I plan a unit for them, it’s not as easily broken into chunks like it is in social studies. We are a skills based class. We introduce different

units. Logical order is our unit now. The next one might be compare and contrast.

The next one, I don't know.

However, she does not challenge the assessment that her students are not good readers. She feels they lack certain skills that she can teach. Once they learn these skills, they will be successful on the CRCT and the CRCT will document this progress.

However, she does not leave this test unquestioned. She has a problem with how her school has changed since the test has become a high-stakes assessment. While the CRCT was always designed to be used as a promotion requirement, the ties to promote were presented incrementally. While her students started taking the assessment in 2002, they were not required to pass it for promotion until 2006 (GaDOE, 2011). "When we saw a difference was when CRCT and promotion became tied. Our school environment changed. Our things. We have these fond memories of Geographic Middle before the promotion part." She went on to explain that before the CRCT became tied to promotion:

We were doing instruction and we were tailoring our instruction to the standards, but the pressure that we felt, and that we had, and that we put our students under, and probably their attitude was most different. Our kids are very much aware of the CRCT and they think about it, and it makes them nervous and the anxiety and all that. Our kids then, they knew it was there, and they knew it was important, and took it seriously, but it was not making you sick to where you have to go to the bathroom. It was not to that degree.

Elizabeth does not reject the assessment. She feels that it is important and that the information it produces is relevant and true. However, she has an issue with the way the assessment is used. The CRCT for her is an authoritative discourse. She does not



appreciate the way that authority is used, but she accepts it. She recognizes it and lives with it. She recognizes a problem—the atmosphere of her school is not what it once was, but the document has always been imbued with an authority to determine a student’s readiness for the next grade, and she accepts that authority.

### **Elizabeth and her setting**

Finally, Elizabeth discussed her need to collaborate with other educators. She specifically identifies three areas of collaboration that she has had experience with that she universally felt were positive: school level dialogue, team level dialogue, and collaborative teaching level dialogue. She explained how her principal promotes collaboration. When asked where the ideas in her school come from, she explained,

Teachers. We talk about it. We, our principal is really good at providing us lots of resources, that’s what this room is [interview setting], is our professional learning, our professional learning library. I’ve never been to a conference, whether it was for general middle school or if it was specific to social studies. I never went to a conference where I was not hearing the ideas that our school was doing. She is a visionary. She isn’t the only person driving this place by any means, but she has a clear vision and she pushes and pushes and pushes.

Elizabeth explained that she and her coworkers are encouraged to find ways to improve their practice and when they find initiatives that can improve the school, her principal provides the space, funds, and materials to make that initiative successful. Her principal models the Glasser (1995) method of leadership: leader as facilitator rather than leader as mandate maker.

Elizabeth also discussed her experience on a three and four person team at Geographic Middle when she was happiest. She talked about how she and her teammates worked together to plan interdisciplinary units, and how they worked together with discipline and producing a uniform classroom across her team. She also discussed her experience as a special education co-teacher when she did not have time to plan with her co-teachers. She expressed her disappointment in the lack of cohesion in those classrooms and resented how the barriers to communication undermined a structure she liked. Important in all of these situation is that collaboration was always good. The failings of her co-teaching experience were tied to her inability to work closely with her partner. The success of her team teaching, and the success of her school, were tied to the promotion of collaboration within that setting.

Elizabeth explained that while she was not always a standards based teacher, the shift to SBE significantly improved her practice. He reported to be incredibly happy in her school and with her administrator. She voiced her agreement with the basic precepts of SBE and used a mastery-learning model. She felt that her approach to teaching was valued at her school and said she loved teaching at Two-Story Middle.

Sandy on the other hand expressed that she was not happy in her setting. She identifies herself as a standards based educator, and she related her data driven approach to mastery-learning. However, as will be shown in the following section, she does not feel her voice is valued at her setting and her construction of SBE is counter what her current setting mandates.

## **Sandy**

A teacher of eight years, Sandy was not happy at her current school, City Middle in New Urban City and constantly discussed the shortcomings of City Middle by comparing it to King Middle in Old Urban City. At the beginning of our interview Sandy opened:

Sandy: I taught four years in Old Urban. This is my second year in New Urban, and I'll be leaving at the end of this year.

Eric: Are you retiring from teaching?

Sandy: No, I'm not. I'm actually moving. We are relocating to Southern Border State. I would like to be in a union state.

When I asked her why she was not happy in New Urban, Sandy explained,

Old Urban county, all of it flowed. We all said we're doing this, and we all did it our own way because all of us were so strong as far as how we are going to do things. We didn't budge on that. And we balanced it out. We said by the end of this week we want to have all this done. Can we handle it? Yeah, we can handle it, and we would collaborate and work together. Here there's none of that. There's none of that openness. Even that differentiation just among the teachers.

I'm at the point right now where I'm just doing what I'm told, and I hate that. I've never been like that in my life.

As we talked, it became clear that Sandy's primary disappointment with her current setting came from how she was treated. Sandy felt that the district ignored her voice and that she was required to teach in a structure that was counter the state structure and not in the best interest of her students. Sandy identified the source of her discomfort coming

from the contradictory voices of her school district and the state standard. She voiced this concern by discussing how things “flowed” from planning to instruction at her old school. She was not against rigid structures or educational scripts. She agreed with the idea that by the end of a week, everyone would be on the same page. However, she did not agree with the structure of City Middle School. Sandy sees a disconnect between the authoritative discourse of the GPS and the curricular mandates of her current system, and this disconnect distresses her.

### **Sandy and the curriculum**

An important moment in our interview came when Sandy said, “Here we have this yearly outline, but it doesn’t match up to what the state is telling us, and that bothers me because I’m a standards driven teacher. I say, ‘hmmm, this needs to match what the state says because the state is the one writing the test.’”

There are three important elements highlighted in this section of data. First, Sandy is a standards based educator. Second, Sandy accepts that authority of the state standards and assessments. She clearly does not question either structure, and third, she feels that her district’s format does not match the state’s format.

Sandy felt that her voice was not valued nor included in her district’s decision making. She repeatedly said that she her voice had been dismissed from the conversation around the curriculum because she was an outsider to the community. She explained that during a meeting where she questioned the curriculum map, she felt “it’s like I’m from Old Urban county, so everybody is acting like I don’t know anything to begin with. You know ‘you’re from that system, uhh!’” She reflected on how she felt ostracized at district,

school, and grade level meetings, and how the lack of dialogue hurt the school and the students.

SBE was a core element of Sandy's self image as a teacher. To continue the conversation from earlier:

I came in when standards came in, so I don't know anything different. I don't know what it was like to have QCCs, even though I've seen them. I don't know about that world. All I know is standards based teaching, and that is one of my strong points. I can do it, and I don't struggle to do it because it is what I was taught to do.

She continued by describing her experience at Kings Middle in Old Urban County.

I'll just give you an example, at the beginning of our school year at Kings, we'd come in before post planning, and we all brought lunch, whatever. We all brought some kind of dish, and we would sit there for four hours, and we would plan out first semester. And we'd say "Ok, this is what Georgia tells us we need to do. This is the track that we're using. We're going to stick to what Georgia says. We're not going to deviate from that plan. We're going to follow their schedule because their schedule is in line with the test, and it makes sense to do that."

Inherent in this attitude is the acceptance of the authoritative discourse of both the standards and the assessment. Sandy is an ideal standards based teacher (Marzano & Kendall, 1996). She has her first unit mapped out prior to meeting the students using the standards—not her texts, school setting, or personal preferences—to outline her first semester. The state wrote the standards. The state wrote the tests. The state dictates what is to be taught and when. Sandy's job is to document what the students do not know,

teach them this knowledge, and document that they have mastered it. She had several notebooks full of charts where she had tracked student performance on each assessment, and had clearly marked which children had mastered which standards, and who had not.

### **Sandy and the assessment**

A key illustration of how the assessments represented an authoritative discourse to Sandy can be found in her discussion of how her students performed on the test. She tied her emotional capital and her ability to be successful as a teacher to her students' performance. She explained that the year prior to our interview,

Last year, I had—my language arts block—last year was the highest year I've ever had of number of kids who failed: four, and that was devastating to me. I freaked out. I was like, what do you mean?

As we continued this conversation, it was obvious that these kids failing the exam reflected on her ability as a teacher. While she blamed the structure of the school some, she really felt that it fell to her teaching to ensure that the students passed the tests. Their failure was an indictment on her teaching.

This theme was repeated when she told three separate stories of students who had failed the CCRCT prior to having her and passed, sometimes for the first time in the student's life, the test after she taught them. It was clear, she bought into the SBE argument that student test scores are evidence of teacher efficacy (Duncan, 2009).

### **Sandy and her setting**

Finally, Sandy also discussed her need to work with other teachers. She resented the lack of collaboration at New Urban. She felt that the units were mandated by the district office and that her voice as a teacher was ignored. She contrasted this with her

experience at Old Urban where every unit was planned as a grade level. As we talked, it became clear that she was ok with every teacher being expected to be at the same place at basically the same time. As cited earlier, she liked the fact that in Old Urban, “We said by the end of this week we want to have all this done.” However, the major difference was in Old Urban, she felt like she had a voice and was a valued member of the discussion.

This was evident her statement:

We get thrown things. It’s like you know, oh we need to do this task this nine weeks. Make sure you’re doing this. And I’m right really? This nine weeks I need to be in the drop everything and cram mode. I don’t need to be in the OK, writing a research paper on New Urban teacher’s pay.

And later in the interview she returned to disapproval of the system when she said:

I think teachers are miserable. I’ve turned in my resignation, but even if I weren’t moving, I wouldn’t teach here another year. Teachers are stripped of so many things that they could do to get these kids excited.

She does not feel her voice is valued in New Urban, and she feels that New Urban’s focus is counter to the state standards and assessments—an authoritative discourse she approves of and accepts. The authoritative discourse of the district is shaped to focus instruction away from learning activities that Sandy felt are both necessary and fun. She critiqued the schools use of an “enrichment” time focused on performing well on the CRCT and the lack of school dances.

What I found most interesting was the fact that Sandy acquiesced to an authoritative discourse that she rejected. She completely and totally resented the curricular mandates of her district, and yet she complied. “I’m at the point right now

where I'm just doing what I'm told, and I hate that." She identifies the GPS as an appropriate authoritative discourse and yet, she complies with her district's demands. At the same time, although she could easily blame the district's structure for her student's poor performance relative to her past experience, she accepts the responsibility of her students' failure. I'm not sure what to make of this. She has these conflicting authorities and she is at a lost at how to make sense of them all, but refuses to pit one against the other. She submits to the authority of each.

Elizabeth and Sandy provide a view into two different SBE schools and how such a setting can be liberating or oppressive depending on how it is shaped by the administration. Clinton is an SBE administrator who tries to encourage teacher participant in constructing a positive standards based learning environment. He injects certain dialogue into his school that neither Elizabeth nor Sandy discussed.

### **Clinton**

Clinton is a standards based administrator. When I asked about his leadership and how he felt education was doing, he explained that schools are getting better because:

I think all of that has to do with really trying to understand what standards based teaching is, and I think some of it is sort of a natural thing.... I think our standards based teaching is getting more focused, but I also think that we've got a real focused conversation on it here in University Town.

Embedded in this statement is the idea that SBE is the best way to teach. He agrees with the focus and likes the focus. He related the progress in his school and school district to the stronger focus they have on SBE, and he voices his appreciation of the conversation around SBE.



His leadership, however, was obviously grounded around the idea of the school as a community. When talking about the work at his school, he constantly referred to "we" instead of "I," and it was apparent that his faculty were involved in the creation of many of the school policies and procedures. For example, when I asked him about walkthroughs and how he conducts them, he said:

I feel kind of proud about what we've done with walkthroughs because we've taken the district sort of walkthrough form, which is you know real focused on are our standards posted, are standards explicitly referenced, was there a starter, was there a closer—which I think is important. Just Real basic stuff, but we also looked at things like, we have our PBIS system is our OWL language. So, if we think that's really important wouldn't you think if you're going in an doing a hundred walkthroughs, some percentage of those times you're going to hear kids talking to each other in that language and teachers using that language, and so we have looked at that. We have looked at our focus, our targeted kids, our bubble kids who we really want to make sure they are learning, what are they doing? So, that's part of the walkthrough is are targeted kids engaged?

As we continued to talk about standards and walkthroughs, I learned that walkthroughs at County Middle were conducted by teachers and administrators, and were designed to help focus the school's educational goals. Clearly, Clinton accepts the basic mastery-learning models promoted by SBE (Brown, 2004; Cox, 2009; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002). He did not eliminate posted standards, and referencing these standards throughout the lesson from his walkthrough, and his addition of the OWLS language mirrors the philosophy of

students needing to be conversant in the language of the standards. However, he looks beyond the basic structures of an SBE walkthrough and adds a discussion of engagement and the need for the weakest students in the school—bubble students generally refers those who have failed the test or passed on a very small market—to be engaged.

### **Clinton and his setting**

This was most evident when he discussed the changes the faculty had made since he became principal. “Before the evaluation was much more of a ‘got you,’ whether you wanted it to be or not, affair. And now it’s really, it’s really not. You’re working with teachers saying ‘hey, we agree as a school that this is what’s important to us. What are we seeing?’ So, I think that’s been important.”

This idea that the walkthrough is not a “got you” came through later in our second interview when he said, “

I’ve just had this conversation with my boss last week, that one of my concerns is, that the district now that it comes through and does walkthroughs, and they want lesson plans, and to the untrained eye, that somebody can come into a class and say well wait, the lesson doesn’t match the lesson plan at all. Well, really if what we’re trying to do is to encourage discovery kind of learning, and inquiry based learning, well you’ve got a map that you kind of want to take, but along the way you may see things that are taking you a better route to get there, and I think quite frankly, if Dr. Superintendent or Dr. Curriculum came in and saw that, they would know exactly, like ok we’re off the exact lesson plan, but this is a good way to go. I don’t think everybody has that skill. I think, people who haven’t spent a lot of time in a class, they come in and go “wait, it doesn’t match” and mark somebody

down for that. I mean you don't get marked down, you get "not evident" where really, it's "evident" at a higher level. I mean, that's what we want teachers to do.

I found this last statement interesting because he interwove inquiry education (Fecho 2004) with standards based education (Marzano & Kendall, 1996). Clinton's general discussion of SBE was grounded in the mastery-learning model (Brown, 2004; Cox, 2009; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002). Within mastery-learning, educational scripts are designed to transmit the standards and document student mastery of them. Clinton did not entirely accept this paradigm. He recognized that learning should be grounded in inquiry, and that inquiry will often require teachers and students to verge off the path of the script (Fecho, 2004, 2011). He was concerned with those administrations who would not recognize this as good teaching, and has brought this concern to his boss's, the superintendent of schools, attention.

### **Clinton and the curriculum**

Like Elizabeth and Sandy, Clinton accepts the authoritative discourse of the GPS and is further excited by the CCGPS.

I think the CCGPS, which I know is a national movement, but Georgia is tied into it. I think those standards, and I know you must be excited, just for language arts.

They're very. They just make a lot better sense. So, I'd say I'm favorably impressed, but I think there's always a lot of work to do.

When asked about why he liked the new standards, he explain that he liked the way GPS required teachers to shift toward SBE and that there will be a greater shift once schools transition to CCGPS

I think we're in a better place because I think the jump from QCC to GPS was so huge, and quite frankly the GPS and common core, match up 90% it's like 90%. I mean some of those the matches are really good. It's more, I think it's going to be easier. My word of caution is, I don't think we need to roll it out that way. Well if you're only so focused on how we're really doing this stuff already, we're not really going to change how people teach. With common core, there's some exciting ways of "no, this needs to be embedded and integrated and so on". How do you reassure your teaching staff that yes you do a lot of this already, but don't just say, "yeah, you do that already" and put it on the shelf. Really reflect on your practice.

Again, Clinton agrees with and accepts the authoritative discourse of the CCGPS. The common core requires more reading and writing in the content areas (CCSS, 2011), and this shift is a correct shift in Clinton's mind. Clinton is conflicted in how to best address the changes between the GPS and the CCGPS. He does not want to stress his faculty out by harping too much on the changes; however, he also does not want his faculty to be complacent. He is stuck in that place of saying, "we don't have a lot of work to do, but we have important work to do."

### **Clinton and the assessment**

Clinton also accepts the authoritative discourse of the CRCT and the implications of student scores. Clinton felt the CRCT was a semi-legitimate measure of his practice.

When I asked him about it he explained:

I don't know how we kept our jobs in 2003 when I look at them [CRCT Scores]. I mean we had like 30% of our African American students graduate. That's now up

to 69%. Special ed was even lower than that. I mean I was looking at our scores at this school 2003 to now and in almost every category we've doubled the number of kids who are proficient, and we're clearly not high enough—where we need to be—but I just think back to those times when we had programs like English language learners programs and 20% of them were meeting standards, how we justified coming to work every day?

He accepts the idea that the CRCT reflects his leadership as a principal. The scores are an authentic measurement of student mastery of the standard and he should be held accountable for poor performance. He is ashamed of the scores his students made in 2003 and is proud of the progress that his school has made. He measures his self-efficacy as an administrator by the results of the assessment, and he will continue to monitor his school's progress through the assessment.

This is not to say he was not critical of the assessment. When I asked if he thought the test would change, he said he hoped so, and we had the following conversation:

Clinton: They say the way we are going to do assessment; it's going to be more constructed response and short answer, and duh duh duh. Exact same thing [as when the GPS from QCC rollout]. I went to 2 or 3 assessment things for, I was in a strand to help the social studies. We wrote these great things, and this is the way. I mean they talked about "oh, totally we'll totally change the way we're going to do assessment." Low and behold we went to multiple choice. All that work we did, I don't know where it went, but I'm talking days of coming up with good assessments that were not multiple choice that we've never heard of from again.

Me: What killed that?

Clinton: I think just the difficulty of, and I guess that's it, I'm hoping that—when they rolled from QCC to GPS it was such a—QCC were just so weak, and it was such a big change, and so they put so much focus on trying to do that, and they had to roll back somewhere, so maybe the assessment piece. I just still, I think it's hard to wrap your head around how do you really assess that way on the scale that you need to if you're doing a statewide assessment.

He was clearly frustrated by the nature of the state assessments and recognized their shortcomings, but he was not willing to use that as an excuse for poor scores. He recognized that students in his school were not performing at a level he wanted them to perform. As he said, he was happy with the progress they had made since 2003, but “we're clearly not high enough.”

### **Common Themes Across These Participants**

There are two themes that unite these participants that separate them from my other participants. First, they all accept the authoritative discourse of SBE and by extension they place the standard at the beginning of instruction. Second they all see the assessment as a reflection of their practice and students' ability. Students who do not perform well on the assessment can be taught through SBE to perform better. Elizabeth used the scores to identify students who needed remediation in reading. Sandy was emotionally tied to her student's performance on the assessment, and used the scores to justify her practice. Finally, Clinton condemned his past practice based on poor performance on the assessments and used current progress on the tests to demonstrate the fact that his school system was on the right track.

Inherent in these participants' relationship with the standards and assessment documents is the idea that they accept the power structures outlined in chapter four. They accept that what should be taught is embedded in the standards, and the state tests correctly assess whether or not students have mastered the standard. These participants do not dialogue with the standards and the assessments. They are accepted and applied to their instruction. Bakhtin (1981) identified the authoritative voice as another's voice that cannot be made a part of one's own voice. Clearly, Elizabeth, Sandy, and Clinton see the standards as someone else's voice. It is not their own. They do not make it their own. Instead, they take the curricular demands of the standard and the assessments at face value and adjust their practice to suit those demands.

### **Transactional Spaces**

In this section, I discuss the transactions that occurred between these participants and me. These interviews served to shape my understanding of SBE in a different way and complicated my view of the complex relationship of state standards, teachers, teaching, and assessments. These participants all served to drastically reshape my understanding of the field. Clinton especially challenged a dichotomy I had set up between SBE and inquiry teaching. I connect SBE with the three major theorists of Glasser (1998), Marzano (2003, 2004, 2010), and the early writings of Ravitch (1983, 1995). Of these, only Marzano discusses instruction and he promotes a mastery learning model (Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Clinton's willingness to challenge this dichotomy stretched my perception of it, and made me question my connection of SBE to mastery learning. He saw SBE as a framework to promote inquiry while I generally see the type of structures produced in

SBE as counter to inquiry. I still believe that is very difficult to inject inquiry into an SBE framework as identified in the settings I am familiar with, but I accept that it is possible.

Elizabeth and Sandy both said that they flourished as teachers within the structures of SBE. I felt, and feel that the authoritative discourse of SBE can be an oppressive force, but both Sandy and Elizabeth were liberated by it. The scope and sequencing demanded by SBE as grounded in the CCGPS provided a footing for Elizabeth and Sandy to ground their instruction. Without SBE, Elizabeth was lost. Sandy, having never taught without SBE, cannot imagine any other structure.

### **Participants Resisting Standards Based Education**

In this section, I discuss two teachers who generally resist the practice of SBE, Leigh and Margaret. While both recognized a need for standards, they were thematic teachers (Smagorinsky, 2008) who, rather than grounding their lessons on a state standard, and followed the mastery-learning model that those who were most comfortably with SBE followed, found themes that they wanted students to explore and shaped the curriculum for students to make teacher identified connections as they progress through each unit. I begin by exploring my conversations with Leigh who identified herself as a thematic teacher and explained what this mean. I connect this to Margaret who, although she does not label her teaching as such, uses a thematic lesson development paradigm to guide her praxis.

#### **Leigh**

Leigh has taught at Senator Middle School for 23 years and is quite upset with the current trends in education. While she does not use the language of SBE, she is critical of many of its elements. Instead of tying the curricular mandates she is facing in her school



to the standards, she ties them to the assessments. When I asked her to tell me about her impression of where the field of education is going, she said “I would say [the field of education is] worse. It’s all the control. There’s more paperwork and less creativity. I think one day it’s going to come to here’s your script, read it.” When asked what was the cause of this trend, Leigh said,

The CRCT, and you know we’ve always have had some sort of test, whether it be norms or criterion based. I don’t know about you, but when I was going to school, the ITBS was the main one, and the only one that I can remember. . . . And did our teachers prepare us for the test? Yes. Did we eat breath and that was the only thing during our school day? No. That’s where I think we’re wrong. Just give them the test. Teach them their parts of speech. Teach them the math formulas. Give them the test, and they make what they make, and do not do all that we are doing. I mean it’s crazy now, and yes you have standards that guide what you need to teach or you’d have people off in left field doing whatever, but do we need to cram it down their throats? If the children know that today we are going to study the language of Shakespeare and the words. That’s what you need to know. You do not need to know ELACRT123. You don’t need to know all that, and I. . . . No. I’m just not a believer in any of this, and I don’t think anybody who has been teaching for an extended period of time is.

In this section, Leigh is combining the assessment elements of the state mandate to the curricular design mandates of SBE and rejecting them together. Leigh accepts that there must be a standard and an assessment, but she does not agree with how this is being positioned in her school. She agrees that teachers need a guide, but she resents the SBE

scripts that have been established. She believes that the CRCT mandates these scripts, and as long as the CRCT is used as the primary assessment, teachers will be held accountable under a mastery-learning model. Mastery-learning—starting with the standard, making the students use the language of the standard, assessing student progress through the standards—is counter her perception of good teaching, and as such, she resists it.

### **Leigh and standards based education**

Identifying specific standards and posting them for the student to review is an element of standards based education (Marzano, 2003). Leigh is mocking and critiquing this structure when she says, “You do not need to know ELACRT123.” She sees this identification of the standard as negative and uses the metaphors of “eating, breathing,” the tests and “cramming” the standards down their throats to express her disgust with the practice. Later she further criticizes the current trends in education when she reflects on her past experience with teams and contrasts that with her current practice.

When we taught on teams, and we sort of have teams now, but not like we used to have strong teams. When we had the middle school concept, and you got the grant money to have the middle school concept. I know we had, on my particular team, we had well the four teachers, and you could almost take our four children and divide them into fourths because they all gravitated to one of us and that was their teacher, their support, the one they went to, and we were all very different, and I thought that was the best years. The four of us were together because we worked well together, but we were very different, and I thought that was good for kids. But now they want us all to be the same, and I don't think that is good for kids.

She is equating collaborative planning and curriculum design to being required to teaching from a script. She sees this drive for uniformity in lessons across teachers as harmful as it does not promote teacher creativity and only serves to support students who are successful with that type of teacher.

Leigh is highly critical of the SBE structure that she is required to follow. She repeatedly expressed her resentment toward being required to identify an essential question for each lesson and the rules governing how standards, essential questions, and vocabulary are expected to be presented in her lessons and classroom. “I basically teach the same way I always have, but I have to take out time in my day to cram the CRCT and the GPS down their throats. That could be ten more minutes of a class segment where we could be doing something else, but because we have to check that box and have that WHAT [district level classroom observation teams] team, we have to do it. But I’m not a believer in it.” When I asked her about the WHAT teams and the ten minutes, she explained that school and district administrators would come into classrooms to make observations. Students would be expected to know certain things and be able to recall the EQ and the standard. Due to these mandates, she had to begin each class day making sure students were prepared in case she was observed. She concluded this discussion by saying, “God forbid, they come into your classroom and you don’t have your EQ or standard on the board. You can’t be teaching them anything if you don’t have.”

She does not reject the all the practices of SBE, but rather, she rejects the idea that everyone in the school must follow them. She agrees that teachers should teach from standards, and she agrees that students should have a general idea about the goals of a unit. The problem is how it is being positioned in her setting, and the effect it is having

on her practice. While she does not say it in these terms, Leigh recognizes that the standards and the assessments resist dialogue. The CCGPS and CRCT are one in the same to Leigh, and she feels that they represent an authoritative discourse that she rejects as it serves to harm students.

When asked to explain how she plans a unit, Leigh explained that, “with the curriculum that I use now, we work off thematics.” She explained that she begins each school year with a grammar unit followed by an author study, but that the most of her school year is organized “in thematic units. This year it was prejudice: the holocaust, the Japanese internment camps, racial prejudice. The big overall theme was prejudice, and we study, and I bring in as many genres as I can, so that we can look at it from different angles.” Generally, she wanted students to connect their reading for the year according to a single theme. The theme guided her lesson development rather than any particular text or standard.

She explained that her school was focusing on data driven instruction (Marzano 2010), and she explained, “I don’t have a lot of nice things to say about data, because it just takes up your time. I could take that time and be doing plans for a new novel.” She was very critical of the “growth” models that she was required to use to measure her students. “It’s not the same. Every year the test is different. The kids are different. The teachers are different, and just because you scored an 840 one year does not mean you’ll get an 850 the next. It doesn’t matter how many standards you write on the wall. There are just too many things that are different. You’re not comparing apples to apples.”

When I asked her if she felt that the standards based mandates and away from thematic units and focus on the assessment was a building or district mandate, she

attributed it to the state. She felt that the pressures to perform well on the tests that her principal felt came directly from the state. She felt that her principal had to buy into these structures in order to be successful, and this bothered her greatly.

Leigh recognizes that there needs to be an authoritative document that outlines what students should learn. She agrees that there must be standards and assessments, but she disagrees with the SBE structure that her school is mandating. She feels that the collaborative planning structure, assessment structure, and classroom mandates promoted by SBE all work to create a uniformity in education that is harmful to her students. She recognizes the authoritative discourse of SBE as authoritative discourse, but rejects it. She does not try to dialogue with SBE. She does not try to dialogue with the standards. She does not try to dialogue with the CRCT. She recognizes how these documents all resist dialogue. They are authoritative discourses to her, but they represent a discourse she completely rejects. In the next section, I introduce a teacher who found the SBE scripts problematic, but rather than reject them, she dialogized them. Margaret, instead of seeing SBE as in direct conflict with her own thematic teaching preference, saw it as a tool to use. Leigh treated the standards as if they were resistant to dialogue, and she was unable to combine SBE with her own practice. She did SBE for ten minutes of the period, and then did her thematic units for the rest of the day. Margaret combined the practices.

### **Margaret**

While Margaret did not state it as Leigh did, she was also a thematic teacher. Margaret would find a theme for the year, unit, lesson, and develop that and ask students to make connections across her units to a single theme. It became clear in our interviews that the GPS were a series of boxes she filled after she designed her lesson. Her lesson

revolved around a theme—social studies or poetry where the two themes she talked about during our interviews—rather than the standards. This is counter to SBE (Glasser, 1998; Marzano 2003, 2010). In fact, this theme-based approach is highly critiqued by Marzano and Kendall (1996) as well as other SBE programs (McMillan, 2008; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). I do not want to come across critical of Margaret’s teaching. Her thematic approach definitely promoted inquiry, and she reveled in her relationships with her children,

You have to build in a relationship [with your students] because poetry is deeply personal and very opening. You have to have a lot of trust in your classroom before children will write good poetry. Uhm. They always laugh because they say it’s a good poem if they can make me cry, and they frequently do.

However, what she does is not SBE. It is thematic, and for the two years I worked with her in this study, she used the same overarching theme of “connections” for the school year.

### **Margaret and planning as standards based unit**

During our second interview, Margaret was excited about a new place in her lesson plan template requiring a cross curricular connection.

And for me, that’s very exciting because that’s what my whole purpose is here to make everything in this room connected to something else, so that it either connects directly or the concept connects so that it becomes a lifelong learning, not a pocket of knowledge that I’ve given them this year that they may or may never use again.

Rather than focusing on the standards required by the state, Margaret was more interested in the connections her students make.

On two separate times during our interview, Margaret said, “the EQ’s and GPS’s, you know all that stuff.” They were obligatory items that she included in her lesson plans, but it was not the focus of her lessons. Rather, she was mostly concerned with interdisciplinary connections she could make with the social studies teacher. She saw SBE as a format to be used but not as a draconian figure. She did it, and it didn’t bother her. When I asked her about her lessons, she said “obviously I have to use the curriculum guide, and the GPS’s and all of those things. I take into consideration the things that must be covered—the things that I am responsible for, but...” and here she spent five minutes talking about her tie in to the social studies curriculum. SBE was not an authoritative discourse for her. It was a discourse that she dialogued with and used to supplement her lessons rather than guide them.

### **Margaret’s dialogue with the standards**

The fascinating thing about Margaret to me was that she did not see the standards, the assessments, nor SBE as authoritative discourse. She openly dialogued with the standards and assessments. For example, both the CCGPS and Margaret place an emphasis on poetry, but each values something different. The standards expect students to understand the poetic devices and recognize them. Margaret felt it was more important for students to be willing to explore their feelings and emotions through poetry than recognize any particular device. However, she did not reject one for the other. She taught both. She explained that before the CRCT she took the “time to simply teach the poetic devices, so that they can answer questions on the test, and then afterwards I always go

back and elongate my units, so we get into their contributions of poetry and their feelings about poetry.”

She does not position one perspective above another. She does not feel beholden to the standard. She covers it so that the students are successful on the CRCT, but she does not demean it. For example, I asked her in our interview if her lessons had changed since the implementation of the CRCT, and she said, “Obviously they have had to had changed because there are things that I have to include that I’m far more cautious to make sure I cover materials. Whereas, in the past without a CRCT, Okay. If we didn’t do that, we didn’t do that.” However, after a discussion of poetry and how she covers the key ideas earlier than she used to, Margaret said, “I said that [my lessons have changed], and I’m trying to think of a concept that I may have not covered before, and I really can’t think of one.” I don’t think that she has always taught the core concepts outlined in the CCGPS. During her poetry discussion, it was quite clear that she has adjusted the way she taught poetry.

Margaret: It’s [testing] changed things like the academic calendar of when I put things, and in fact in order to get poetry in for the CRCT I have to teach it off the curriculum guide. I have to put it where it doesn’t belong on the guide in order to make sure we cover the material.

Eric: Does the guide make more sense?

Margaret: Yes and no. I’m teaching it before I want to, but poetry has been something that I’ve, this year—I’ve changed it up, switched up a little bit. It’s always good to switch things up a bit.



To Margaret the standards are not an oppressive force requiring her to hurt children. Neither are they a sacred text outlining the best structure for teaching. It is a document that she openly dialogues with, and this treatment is different from anyone else in my study.

### **Margaret and the assessment**

She has the same relationship with the CRCT. When I asked her how her students did on the assessment, she said: “They generally do well. Those who don’t do well, I can always. I’ve never not been able to find a cause. It’s either excessive absences, or they’re always in ISS, or it might be an EXE student that they’re not using the EXE test on, or the kid was sick during the test. There are logical reasons that children are not doing as well as I would have hoped.” Inherent in her reply is the assumption that it is never her instruction. Her instruction is good, but it isn’t always the child’s fault either. Some children are given the wrong tests, others aren’t feeling well the day of the test. Regardless, the CRCT is not an authoritative measurement. She is willing to say that there are reasons a child will not pass the assessment that have nothing to do with whether or not the child has mastered the material, and she wants to promote that dialogue with and across the assessment. This was explored further in our second interview when she said, “the CRCT is a thing that you do along the way, but it is not the goal. Knowledge is the goal. There are many ways to show knowledge, and the CRCT may be one of them, but it’s only one of them, and it’s not the end all be all.”

Finally, Margaret is looking forward to the next school year because she will be working on teams again. A major reason that this is exciting to her is that she will be able to focus the cross curricular connections that she values.

I am very excited because this school is going to be going to teams this year, and that is my concept of the middle school. And so, even without the teams, we've been missing teams for what, eight years now? Even without that, I always go to the social studies people and say give me the general outline of your year. But Next year, I'll know everyone will be together. When are they going to be in Asia, when are they going to be in Africa. Next year, I can choose the literature and the informational readings and the other things to be reflective of social studies. So I will use social studies as my driving hub and make my literature follow after so the children become immersed in that.

She is looking forward to being able to use the teams to further her educational goal of promoting connections.

### **Common Themes Across These Participants**

Leigh and Margaret have two things in common: they both are thematic teachers who see making interdisciplinary connections as the primary goal to middle school education. As such, they both reject SBE as the sole way to promote learning. For this reason, they are both critiquing the various curriculum and assessment documents. However, their approach to these documents is very different.

Leigh sees the CRCT, the current standards structure, and SBE all as being an authoritative discourse that harms students. She understands the authoritative structures inherent in these documents and rejects them. Like the participants in the first section of this chapter, Leigh agrees with my basic analysis of the authoritative forces embedded in the standards and assessment documents, and like me, she finds these voices oppressive. She openly rejects the paradigms promoted by SBE and feels these oppressive documents

should be abandoned. However, she feels the documents resist dialogue. The CRCT promotes a very specific way to think about learning for Leigh, and this is not open to critique. It is to be accepted, as her principal does, or rejected entirely as Leigh does.

Margaret, on the other hand, is open to dialogue with the documents. They are not authoritative discourses to her. Of all my participants, Margaret is the only one who would question my SFL analysis of the standards and assessment documents. I don't think she would agree with my identifying these documents as oppressive. She uses the documents to guide her instruction, but her instruction is not dependent on the CRCT nor the CCGPS.

### **Transactional Spaces**

These two interviews generate a number of problems for me as a thinker. It is my natural instinct to try and combine these two teachers' approach to thematic unit as a general rejection of the SBE movement, but I can't. Leigh is open to another teacher being successful using the SBE structures. She just rejects it as an authoritative discourse. If SBE were more open to dialogue, Leigh would be more open to it. Margaret does not recognize SBE, the standards, nor the assessments as having an authoritative discourse. She openly dialogues with each and as such significantly changes the dynamic of the discussion.

It's really frustrating to me as she challenges all of my assumptions concerning SBE. I tend to be more like Leigh and recognize the authoritative discourse of SBE and reject it. Margaret dialogues with it. Her willingness to subject the standards and assessments to dialogue challenge certain assumptions I have made in chapter four. While everyone else in my study treats SBE, the standards, and the assessments as an

authoritative discourse, I have to be open to Leigh's perception of them and her willingness to dialogue with them.

### **Participants in the Middle**

Alice and Tiani have a very different relationship with SBE, the CCGPS, and the CRCT than the other participants in my study. Both identify themselves as standards based teachers, but neither of them wholly accepts all the assumptions that go along with this identity. They feel that SBE has had a positive net influence on education, but the question certain implications. Alice generally agrees with the CCGPS and the CRCT and has changed her instruction based on the assessment, but she does not agree with the political ramifications of having such a high stakes assessment. Tiani, is looking forward to the Common Core, and appreciates the focus the document provides relative to the GPS, but questions whether or not the new curriculum will change any praxis as the assessment is likely to remain the same.

#### **Alice**

As I discussed in chapter three, Alice taught with Leigh at Three Counties Private school and followed her to Senator Middle 20 years ago. She serves as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade gifted math and reading teacher as well as the schools testing coordinator. This is an odd position for her in that she is required to enforce rules that she does not necessarily agree with.

Alice readily admits that testing has changed her teaching due to CRCT domain weights. While she teaches everything in the GPS, she admits that skills that are not as heavily tested do not get discussed as much as skills that are tested. She specifically talked about probability and algebraic equations. She does not spend as much time on

probability as she had prior to the CRCT and spends significantly more time on algebra. However she does not leave this unquestioned. She said,

Is that right, wrong, or indifferent? I don't know. Kids will say to me, "when are we ever going to use this?" and I'll say, "never, but you're learning how to learn." That's really my philosophy. I don't know. I cannot tell you when you're ever going to analyze systems of equations again. You may not. However, you are sitting here. Someone is teaching you something. You are practicing it, and you can do it again. That's the life skill.

Contrary to my expectations, Alice's deference to the test has little to do with her necessarily valuing the content weights. Rather, she sees her role as a teacher to help students learn how to learn. She jokes about how many of the skills she teaches may never be used by her students after high school, but still feels it is important for students to master learning.

### **Sandy and the curriculum**

She felt it was important for me to know that she would sometimes ask her husband, an architect, for real world applications of her content. She knew that some professions applied all the knowledge she presented to her students, but she also recognized that some of her students will never use the math. The continuum of application and the need for learning for learning sake was an interesting dyad that Alice repeated several times throughout our interview.

Alice recognized the authoritative discourse of the CRCT and critiqued it as an oppressive force; however she did not completely reject it.

Like I said, I think there is a place for standardized testing. I do think there needs to be some accountability, but I. I'm not saying just give the test and say, "whatever the results are, the results are." That magic number of 800 though. It's a magic number. What do I do when I look at a kid and say, it's a 795? That's literally a question. How do I say to you, sorry, you don't move on. Whereas, I could look at him, and maybe he made a 760 last year and now he's made a 795. There's some significant growth there. But, I still think we're putting all our eggs in one basket, but it's hard to say that to say, "Ok fine, you as the professional teacher, you tell me when they're ready. Because the you get all, there's emotions, and it becomes very subjective as opposed to the test, which is what it is.

Alice skirted a line between accepting the authoritative voice and dialoguing with it. It is not quite a dialogue, but it is not a rejection. She wants the test to be something that it is not. She does not like what the assessment is, but she understands why it is that way. She has a very complicated understanding of the assessment. She believes there needs to be an objective measure, but she does not want it to be a universal tool used unilaterally to separate the prepared from the unprepared. She wants to insert teacher judgment, but she does not know how. She wants there to be dialogue, but cannot imagine what that would look like.

### **Alice, her setting, and her practice**

Finally, Alice does not completely agree with the SBE requirements in her school, but she does them anyway. She explained that she does two lesson plans, the document mandated by her administration with essential questions and the standard identified, and

the document that she uses. Again, she sees SBE as an authoritative discourse. She does not dialogue with it. She does not try to bend it to her will. Rather, she does it because she has to, but she does not use this document. She rejects the discourse. It is wholly another's voice, but it's a voice she rejects. It was one of the most solid recognitions of how a teacher can identify an authoritative discourse and subversively reject it in my research setting.

### **Tiani**

Tiani also has a complex view of the standard. She recognizes the authoritative discourse of the CCGPS and sees it as a better authority than the GPS. Throughout our discussions, Tiani made it clear that “the new common core standards coming in next year, that's going to make a really big change, but I think it's going to be one that's for the better.” Tiani felt that too much was asked of teachers. “I think, at least here, teachers are expected to do more than they are capable of.” However, she was torn about whether those expectations came from her districts model of SBE or the standards themselves.

For example, a major reason Tiani likes the new CCGPS is that they are not as broad as the GPS. She explained:

Common core is a lot more focused. Instead of, for example, when I taught sixth grade, I was really excited about it because in sixth grade you teach every part of speech, every part of grammar plus reading, plus writing, in a year—supposedly. Really we just teach grammar because there is no time for anything else. With common core, they teach pronouns, so they can focus on doing one thing well and building on everything else.

However, it is not only the content that appeals to her, but the way the CCGPS were generated. She said:

I like the fact that it's planned with the end in mind. They started with what they wanted kids to be able to do in twelfth grade and they built it down. I think that it's going to be hard for the first few years because they aren't going to have the basis, but I'm really excited about it.

Finally, a large part of her excitement can be explained by the fact that her school district will be forced to reexamine their structures due to the new curriculum. "I am very excited about the common core coming out. I would like a little more input on how things are paced. I don't always think that we do things in the most logical order." Inherent in her discussion of the CCGPS is the idea that it is an authoritative discourse that everyone will be required to address and accept.

In other words, a major reason Tiani likes the CCGPS is that it is a discourse the more closely matches her own beliefs about the scope and sequencing needs of schools. It is not an internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). She does not dialogue with the CCGPS. Instead, it is an authoritative discourse that she accepts more readily because it closely matches her internally persuasive discourse.

### **Tiani and her setting**

Despite her optimism concerning the CCGPS, Tiani was not quite so about how her school district will address them. She has serious qualms with the four week SBE lesson framework her district requires, and resents the lack of dialogue around them. She sees two places devoid of dialogue that she feels need it. First, there is no dialogue



between the administrators mandating the planning structure and the teachers implementing it.

There's a cycle we're supposed to be following that's four weeks, and it has taken us 18 weeks to understand even how to use it, and even so it really—All lessons don't fit in a four week cycle, and we are kinda trying to make it do that. So, those kinds of things. We have to have our meetings in a common room instead of our rooms where we have our resources, where we have our things and materials that we need. We are somewhere without what we really need to get stuff done unless we tote it to the other end of the school with us.

She resents the structure that they are required to follow, and feels that they were not given enough support to correctly use the SBE structure. She also resents the mandate to meet in a curriculum room rather than in a teacher's classroom.

However, she is not sure that allowing them more freedom in planning will necessarily promote dialogue.

We meet once a week as a language arts department to plan our lessons, and some contents do this very very well. I've never worked in a language arts department that does. Social studies, they meet with us at the same time, and they'll share resources, they'll talk about 'we're doing this.' Language arts just kinda sits there, does their own thing and then leaves.

The lack of collaboration within the language arts department bothers her. She believes that collaborative lessons would help her school. She likes the basic tenants of SBE, but the social and political structures of her school makes this impossible. The district's strict

lesson planning structure, and the teachers discontent serve to stifle dialogue and create an oppressive atmosphere.

### **The Common Theme Across These Participants**

Both Alice and Tiani want to insert dialogue where it does not exist. Alice wants to be able to dialogue with the CRCT, but the authoritative discourse of that document resists this dialogue. Even as she talks about the desire to use teacher judgment to discuss promotion, she undercuts her own argument. In the end she relents to the discourse of the assessment and accepts it.

Tiani feels that her setting would be stronger if there were more dialogue. She feels that the district prohibits dialogue as they mandate specific planning protocols and control everything down to the space where they plan. However, she also recognizes that the teachers at her school are not willing to dialogue. Each teacher, although required to work with others, rejects this mandate and does their own thing.

In both cases the lack of dialogue promotes an oppressive atmosphere. In one setting teachers and students are beholden to the test. In the other, the prohibition on dialogue in one setting leads to a refusal to dialogue in another setting, and this creates a caustic atmosphere.

### **Transactional Spaces**

I walked out of my first interview with Alice with a very different feeling than I expected. I wanted to interview her as the prototypical test coordinator. Someone who is hard nosed about test security and genuinely respect the mandated structures. She had that, but she also questioned the test in ways that I had not expected. My memo recorded in my car immediately after the interview highlighted her discussion of the negatives of

any single measurement and how her critique from 1934 predated anything Berliner (2009) has said. I also related to her tales of compassion for teachers who had screwed up some measure of testing administration and her assurances that no one was going to get fired.

I still don't know what to make of Tiani's situation. The oppressive forces in her school serve to dissuade dialogue. In my personal experience, an oppressive administration serves to unit the staff against him or her; however this is not the case at City Middle School. The required collaboration has served to ensure that teachers will not collaborate in any way. It seems the most effective way prevent dialogue among teachers is to mandate it.

### **Collaboration**

The one theme that was uniform across all my data sets was collaboration. This theme is one that I neither prompted nor anticipated but found striking as I analyzed the data. It was not in my research questions, and I did not reflect on collaboration in any of my post interview memos, but as I transcribed the data and conducted my analysis, it kept coming up and became the one unifier of my participants. Every teacher I worked with made a comment about the importance of collaborating with other teachers.

Each participant reflected on collaboration in a different way. Clinton commented on how he promoted collaboration in his school; Elizabeth commented on how she works with other teachers to plan and work with students, and Alice discussed a school wide math program that they had developed together to help the students in this subject. Leigh and Sandy each discussed past collaborative settings that they felt better suited their student's needs. Tiani reflected on the practices of another team of teachers in her school

who were better at collaborating, and Margaret talked about how she looked forward to the following school year because they would be encouraged to collaborate more than they had in ten years.

There is something about teaching and the need to collaborate that I feel needs to be explored. I do not have the data here to conduct a significant conversation around collaboration. I did not pick up on it during the interviews, and I was not looking for it. The fact that every teacher mentioned collaboration is important, but I cannot express why. Ideally, I would conduct a third interview discussing this theme, but that is not the purpose of this study or document. I bring it up because it was a theme that recurred despite my interviews structure, but unfortunately, once addressed, there is not much for me to comment on.

### **Conclusion**

There are three important themes that I found repeated throughout the data. Generally teachers recognized the standards and assessments as an authoritative discourse and their acceptance or rejection of this discourse significantly impacted their praxis. Margaret makes generalizing this idea problematic because she does dialogue with discourses that the other participants felt resisted dialogue. This fact does have a significant implication concerning authoritative discourse that is explored in the next chapter.

People who accepted SBE saw the standards differently than those who rejected it. If you accept SBE as “best practice” then you had to accept the standards. However, the participants who questioned the structures of SBE were also more likely to question

or reject the standards and assessments. None of the SBE teachers rejected the CRCT. Everyone else in my study questioned the assessment in one way or another.

Collaboration improved education and collaboration requires dialogue. Everyone felt that dialogue had a positive impact on learning. Clinton promoted inquiry teaching; Sandy discussed her work with other teachers in Old Urban County. Margaret, Elizabeth, and Leigh all discussed passed experiences working on teams. Alice discussed a math program her school created, and Tiani lamented the lack of dialogue in her department. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of these themes as they relate to the documents in Chapter four and the participants in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6  
IMPLICATIONS  
**Review of Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how state standards and assessments affected teacher practice. I did this by conducting a research project using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003) to analyze the curricular documents of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), and the assessment documents of the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) associated with each curriculum. I then used the qualitative research tools of interviewing (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Seidman, 2006) and transactional analysis (Stewart 2010, 2011) to understand how teachers related to these standards and assessments.

The study was designed to explore and respond to the following research questions:

- 1) What is the historical context for standards and standardized testing in Georgia, and what are the implications of that history?
- 2) What are the curriculum documents specifically designed to inform instruction are provided to teachers by state and local school districts, and who developed these documents?
- 3) How do these documents construct teachers, students, and instruction? (e.g. student identity, teacher role, methods of instruction?)

4) How and why do teachers and administrators select and privilege particular curriculum documents over others, and how do they use these documents to design and implement instruction? Subsequently, have their practices changed as a result of adhering or resisting particular curricular mandates?

The first question was explored in my second and fourth chapters where I provided a history of Education Reform and specifically Standards Based Education (SBE) in the United States in chapter two, and I began chapter four with an exploration of these histories in the state of Georgia. The second question was discussed in chapter three where I explained how the GPS, CCGPS, and CRCT are used in the state of Georgia and justified my selection of these documents. Chapter four was dedicated to exploring the third question, and chapter five was devoted to discussing the data gathered to answer the fourth question.

In this chapter, I examine the implications of my research findings. I begin by reviewing the theoretical frameworks on which this study stands, followed by a discussion of my understandings of the authoritative discourse of the standards and assessments, teachers' needs for dialogue, the transmission model of learning privileged in the assessment and standards documents, and finally the roll of teacher setting as it influence teacher attitude and satisfaction. I conclude this chapter by looking across these implications and summarize the understandings I take away from this research.

### **Connecting the Data**

In chapter four I discussed the linguistic structure of the Georgia standards and assessment documents and how these documents were created to express an authoritative discourse. This discourse is designed to limit dialogue and presents learning as fitting

within a Piagetian (1997) or mastery-learning (Brown, 2004; Cox, 2009; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002) paradigm. The standards dictate what students must learn, know, or do to be able to complete the requirements of a given grade, and the assessment is the ultimate assessment of whether mastery of the standard has been reached.

In chapter five, I explored how seven educators related to these standards and demonstrated how most teachers equated SBE to mastery-learning and that those who agreed with the mastery learning model reported to be happier in their setting than those who were not. The two exceptions to this were Clinton and Margaret. Clinton, as an administrator injected inquiry education into his SBE model, and Margaret taught based on a thematic model that she identified as fulfilling the requirements of SBE. Chapter four is an analysis of the standards documents. Chapter five is an analysis of what teachers did with these documents.

### **A Return to Bakhtin**

This dissertation is disjointed at some obvious points, and it is important that I address and reflect on this. The fact is, I have two different data sets, the documents and the interviews, that I treat differently. I use SFL (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003) to explore the documents, and I use transactional analysis (Stewart 2010, 2011) to analysis my interview data. These two research traditions are both grounded in the theory of Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Theoretically, Bakhtin is concerned with the nature of discourse and dialogue, and both SFL and transactional analysis try to account for the dialogic nature of language. Fairclough (2003) explained that Bakhtin's theory is used in critical discourse analysis because "all text (written as well as spoken)



are dialogical, i.e. they set up in one way or other relations between different ‘voices’. But all texts are not equally dialogical” (p. 214). SFL is designed to explore the relative dialogical nature of texts, and I specifically used SFL to examine the authoritative structure of the GPS, CCGPS, and the two CRCT documents. I was specifically interested in how the documents were structured to resist dialogue and how that affected the lived experiences of teachers and administrators.

Interviews are expected to be dialogic (Stewart, 2011); however, they are going to be guided and shaped by the individual conducting the interview (Seidman, 2006). My interviews were somewhat controlled by my interview protocol. Transactional analysis helps account for the meaning making processes inherent in dialogue and provides a tool reflecting the mutual meaning making practices that exist in any conversation, but specifically the interview. I am not solely interested in my participants’ experiences, but our combined experiences. Transactional analysis helped me account for the dialogic nature of language and discuss our shared understandings.

### **Understandings and Implications**

As I sifted through the data, I found four important implications to be drawn from this research. One, there is a connection between the common core and SBE that is often going unquestioned. Two, teachers need to feel that they are a part of the dialogue that occurs as standards are translated into a curriculum. Three, SBE and the common core standards promote a Piagetian model of education that ignores other theories of education, and four setting matters. Teachers’ perception of SBE and the common core were closely tied to where and for whom they worked. In this chapter I explore each of these implications and show how my data supports these arguments.

### **Common Core, SBE and Authoritative Discourse**

While not everyone in my study discussed the standards as presented in the CCGPS, the participants all connected SBE to the CRCT. I was reticent to accept this connection, but my literature review revealed that assessment is a major component of SBE (Marzano 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 1996; McMillan, 2008). Marzano and Kendall (1996) explain that there are three levels in education: the standards, instruction, and assessment. Without assessment, there is no SBE. SBE proponents argue that the type of high-stakes assessment currently in school is not necessarily what they mean (Glasser, 1998), but every teacher and administrator I worked for connected SBE and high-stakes assessment.

By producing these standards and assessments and presenting them as they are, the state department is mandating SBE. There is no room for dialogue with the standards and assessments. I know Margaret's experience throws a wrench into this argument, but she is at an odd setting that I'm not sure is focusing on SBE in the ways the other schools certainly are. Margaret is working in a setting where her educational purposes are allowed to take precedent over typical SBE structures. Her progression of beginning with a theme or text, identifying materials to teach, outlining a unit and identifying core standards last is highly critiqued in the SBE literature model (Brown, 2004; Marzano, 2003, 2004; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002; Thompson & Thompson, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Margaret talked about past experiences where she would get in trouble when her essential question was not posted or if the standard on the wall did not exactly match the conversation occurring in her classroom. Still, her school mandated certain aspects of SBE: they did give the CRCT, they had

essential questions in their lesson plans, and Margaret did tie all of her units to one standard or another. However, like Leigh, Margaret did not begin her lesson plans with the standard. Unlike Leigh and Alice, Margaret did not feel the need to hide this fact from her administration nor that this practice was contrary to her school's SBE mandates. The other participants all felt the authoritative discourse of the state documents and either accepted or rejected it.

Inherent in the SBE discourses are a number of practices that every one of my participants discussed. They all discussed the walkthrough where teachers and administrators entered classrooms to ensure SBE practices were being conducted. Outside observers looked for standards, essential questions, and word walls. My participants talked about how observers would listen to the instruction to make sure that the teachers and students were using, "the language of the standard." Clinton challenged this structure a little when he discussed how they should also be looking to see school norms represented, and he defended the practice of moving off the script when inquiry demanded it. However, he still expected teacher to ground their instruction in the standard, and he judged their, and his own, performance based on the standardized assessment.

Thematic teaching (Smagorinsky, 2008) and inquiry teaching (Fecho, 2004) are not easily implemented in SBE. SBE resists the types of structures necessary for thematic and inquiry education. The three thematic teachers, Margaret, Leigh, and Alice, taught despite the SBE structures. While theorist have shown how one can use dialogue practices to conduct SBE (Fecho, 2011), the majority of the participants in my study, all but Clinton and Margaret, connected SBE to mastery-learning. Both Leigh and Alice

openly admitted to going through the SBE motions to please their administrations, but they taught based on themes. Margaret did not really reflect on the SBE structures. She said “obviously, I have my EQ’s and GPS’s,” but that was not the primary focus of her lessons. Leigh outright rejected SBE and taught thematically. Alice was more concerned with her educational goal of “learning how to learn” than with the standards, but she was willing to work within the SBE framework to reach her goal. She co-opted SBE. Margaret used SBE and thematic units together. She created a dialogue between the two formats.

The only participant to discuss inquiry education was Clinton, and he did not see SBE and inquiry meshing without conflict. He recognized that following strict SBE protocols would lead learning in an inquiry setting to be assessed as “not evident.” However, he was able to couch his discussion of inquiry within the structure of SBE. He was not willing to see the discourses of inquiry education as conflicting with SBE, but there is conflict there. Otherwise, he would not have had to hedge his discussion of walkthroughs and justify moments when teachers are found “off the script.”

I found the ages of my participants particularly illuminating. The younger teachers were SBE teachers. Tiani and Sandy both have always been SBE teachers, and while Elizabeth was trained under a thematic model, she greatly appreciated the initial shift to SBE early in her career with the transition from QCC to GPS and was excited about the further shift to CCGPS. Clinton has only administrated under and SBE model and the three participants who resisted SBE, Alice, Leigh, and Margaret all talked about how the field is not what it used to be. When I asked Leigh if she saw SBE as a temporary fad or a model that will continue to dominate the field of education, she shook

her head and said that she will be retiring before either happens. It was clear to me in that moment, that she felt that the current dominant discourse of SBE was going to remain dominant.

If the connection of SBE and mastery-learning does not go unchallenged, this dominant discourse will become the sole discourse. Teachers who identify themselves within paradigms that do not mesh with the Piagetian theory and mastery-learning model would have been uncomfortable in four of the six settings discussed in chapter five. Mastery-learning was the dominant discourse at Kings Middle, City Middle, Senator Middle, and Two-Story Middle. Teachers who accepted that discourse—Elizabeth, Tiani, and Sandy—reported being happy in at least one of those settings. Teachers who rejected that discourse—Alice and Leigh—reported not being happy. Only Clinton and Margaret discussed settings where SBE was not equated with mastery-learning, and Clinton acknowledged that it was difficult for him to insert inquiry education into the discussion of his school's practices. As this process becomes more and more difficult, those teachers who reject mastery-learning are going to find it harder to find places that accept their approach to teaching and learning. As this happens, the discussion of learning will become more controlled and geared toward the mastery-learning model.

### **The Need for Dialogue**

A recurring theme of chapters four and five is that the standards and assessments resist dialogue. The two teachers who have the greatest problem with this are Leigh and Alice. Leigh does not attempt to dialogue with the SBE structure. She rejects the various authoritative discourses connected to it. Alice, on the other hand, wants to dialogue with the structure, but does not see how that is possible. She is torn by the SBE demand for an

objective measure and her need to insert her own judgment. However, she realizes that these two moments are incompatible and is not sure how deal with these conflicting discourses. In the end, she accepts the authoritative discourse of SBE, but couches it in her own philosophy defining the goal of education as “learning how to learn.”

While the standards do not promote dialogue, teachers still found and created moments of dialogue in the implementation of SBE. Elizabeth and Sandy both discussed their need to work with other teachers to “unpack” the standards and create units. This design allowed them to combine their voice with others and created a dialogic atmosphere that both were successful in. Settings that resisted this dialogue were described as oppressive and unsatisfying.

Tiani lamented the lack of dialogue. She longed for the collaboration that she saw on the social studies team, and she and Sandy both resented the structures from her district that demanded a specific teaching structure regardless of the teachers’ individual voices. Clinton, understood how an administration can be oppressive, and promoted dialogue in his school. He and his staff adjusted the SBE rubrics to suit their needs, and he inserted inquiry as an educational goal despite the rhetorical difficulty of this task.

Margaret did engage the standards dialogically. She did not see a thematic/SBE disconnect like Alice and Leigh. Instead, she weighed her own educational goals as being equal to those in the standard. This is not the design of the standards, and the standards resist this use. The standards are designed to shape instruction in its entirety. The idea of themes and inquiry are outside the standard. These are not educational goals that can be assessed, and as such they are ignored. Margaret refused to allow this to happen. Margaret’s treatment of the standards is different from Leigh and Alice. Leigh and Alice

did not dialogue with the standards. They saw the standards as an outside other. They did not try to make the language of the standard their own. Leigh divided her class time up between SBE instructional time, and her thematic instruction. She gave SBE a lower position by designating less time for it, but it was separate. Alice accepted the language of the standard and used them to meet her goals, but she did not amend the standards in any way. In fact, she amended her instruction to reflect the content weights of the assessments. Margaret accepted the standards, and the assessments, but she did not see these documents as having authoritative control over her classroom. She worked with them and adjusted them to suit her goals.

The standards and assessments resist dialogue, but certain settings were able to inject dialogue into the everyday practice of teachers. In doing so, they promoted teacher satisfaction and agency. The structures that did not allow for teachers' voices were resented and resisted. Administrations must find ways to promote and value teacher input. In order for a faculty to feel satisfied in a specific teaching environment, each teacher must feel that his or her voice belongs with others. They must participate in the give and take that is inherent in dialogue. Teachers who did not feel that their voice was important, Sandy, Alice, and Leigh for example, all were preparing to leave either their current school or the teaching field all together.

Settings that promote dialogue should be celebrated. Schools where teachers are able to address the standards creatively by promoting thematic and inquiry teaching practices should be found, highlighted, and promoted as great educational settings. Teachers, administrators, and policy makers need to see that mastery learning is not the only affective teaching method.

### **Construction and Transmission**

An important element of SBE that is not getting enough attention is the fact that it represents a very narrow notion of education. Grounded in SBE is the assumption that there are basic knowledge, skills, and understandings that every person should have at a certain age, and that these core knowledge, skills, and understandings can be measured. This structure has gone under many names. E.D. Hirsch (1988) called this model cultural literacy. Current proponents of SBE call it mastery education (Ainsworth, 2003; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Thompson & Thompson, 2000). Critics of the paradigm call it a “banking model” of education (Freire, 2005) or a “Transmission” model (Smagorinsky, 2008). As I have shown in chapter four, the SBE documents of the GPS, CCGPS, and CRCT domain descriptions are all heavily grounded in this model. This ignores the fact that there are other ways to discuss and theorize learning (Delpit, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Fecho, 2004, 2011; Freire, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Smagorinsky, 2008; Vygotsky, 1987).

A major implication of SBE is that constructivist models of education, i.e. inquiry education (Dewey, 1938, Fecho 2004, 2011; Freire, 2005), cultural relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billing, 1994), and thematic lesson design (Smagorinsky, 2008) are wrong. The standard and assessment documents resist these structures, and the participants in my study recognized this resistance. Elizabeth and Sandy cannot imagine an educational paradigm not grounded in standards. Elizabeth started under such a paradigm and floundered, Sandy only knows SBE. Alice and Leigh have a hard time negotiating their practices within an SBE structure. Clinton has to make certain allowances in his school to promote inquiry that are not consistent with SBE nor the



standards, and Margaret ignores the authoritative discourses and teaches within her constructivist paradigm regardless.

Educational and professional development programs that ground their work in a constructivist paradigm are going to have a harder time being accepted within the educational world of SBE. The problem is, 44 states have adopted this model (CCSSI, 2013). The dominant discourse in educational theory is grounded in a transmission model of learning, and it is only going to become more difficult for constructivist theories to gain purchase into schools (Ravitch, 2010). The teachers who felt the most validation were those whose educational theory matched those of the standards, and as the standards become more and more engrained, teachers like Leigh and Alice are going to find other fields while teachers like Elizabeth, Sandy, Tiani, and Clinton are going to flourish. Teachers in my study gravitate toward structures that suit their philosophies and abandon those that are not in accord with their pedagogical approaches. Which brings me to my final section.

### **Setting Matters**

Those teachers who were happier and optimistic about the field of education were those who were in settings that matched the pedagogical philosophies. Tiani and Sandy illustrate this best, but it is true of all my participants. Tiani and Sandy were in the same school under the same structures. Tiani, while discouraged by certain practices was generally happy and optimistic while Sandy had already resigned her position due to her disgust with the system. A transactional moment that existed in their data can be grounded in their discussion of grammar instruction. Tiani discussed the way her school focused on grammar in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade positively. It was the result of collaboration within

her school, and it was based on a decision that she was a part of. She, and her coworkers at the time felt that grammar was a major element in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade standards and assessments, and they adjusted their curriculum accordingly. She disagreed with the way the standard focused on grammar, but she approved of how her school addressed the standard. Sandy hated the focus. She interpreted the standard differently, and felt that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade's emphasis was misplaced. She resented being told to spend 60% of her instruction on grammar and did not think the school would change their focus away from grammar with the adoption of the CCGPS. Tiani was generally happy at City Middle School. She returned this school year. Sandy was miserable, and she left.

Now, Sandy will be leaving one standards based school for another. I have every confidence that she will find a school system that matches her construction of SBE, and she will flourish there. She was very happy at Old Urban, and I am sure there are other SBE programs similar to that school. Leigh and Alice, on the other hand, are in a very different place. The SBE focus has created a school culture that resists their teaching paradigms. Both of them discussed their upcoming retirements, and neither was ready to leave working with children, but neither could they continue to work within an SBE structure. Leigh said it more concisely when she explained:

So I've got 3 more years now. Now, like I said, if we have a miraculous turnaround—you know everybody at the state department is over thrown. We have a reasonable superintendent to work for. If all things in the world were as they should be. I could do it longer because I love kids, and I love teaching.

She is not ready to leave the classroom, but she will be leaving the classroom as long as SBE remains the dominant discourse of her school, and she does not see the need to seek another district, because she identifies the problem as a state issue, not just a local one.

Margaret has found a setting that allows her to be a thematic teacher. She is not in conflict with the standards because she does not have to be. She includes the essential questions and GPS standards on her lessons, but she focuses more on the elements that match her philosophy. This was evident when she discussed a recent change her principal had made to the lesson plan format. She said:

Last month she [her principal] changed the format and she included world connections. And for me, that's very exciting because that's what my whole purpose is here to make everything in this room connected to something else.

Of the five schools I worked in, Margaret was the only participant who found she could comfortably practice under a guiding theory other than SBE. It was nice to see that this option was available, and that Margaret was not floundering in a setting where her disposition did not match that of her school's administration, but it is a rarity.

### **Conclusion**

When I began this project four years ago, I was more interested in a perceived disconnect between what the GPS required students to learn and what the CRCT assessed. It took me three years to understand that this question was completely immaterial. Instead, what I learned was that teachers have very complicated relationships with these documents, and those relationships go largely unquestioned. By exploring how teachers relate to the assessments, I found certain disconnects among the underlying assumptions of SBE and certain teachers, and by exposing these distinctions, I found an

important critique of SBE. SBE does not promote constructivist perceptions of education, and those teachers who ground their teaching in constructivist theories have a difficult time negotiating their educational goals and the mandates of the standards. The purpose of this study was to first understand how the standards and assessments are related to each other, and second how teachers negotiated this relationship.

What I learned is that the test and standards, while disagreeing slightly on the “what” should be learned, matched when it came to defining what it means to learn. All four documents promote a Piagetian (1997) stage theory of learning where knowledge is a commodity that can be passed from teacher to student. This theory was couched in the language of “mastery learning” (Ainsworth, 2003; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Thompson & Thompson, 2000), but the basic assumption that education is a commodity is central to both theories. Teachers who accepted this paradigm were quite comfortable with the standards and the assessments and valued them. Teacher who rejected this paradigm had a more complicated relationship with the standard and assessment. Some teachers were able to find settings that did not require them to conform to SBE while other sought to leave the field. While approving the standard, they resisted the assessment, and this resistance served to make their work uncomfortable and generally unpleasant.

While this was the most glaring complication, it was not the only problem with SBE. Even when teachers accepted that knowledge is a commodity, they did not always agree on what knowledge students are expected to learn and how best to structure a lesson to deliver instruction. Conflict and discomfort festered in schools where curriculum maps and lesson plan formats clashed with an individual teacher’s perception

of “best practice.” Frankly, this war of “best practices” created more conflict than the different paradigm. Meaning, teachers who were teaching thematically in a schools mandating mastery-learning models reported more job satisfaction that the teachers who agreed with the mastery-learning model, but rejected the way the school sought to demonstrate mastery.

### **Reflection on Subjectivity**

In chapter three I discussed my subjectivity as a limitation on this study. I entered this project conflicted in that I personally and professionally question many of the curricular structures of Standards Based Education (Ainsworth, 2003; Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Thompson & Thompson, 2000); however, I am fond of the CCGPS. The SBE discussion of “best” practices is particularly problematic for me because I embrace a theory of education that does not recognize a specific benchmark that differentiates the educated from the uneducated. Rather, I see education as a continual feast of becoming (Fecho, 2011) where I am constantly growing until I’m dead. An anecdote I continually use to show how education is contextual is my own experience with the works of Charles Dickens. When first required to read Dickens in high school, I hated him. I found the stories confusing and the language old and stale. When I studied English as an undergraduate at West Georgia College, I avoided Dickens entirely. I dropped not one, but two classes when I realized that I would be required to read a Dickens novel for the class. After I had received my degree in English without reading a single Dickens novel, I was arguing with a friend from high school who while in the exact same classes as me had had a very different experience with Dickens, and he convinced me to read *Great Expectations* again. Within two years of our argument, I had read Dickens entire cannon.

He is among my favorite authors. I was not ready for Dickens in high school, and bad experiences with him then led me to avoid him for six years. What worked for me in my early twenties was not productive in my late teens. I found Dickens when I was ready for him, not before. This story does not fit within the narrative of “best practice.” If the practice had worked for my friend, it should have worked for me. It didn’t. The concept of “best” practice ignores how students develop differently at separate rates. It assumes a specific teaching strategy matched with a specific strategy will always work. It assumes that everyone is ready for the same material at the same age, and this is all counter to my lived experience. I cannot accept it.

That said, I began this study wedded to the CCGPS. When Clinton said to me “I know you must be excited, just for language arts,” while discussing the transition from GPS to CCGPS, I whole-heartedly agreed. When Tiani explained that she was excited about “the new common core standards coming in next year, that’s going to make a really big change, but I think it’s going to be one that’s for the better,” I could not have agreed more. When Diane Ravitch (2013) recently blogged about her final decision to reject the Common Core, I found myself disagreeing with her writing for the first time in five years. I believe that the standards are written to promote dialogic classrooms. That said, as I conducted the analysis of the standards and the assessment documents reported in chapter four, I found my love of the standards more and more problematic.

The standards seem to be clearly written with SBE in mind, and SBE requires a uniform summative assessment (Guskey, 2010; Marzano, 2010), and I disagree with the way this has been carried out in Georgia. Ravitch (2013) argued that the Common Core promotes the type of high stakes standardized assessment that I find most problematic in

education. As much as I want to challenge Ravitch's argument, the more I think about it, the more I agree with her. It puts me in a very uncomfortable place.

Every teacher and administrator I worked with was required to work within the SBE framework of posting standards, providing an essential question that can be answered at the end of a lesson, and documenting student progress through formal assessment. Only Margaret treated these as an afterthought. Everyone else felt compelled to center his or her instruction on this paradigm. Elizabeth and Sandy were quite happy working in this structure, and I felt that they were fantastic teachers. I cannot critique the paradigm totally because it worked so well for them. But Leigh, Tiani, and Alice felt stifled by it. SBE worked counter to what they wanted for their students, and they all connected SBE to high-stakes assessment.

Leigh said it best when she said "yes you have standards that guide what you need to teach or you'd have people off in left field doing whatever, but do we need to cram it down their throats?" I love the guidelines these standards set. I like the general direction of the CCGPS. That said, they come out of an SBE tradition that is actively working to "shove them down our throats." I have had friends get reprimanded for not having their standards and essential questions posted on the board. I have friends officially labeled a "bad teacher" by my administrator due to low test scores, and these experiences are ignoring the rampant cheating and data manipulation that has occurred since high-stakes assessment has become the primary tool for judging school quality. I don't want the CCGPS to mean more of this type of thinking around schools, but I'm afraid that it might.

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