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Effects of Standardized Testing in Urban Turn Around Schools

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Abstract

Standardized tests are intended to show what students have learned and retained in a classroom setting. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to understand the effects of standardized testing in urban turn around schools. The research question that guided the study was: What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing, in urban turnaround schools in the south? The sample was obtained through a snowball strategy, and it consisted of 11 participants who were teachers from an iZone school in the Southern United States. The data obtained were interviews and artifacts (lesson plans). Inductive analysis was used to analyze collected data. Findings indicated that teacher participants perceived that standardized testing hinders students' achievements performance.

Keywords: iZone, turnaround schools, underperformance

Dedication

To my beloved friend and colleague that was taken from us too soon: Ms. Lange, *"students till death"* this is for you. Also, to by brother-in-law, *"in the hand"* whose guidance, support, teachings, and reprimands molded me in to the person I am today.

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My profound thanks to my family; this long-awaited accomplishment cost them numerous sacrifices, which cannot be described. I devote this accomplishment to my family, particularly my Husband Guillermo. I additionally stretch out my genuine gratitude to my son Junior, my daughter Margie, and friends who have put in various amounts of time to help me in dealing my inquiry. Without their support, I would not have possessed the capacity to achieve my objectives on time.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this case study I attempted to explore the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools. Harris, Harris, and Smith (2012) argued that, "contrary to popular assumptions about standardized testing, the tests do a poor job of measuring student achievement. They fail to measure such important attributes as creativity and critical thinking skills" (p. 1). At best, the test is measuring students' knowledge on a subpart of their total knowledge about a specific subject; however, it falls short in teaching, measuring, analyzing, or assessing skills that are instrumental in a student's life in the 21st century such as resilience, motivation, endurance, empathy, and leadership. The test does not measure a complete educational achievement.

Background of the Problem: History and Context

The current problem is students in urban turnaround schools are underperforming on state-mandated tests, and testing tends to result in institutional stress because of the pressure of meeting benchmarks. High scores are also regarded as signs of effective teaching, and low scores as signs of teacher ineffectiveness (Harris et al., 2011). Even though teachers prepare students with curriculum-based material, other factors that cannot be controlled by the teacher or the school can affect a student's score on a standardized test.

A report released by the Brown Center for Education Policy at the Brookings Institution indicated standardized testing costs an estimated $1.7 billion annually in the United States (Chingos, 2012). Many researchers have debated the costs, benefits, and effectiveness of standardized tests (Baker et al., 2010; Decapua & Marshall, 2015). Standardized testing impacts both teachers and students, and the effects are more noticeable in those schools with a significant number of minority students; schools where cultural differences and economic disadvantages are

more prevalent, low-performing schools (Moores, 2013). Currently, the sole purpose of using standardized testing is to assess the students' educational progress and knowledge (Wagner, 2013).

With this case study, I examined standardized testing and whether it can be relied upon as the main tool to measure students' and teachers' abilities and effectiveness. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' experiences on the impact the test is exerting on both teachers and students in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. I examined five factors—accountability, diversity, testing overload, student learning, and teacher preparation—to attempt to answer the research question posed for this study.

Conceptual Framework: Constructivism

The theory of constructivism undergirded this study. This theory is based on observation and the scientific study of how people learn (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Learners construct, or build, their understanding of the world through their own individualized experiences, interactions with objects and the world around them, and interactions with other people. Educators endeavor to develop collaborative activities, write innovative lessons related to real life, and prepare motivational projects that allow learners to engage by incorporating practical strategies and resources. Students must involve themselves actively in the processes that lead to their acquisition of knowledge. However, educators must create a learning environment that engages the students and is simultaneously egalitarian and offers differentiated learning opportunities to accommodate all learning styles, types, and levels within the classroom (Milan et al., 2010).

Lessons must be highly engaging and interactive to transition learners from passive to active learning. Constructivism places great emphasis upon a learner-centered approach (Au, 2011). Constructivist practice can thrive only if the school board allows educators the autonomy

to exercise ongoing professional judgment in accommodating their learners' needs. Furthermore, students grow and progress at different rates, and educators are intimately aware that not all learners acquire knowledge in the same way or at the same pace. Thus, educators need some degree of freedom to make decisions about their pupils' progress.

In addition to having a degree of autonomy as facilitators within the classroom, teachers should be sensitive and considerate of their learners' sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The role of teachers is to transform their mental schemes by way of guided instruction, learning favorable and active material that leads to mental growth. Within a constructivist model, educators must be willing to adapt and adjust the learning material to the evolving needs of the learners (William, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The lack of knowledge about teachers' experiences regarding the use of standardized testing in an urban turnaround school in the southern United States was the problem studied in this research study. As noted in "Turnaround Schools" (2018), "As districts, nationwide struggle to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the U.S. Department of Education has shifted its focus to turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools" (para. 1). This study explored the perspectives of teachers on their students' low performance on state mandated tests. The test results were used, including decisions regarding student and teacher promotion, school funding, and school closure; and the tension these state-mandated tests put on schools, their teachers, and students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the effects of standardized testing on teachers and their students during instructional time. Several authors argued against

standardized testing because standardized testing tends to hold educators and students accountable only for reading and mathematics while neglecting history and science (Blazer, 2011; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Taryle, 2015; Walberg, 2011); however, their arguments were directed toward comprehensive and systematic testing across the entire curriculum, not standardized testing specifically. Standardized testing has managed to narrow the curriculum and marginalized teachers who wanted their students to have a full education (Burke & Adler 2013). Educational funding of public schools is also a component that is directly linked to the results of test scores; and often low-test scores are more common in schools where most students are minorities and come from a low socioeconomic status (Taggart, 2016; Thompson & Allen, 2012).

I explored the lived experiences of teachers tasked with preparing students for frequent and mandated standardized tests. In doing so, I identified disparities existing between students who attend low-performing schools versus those who attend other schools. As a result, I offered solutions to the research problem, which may improve the experiences of teachers and students in turnaround schools and raise students' test scores on standardized tests.

Research Question

This study was directed by this research question: What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

In this research study, I aimed to reveal not only the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States, but also methods that could be utilized to implement change in low-performing schools. The impact of

standardized testing has on urban students is monumental. Therefore, addressing this problem is important to benefit all stakeholders, including teachers, students, principals, parents, and school communities. Based on results from my study, I contributed to narrowing a gap that exists in low-performing schools by enhancing the relationship with feeder schools to have students prepared and ready when they enter high school. Additionally, I offered explanations of why to change the length of a class period because additional minutes could allow teachers to teach to greater depth and implement after-school intervention programs to assist the students with lowest academic scores to work or make up missing assignments.

Students need to feel supported in all aspects of their educational endeavors and their standardized test scores should not determine their future or that of their schools. Scores of standardized tests are not the equivalent of student achievement. Furthermore, standardized test scores do not provide much useful information for evaluating a student's performance, a teacher's competency, or the achievement of a particular school or program (Harris et al., 2011).

Definition of Terms

Turnaround Schools

According to Education Week (2017),

> In 2009, the federal government repaired the Title I School Improvement Grant program, increased its profit to $3.5 billion with money from the recovery act, and specified four turnaround possibilities from which perennially declining schools would have to choose to get a share of the funding (para. 2). The idea of turnaround schools was an initiative that came out of the University of Virginia's School of Education (Hess, 2013). Schools that have not reached their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind

are designated as Persistently Low-Achieving Schools (PLA), and as such are provided intervention assistance from the state department of education.

The department of education has designated four turnaround school models for those qualifying for Race to the top (RTT) and School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding. Local Education Agencies must choose from one of the four turnaround models as specified by the U. S. Department of Education (2009). The four possibilities are turnaround, shutdown, restart, or transformation.

Turnaround

The principal and least half of the staff is replaced. In this model, the school must embrace a new governance structure; provide job-embedded professional development; offer staff financial and career-advancement incentives; implement a research-based, aligned instructional program; extend learning and teacher planning time; create a community-orientation, and provide operating flexibility (The Department of Education, n.d.).

Shutdown or School closure

The school is closed, and the students attend other schools in the district (The Department of Education, n.d.).

Restart

The school is close and reopen, under a new administrator that has been chosen through a precise evaluation process, and is required to registers, within the grades it serves, any previous student who wishes to attend (Department of Education, n.d.).

Transformation

The district replaces the principal; however, they are not required to replace the staff; provide job-embedded professional development; implement a rigorous teacher-evaluation and

reward system; offer financial and career advancement incentives; implement comprehensive instructional reform; extend learning- and teacher-planning time; create a community-orientation and provide operating flexibility and sustained support (Department of Education, n.d.).

Standardized Testing

Standardized testing refers to a government-mandated, multiple-choice test in which the examinees (usually students) are expected to give their responses by filling in a bubble on an answer sheet with a No. 2 pencil. However, this definition is limited; the word *standardized* merely refers to the fact that format, administration, and scoring of a test are the same for all examinees, ensuring essential fundamentals that provide interpretable data (Alcocer, n.d.).

Underperformance

To be less successful than expected or required due to the inability to meet the desired academic standards.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

All research analysis is based on assumption that the ability to prove a study question is valid. Which, help provide the basis to investigate the desired subject matter is crucial for the researcher. For my study it was assumed not all students in urban settings came from dysfunctional families, and not all inner-city students in turnaround schools were underperforming.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the physical characteristics that restrict the findings and define the limits of the research study. Delimitations are under the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). Delimitations of this study included the focus on urban turnaround-school students, low-income

families, and the underperformance of students on standardized tests. This study was based on my curiosity about the topic and my desire to find ways to improve some components, aspects, or problems related to the topic. The research was constrained to a couple of districts and one grade school within a specific geographic area.

Limitations

I was limited in my study to the views and perspectives of the participants in the research. Eleven participants shared their stories, experiences, beliefs, and opinions via personal interviews and provided their lesson plans as data sources for the study. I explored how urban turnaround-school students are being prepared for and evaluated based on their performance on standardized tests.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 covered the research question within the framework of constructivism. The problem statement explained how many urban students in turnaround schools are consistently underperforming in state-mandated tests. In addition, the problem statement addressed how the results of standardized tests limit a student's educational achievement and the well-being of teachers and schools. The purpose and need for the study were presented, and methodologies I used to collect data were introduced. Chapter 2 will present the literature review that formed the basis of this research study. Chapter 3 denotes the methodology, defines the design of the study, participants demographics, instrumentation, data collection, data processing, and analysis. Chapter 4 explains the results and findings, analysis and clear summary of the findings. Chapter 5 reflects the conclusion and provides recommendations for policymakers and future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The way standardized testing is utilized and embedded in classroom instruction was investigated in this study. Standardized testing is used by education administrators and teachers to assess a school's performance, to understand how learners retain information, and to assess instruction methods used by teachers. Standardized tests also serve as a mechanism by which local, state, and federal entities regulate funding for schools (Moores, 2013). Researchers have related standardized tests with stress, pressure, and frustration for all stakeholders because of the necessity of being proficient in meeting benchmarks (Chingos, 2012; Stillman, 2011) . Often counties and school boards regard high scores as a sign of effective teaching and view low scores as ineffective teaching (Harris et al., 2012). However, even when teachers prepare learners for standardized testing with curriculum-based material, other factors beyond the teacher or school's control can affect a student's score on a standardized test.

In this literature review I examined standardized testing, considered statements that addressed standardized testing should not be the only tool used to measure learners' and teachers' abilities and performance, and explored the impact of standardized testing on the experiences of teachers in turnaround schools. In addition, I examined five factors related to standardized testing: accountability, diversity, testing overload, student learning, and teacher preparation. In addition, I provided an overview of the conceptual framework and an assessment of how the literature is expected to support the research question posed for this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research study reflected the constructivist philosophy often evident in the mission and objectives of a school system (Milam, Furr-Holden, & Leaf, 2010). The original development of the concept of a constructivist philosophy traces back to

Socratic dialogue, as described by Wagner (2013), in which an author asks learners direct questions to provoke their thought processes and identify the weaknesses in their thinking. The constructivist approach is used in contemporary society to have learners create new experiences through self-discovery. In a constructivist model students are active and become cocreators of their education instead of being passive recipients of information (Olusegun, 2015). The constructivist philosophy includes learning through real-life experiences and sustained inquiry and encompasses the idea of young people being able to find solutions to problems beyond their levels through the guidance of an adult (Milam et al., 2010). The educator may act as a facilitator to aid learners' progress, but students also bear a component of the responsibility. Teachers should understand how students construct knowledge to enable and promote learners' knowledge construction at the various levels at which interaction occurs between teachers and learners. Therefore, teachers should be aware of their students' lives to enable them to establish better mechanisms that can build bridges to achieve academic success (Au, 2011).

Review of the Literature

This section presents a review of existing studies on the effects of standardized testing on the teachers of the research district. The school has a record of low performance on standardized testing but still holds teachers to high standards because of the effectiveness of the school's objectives. This critical review of the literature included a definition of standardized testing and a discussion on time spent teaching valuable content such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity rather than time spent on standardized testing material.

In addition, previous research conflicted on the effects of accountability policies, diversity, testing overload, student learning, and teacher preparation with respect to standardized testing outcomes. As such, this review examined the literature with a view toward the effects of

standardized testing on both teachers and learners, including the impact of accountability policies, diversity, and testing overload, as well as the preparedness of the measurement mode of educators and students.

Accountability

Accountability is a recent trend in education. School districts, educators, and learners are held accountable for the school's success. However, accountability is everyone's responsibility; it begins with an individual and ends with the entire community (Krechevsky, Rivard, & Burton, 2010). In particular, the education sector applies checks and balances to monitor and evaluate the success of the institution by demanding accountability from the individuals involved; in this case the teachers and school administration are held primarily accountable (Ward & Bennett, 2012). The concept of accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies, including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position (Springer et al., 2011). To sustain accountability the education system must comply with local, state, and federal laws regulating and governing responsibility in institutions. Therefore, in a school system setting community members must be willing to work as a team because all parties—administrators, teachers, and learners—are accountable for the functionality of the school (Ward & Bennett, 2012).

School boards, county officials, as well as the general community expect school principals to govern by setting exceptional examples for their team. Part of their duties include identifying challenges in the school, multitasking to accomplish the stated goals, leading to the desired progress, overseeing teachers performing their obligations, and meeting the needs of learners (Wagner, 2013). Thus, principals expect teachers to be highly qualified and

experienced; to cover the syllabus and teach from the curriculum; to use the proposed, tested, and evidence-based teaching strategies; and to be accountable for their responsibilities (Crowe, 2010). Additionally, teachers must meet the content parameters of the standardized tests, to enable the administration to determine the progress of individual learners and create an analysis report on the school performance (Crowe, 2010). Teachers should also demonstrate creativity in their instructional methods to engage each learner and deliver the intended content (Wagner, 2013). Finally, teachers need to hold students accountable for being able to apply what they are taught during the learning process.

In turn, learners must present themselves for learning and exercise discipline during the learning process. Students are responsible for all the activities assigned to them as the teachers and the administration keep a close watch on the students to ensure they meet their responsibilities and improve their academic performance (Ward & Bennett, 2012). Student performance is the key determinant of the schools' success, and such achievements control both teacher and student promotions as well as government program funding (William, 2010).

Furthermore, advancements in regulations and technology impact the way education institutions are administrated as well as the methods of managing, teaching, learning, and assessment (Taubman, 2010). For example, before the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, there was minimal formal accountability and government control in the education sector. Standardized testing results had minimal to no effect on the curriculum or instructional practices. However, since the NCLB Act passed in 2001, teachers experience more scrutiny and pressure that extends to modification of the curriculum and teaching methods (Assaf, 2008; William, 2010). The pressure comes from politicians, school management, and other stakeholders to determine the achievement of adequate yearly progress (Carlson, 2011).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015 and represents good news for our nation's schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The new law builds on critical areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country (The Department of Education, n.d.).

Negative Effects of Standardized Testing

Assessment scores determine which teachers and learners are promoted and what funding is allocated to what programs; they also heighten accountability pressures on the schools (William, 2010). The burden placed on teachers affects their teaching behaviors, resulting in concentration on learner memorization of the prescribed content (Assaf, 2008; Ward & Bennett, 2012). The degree and nature of administration involvement in scrutinizing teacher performance determines the amount of pressure teachers experience and how they may alter their teaching behaviors (William, 2010).

Contrary to the intent of accountability (which is to generate achievement through a team that works together for the benefit of all) the demanding requirement of high scores and government funding have driven education into a new era of measuring school success based on performance in terms of individual learner outcomes (Krechevsky et al., 2010). This situation led to data-driven decision making (DDDM), which focuses on the standardized testing in America to determine whether learners are improving their scores, and thereby establish the success of a school (William, 2010). DDDM involves data gathering, interpretation, and dissemination of findings to inform and direct school improvement efforts (Carlson, 2011). Standardized assessments significantly limit the learners' focus on learning and are, therefore,

inappropriate tools to measure school and teacher accountability (William, 2010). More appropriate would be the use of multiple ways to gauge school and teacher success such as improved levels in slow learners, curricular activities, and discipline, among others. According to Krechevsky, Rivard, and Burton (2010), standardized testing should be one of the ways to gauge school and teacher success, but not the primary measurement tool.

Furthermore, William (2010) pointed out that assessment results when used to evaluate teacher quality and accountability are not a reliable, valid, or equitable measurement tool. In fact, several authors showed traditional analysis tools similar to standardized tests are fraught with errors, resulting in unreliability (Springer et al., 2011; Thompson & Allen, 2012; William, 2010). Researchers also argued tests measuring a few choices are neither reliable nor sufficient to provide meaningful accountability (Baker et al., 2010; Chingos, 2012; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Kim, 2010). These researchers showed judging teachers based on the assessment results of their students only serves to demoralize teachers. As a result, many teachers left the teaching profession because all accountability was placed on teachers rather than shared with learners and parents. As such, learners and parents should also contribute to good testing results to reduce the pressures of the examination regulations on teachers (Springer et al., 2011).

The negative consequences of accountability are far-reaching. For example, strict teacher accountability not only leads to teacher attrition but also discourages active young candidates from becoming teachers or principals (William, 2010). It is suggested standardized testing had little effect on shaping a prosperous future for either learners or educators (William, 2010). Additionally, instead of schools being accountable to the community, learners, and parents; schools focus on becoming answerable to an unregulated test industry. Score inflation cases increased as curricula were narrowed and replaced by shallow subject mastery and instructions

(Parkay, Stanford, & Gougeon, 2010). As a result, learners received a lower level education, and the public received a false notion that education was doing well. Thus, school administrators must add other measurement tools to complement the standardized testing system, which does not provide a comprehensive evaluation of the entire school system (Baker et al., 2010; Chingos, 2012; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Kim, 2010).

Alternatives to Standardized Testing

Teachers work regularly and routinely under stressful conditions. Hardy (2013) suggested engaged and engaging teaching requires teacher pedagogies, work encounters, respect for learners and families, adapting curricula and policy reforms to the contextual needs, and readiness to learn on the job in an ongoing fashion. Hardy also pointed out an increasing need to review existing policies to enact standardized testing and curricula. However, limited opportunities exist for robust and vibrant professional learning experiences, thereby compelling teachers to do their best under the current conditions to help all learners achieve to their full potential in school.

Although teachers aim to help all learners, Thompson and Allen (2012) revealed certain education reforms achieved very little in terms of progress among African-American students. Education reforms that focus on accountability as the only measure of successful schools often fail to teach students real-life problem-solving skills (Thompson & Allen, 2012). In addition, Thompson and Allen noted a standardized testing curriculum can also result in apathy among minority populations. Thompson and Allen suggested introducing other modes of testing to replace or complement the standardized tests now in use. Baker et al. (2010) and Thompson and Allen (2012) also explained how such issues might be avoided.

In addition, Parrot and Keith's (2015) revealed seeking the help of librarians can be useful because librarians reinforce what learners acquire in the classroom. The authors concluded collaborative support improves the learning process for students in schools. Also, Cassell and Nelson (2010) focused on issues associated with environmental education, system thinking, and likely prospects in American public schools showed the formal education system played an essential role in the transformation of learners' intellectual orientation and cultural attitudes. Cassell and Nelson also indicated a high tendency in public schools to reproduce concepts for the elites within the society, fueled by both the business and the political community.

Cheating as a Byproduct of Standardized Testing

Standardization brought undue pressure on educators and led to a narrowing of the curriculum and structured expectations of teachers to do much more with very little. Morgan (2016) observed the unhealthy competition arising from high expectations brought by standardized testing diluted the quality of education. For instance, the pressures on educators led to unhealthy competition among teachers and resulted in malpractice to alter learner test scores. Morgan (2016) indicated the method has even more disadvantages for students in low-income families.

Standardization is necessary for the evaluation of students' actual learning. However, there is also evidence that when teachers resorted to the standardized test as their primary form of learning assessment, the approach negatively affected the quality of teaching (Styron & Styron, 2012). Notably, the standardized assessments may not assess learners' many needs (Baker et al., 2010). The educational system's intent is to produce well-rounded individuals, not merely excellent grades on standardized tests (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). Abusers of standardized

testing have used learners' scores as political weapons to destroy schools and learning processes, undermining core elements of learning, including teacher autonomy and learner engagement in school settings (Szabo, 2015).

Diversity

Diversity is an important topic at all levels of the education spectrum (Toldson, 2012). Each student's uniqueness includes ethnicity, immigrant status, social class, religion, language, culture, gender, and sexual orientation (Brunn-Bevel & Byrd, 2015). Researchers showed differences in gender, socioeconomic background, learning style, intellectual ability, and other variations affect learner performance (Baker et al., 2010; Springer et al., 2011; Thompson & Allen, 2012; William, 2010). Every individual develops and achieves different milestones at different stages of development. Standardized testing does not take into consideration students' backgrounds or different learning styles, even within the same age group or grade level. Rather, standardized testing was designed to evaluate all students against the same benchmarks per grade level, operating on the gross assumption that all learners developed at the same degree and are at par with the requirements of the tests.

Minorities in the multicultural United States continue to face problems in education and the provision of proper academic services intended for minority learners, most of whom reside in Black and Hispanic communities (Laundra & Sutton, 2008). Another example is that of students with special-needs who are required to identify themselves under the special-education umbrella (Laundra & Sutton, 2008). This category includes gifted students as well as others who need special attention. However, problems arise when these students are tested under conditions and against benchmarks that do not consider the special educational paths they are bound to take in the special-education system.

The result of standardized testing geared toward testing all students means that all learners are measured the same way regardless of their various levels of cognitive development. Students with different developmental maturity may be at their most vulnerable as they progress through school, especially when they also exhibit comprehension difficulties (Crichlow, 2013). Thus, students who learn differently are at a disadvantage in an accountability environment, and the results from standardized tests may not represent accurately the students' ability to grow as a student.

Moores (2013) investigated the need for individualized instruction in a standardized educational system. Moores revealed significant differences across states; for instance, deaf children and others with no form of disability were obliged to take the test without any adjustments. Moores emphasized the growing concern within the education community that despite advocacy for a standardized curriculum, standardized testing must provide some level of flexibility to meet the needs and interests of all the learners. Otherwise unfairness, loss of objectivity, and unintentional biases would result. In short, Moores (2013) revealed cases still exist in which students who require specialized attention do not receive the hoped for accommodations. Still, standardized tests are used to assist school administrators in making decisions affecting learners, teachers, and the institution, as though these tests were measuring all students accurately (Milam et al., 2010).

America is one of the most multicultural nations in the world (Berliner, 2011); yet, cases of discrimination arise in various situations such as education (Ball & Tyson, 2011). For example, Whites and Asians perform better on standardized tests as compared to Hispanics and Blacks (Baker et al., 2010; Springer et al., 2011; Thompson & Allen, 2012; William, 2010). The standardized method of testing was specifically designed to get a particular portion of the school

system to test a certain way (Wray, 2016). For instance, middle-class English speakers can perform well and access further opportunities to improve their lives (Wray, 2016). Multiple-choice test questions, as found on standardized tests, rely on mental tasks other than spatial or visual abilities, shutting out many learners from achieving above-average performance.

According to Hollins (2011), the best reflection upon teachers is how well they know their students' potential, abilities, learning styles, and learning levels. However, this notion is not fitting in the current standardized testing culture. Testing can unexpectedly result in the failure of a bright child due to factors such as anxiety or physical and mental challenges at the time of testing, thereby damaging that child's prospects for further appropriate learning. Therefore, these results do not accurately measure a student's overall academic performance (Kelleghan, Madaus, & Airasian, 2012). Testing has become a disservice to learners, and it makes the teachers insecure in their teaching skills (Alismail & McGuire, 2015).

In addition to differences among racial groups, learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to perform lower on standardized tests than those from higher socioeconomic brackets (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2013). Students from families with low incomes tend to face several home-based conditions that can affect their concentration in school, leading to poor performance (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2013). Additionally, students from low incomes may be discriminated against and denied better opportunities for advanced learning through standardized testing. The labeling of such learners as products of their environment affects their academic achievement because it connotes low-level learning surroundings and presents the students with persistent life pressures (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2013).

Educational disadvantages often are beyond the power of the learner; they include cognitive challenges, lowered intelligence, disabilities, poverty, neglect, parental divorce, and

other unanticipated circumstances (Baker et al., 2010). According to DeCapua and Marshall (2015), there is a big achievement gap and cultural dissonance in the United States affecting learners' performance. Advocates of standardized testing claim that it takes care of these factors by putting them into consideration so that learners can have a standard and fair ground of determining their performance. However, the reality is that students with limited or interrupted formal education are pressured to be successful through standardized testing (Assaf, 2008). DeCapua and Marshall (2015) further argued there must be culturally responsive teaching strategies available to curb the problem of poor performance by Black and Hispanic learners.

Sccording to Taggart (2016), cultural discontinuity affects more Latinos as compared to other ethnic groupings. Blacks and Hispanics trail in their educational performance due in part to low income and regional settings (Taggart, 2016), as well as violence in their communities, which may disadvantage them through increased absenteeism and mental disturbances (Milam et al., 2010). These cultural adversities disadvantage Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities also in standardized testing. Perceived attributes such as being intelligent or not have been used negatively to label minorities to promote negative perception towards them (Laundra & Sutton, 2008).

Testing Overload

Within the U.S. educational system, learners undergo testing multiple times between kindergarten and graduation from high school. Multiple standardized-testing efforts during an academic year can lead to a shift in instructional focus and away from intended and genuine learning to teaching for assessment, causing neglect to the overall welfare of the child (Taryle, 2015). When subjected to multiple standardized tests, learners may grow tired of undergoing the testing process repeatedly, resulting in flawed outcomes. Standardized tests can be redundant;

they are not always aligned, they do not prove mastery of any subject, and they can be detrimental to some groups of learners, as shown in the following examples.

Despite widespread acknowledgment of the need for some form of assessment in the school system, the standard practice requires all teachers to ensure that they are checking for learner understanding and mastery (Baker et al., 2010). A lack of mandates between states means test standardization (Morgan, 2016). But testing overload can backfire on the effort to measure student progress. For example, Kim (2010) found multiple cases where students were tested twice per month or a minimum of once per month, a rate at which the learning environment becomes unhealthy for learners.

Standardized testing is not a new concept, but its frequency has increased with time. The NCLB Act of 2001 mandated the annual assessment of learners in reading and math in Grades 3–8 and once in grades 10–12 (Lazarin, 2014, p. 7). Students are tested in science, biology, chemistry, and U.S. history. Now, they are assessed throughout the year making test taking part of a student's life because it is the stepping-stone of moving from one grade to the next.

In 2015, a new consolidated act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was voted into law offering more freedom to states and their educators to accommodate the needs of every child. The Obama administration joined a call from educators and families to create a better law that focused on the explicit goal of thoroughly preparing all students for success in college and careers. (The department of Education n.d.).

The continued reliance and focus on students' scores on standardized tests can shift the balance from teaching the curriculum to teaching specific items. Additionally, Squire (2014) found educators lose between 60 and 110 hours of instructional time due to testing. Moreover, Squire showed testing narrows the curriculum and constricts learning capacities of the learner.

On the flip side, Squire and other authors also contended testing is an important aspect when one wants to assess whether learning has taken place (Carter & Welner, 2013). It is used to gauge mastery of the subject matter that has been presented in the classroom, and it helps to ensure that educators are accountable and can assess the learners' level of understanding regarding the curriculum content. However, the focus of education should be on the students' development because the student is the most important person in the educational system.

Student Learning

The purpose of schooling is to equip individuals with the necessary fitness and skills for the daily challenges of life (Baker et al., 2010). Utilizing well-crafted assessments and setting meaningful goals while giving students ownership over the process can powerfully affect teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2015). In this regard, standardized testing is viewed as a tool to prepare all learners for college and career readiness. Student learning encompasses skills, knowledge, and capabilities that students have achieved because of their commitment to a set of educational practices. Assessment is attached to learning targets and standards, but the learners must own the evaluation process as well.

Contemporary society is multicultural, multidimensional, and increasingly demanding, which leads to more challenges for students. Although many students may seem college-ready, they may not be college-eligible (Kearns, 2011). Thus, there is a continuous need for proper structures and guidance to help learners transition to college. In addition to being college-eligible and college-ready, the global economy, ecosystem, and political networks require that all students learn to communicate, collaborate, and problem-solve with other people globally (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). Giving students ownership of the learning process empowers,

connects, and engages them because they can address relevant issues as the latter arise, and they can develop and learn about their own interests and passions.

Students who are not college ready often blame others, instead of learning how to cope with the challenges they face (Baker et al., 2010; Kim, 2010). The new challenge that today's learners are facing is an enormous demand from the multicultural and multidimensional society in which they live, adding to students' struggles (Kim, 2010). Transforming low-income and undereducated learners in inner city schools with challenging cultural and socioeconomic factors should not be done at the expense of education, which is key to becoming a productive citizen (Szabo, 2015). In fact, student learning should be the top priority for schools, educators, and administrative staff (Baker et al., 2010). For example, Szabo (2015) discussed the Career Technical Education program, which is aimed at preparing students by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and habits to take a path that allows them to grow and improve their skill level even further. The program is also designed to aid students in achieving an academic skill level while supporting them with work-based learning hours through internship programs, thus elevating their employability and technical skills (Szabo, 2015). Educators need to devise more creative ways, like the Career Technical Education program, to deliver appropriate content that interests learners and can equip them with the essential skills to pursue their futures (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

Learning is a sequential process; it cannot happen overnight. Saavedra and Opfer (2012) suggested learning should occur through various disciplines, including native and foreign languages, as well as social science, mathematics, and the arts (p. 10). Teachers must ensure learners stay current with respect to these disciplines, which requires 21st century teaching. It is not enough to teach students how to pass a few assessments; the 21st century demands learners

be taught and helped to develop skills that will enable them to compete fairly in the new millennium.

Teacher Preparation

Preparation for standardized testing centers on teaching and learning as the most important activities of education. Preparation involves the educator, the learner, the content, the strategies used, and the setting for instruction. Even with all this preparation, most teachers experience undue pressure from their school principals to perform above and beyond agreed standards (Parkay et al., 2010). Some teachers must work extended days to ensure that learners are prepared and ready to take local, state, and federally mandated end-of-course assessments. While sacrificing their own time, coupled with students' disadvantages and socioeconomic situations, the teachers' tasks continue to grow, especially in low-performing schools (Parkay et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the educational system has become politicized, and levels of performance on the tests are often determined by geographic, cultural, and demographic factors (Lewis & Young, 2013). Stillman (2011) argued educators serving in low-performing schools must act as agents of change, working toward social equality in public schools together with their learners and communities (p. 134). Teachers must know what and how to teach, and also be able to assess knowledge taught by evaluating their students' understanding and mastery of prescribed learning outcomes and objectives. However, they must also consider how standardized testing is affecting their students (p. 135). Teachers must find alternatives to ensure that both learning and assessments are ongoing in the classroom. Hardy (2013) explained the need to focus on the promotion of understanding about the sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds in which teachers instruct and learners learn. Harding saw the education of students as a team effort (p. 206).

The challenge for teachers is to embrace and embark on their roles in turnaround schools. Every new situation brings its own and sometimes new challenges; thus, a teacher's current task is to improve the educational system and make it better suited to 21st century needs and to make it one of which they can be proud. At the heart of these changes must be a different view of individual intelligence and the creative mind. This implies that teachers must learn and adjust to the community's culture and socioeconomic drawbacks. In addition, teacher must partner with community leaders, parents, pastors, and alumni to collaborate on a schools' vision for a change (Parkay et al., 2010). More challenges in the community and in learners will require more collaborative work.

The needed change in school culture will allow teachers to nurture great partnerships with communities, leaders, parents, and others, as well as the school's regular learners. Teachers must be present in the community and be transparent to the individual student (Parkay et al., 2010). Additionally, educators must be innovative and creative in the ways they approach learners. For instance, educators must challenge students to do better and try harder without making students feel or think that they are being undermined. Educators must teach each class with vigor, have fun in the process of teaching, and ensure that learning is taking place without deviating from the state's standards (Parkay et al., 2010).

An effective teacher should ask how and in what ways they can help learners improve their overall academic achievement (Parkay et al., 2010). They can facilitate this process by introducing each lesson or any other permitted activity to allow learners to use the skill sets acquired in other subjects (Parkay et al., 2010). Teachers must stand firm in the core mission that pushes the school to turn around and raise its academic success (Parkay et al., 2010). Educators must understand and embrace the school culture and traditions fully and diligently

support specific aspects of the school (Taubman, 2010). Teachers must also hold learners accountable for every step of the learning process and on improvements that are noted.

In IZone schools (i.e., schools in the lowest 5% of the state regarding academic achievement), the first step is to ensure the school will raise its academic bar. The principal tasks every staff member and educator to teach effectively and with rigor and creativity to spark growth and help turn around the school's performance. The school administration and board look for rigor in all subject areas; thus, teachers must commit to teaching "from bell to bell" (Taubman, 2010). Doing so can be tedious and overwhelming at times, but teachers can and must do so for the benefit of the learners and the entire community.

Schools and practitioners must work together closely, especially in research partnerships, with their primary objective being the discovery and identification of alternative venues for learning in different schools in the United States (Cassell & Nelson, 2010, p. 179). Educators hold the responsibility to assist their learners in becoming citizens who will exhibit and promote healthy social and cultural behaviors. Considering the sentiments of teachers through their life stories and voices will generate more knowledge about the methods through which teachers make adaptations and adjustments for the diversity of the learners (Kirk & Macdonald, 2001, p. 445). The learning process is both contextual and learner-oriented; appraisals consider the beliefs, values, and knowledge of individual teachers as they account for the mental processes that underlie their conduct (Cho & Eberhard, 2013). Institutional transformation is unlikely to occur unless administrators implement policies to address teachers' dilemmas and school culture transformation (Cho & Eberhard, 2013, p. 7).

Standardized Testing Inefficiencies

Testing methodologies have changed drastically since Horace Mann introduced the concept of standardized exams in the public schools in the 19th century (Gallagher, 2003). Initially, such testing operationalized measurement instruments deemed to demonstrate equality (Milam et al., 2010). However, the current expectations placed on teachers and learners have made this analysis design a failure because it encourages memorization of content expected to be on the exam (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Researchers indicated three main issues with standardized testing: (a) it has become flawed and ineffective as an accurate measurement tool, (b) it has lost its original purposes of democratization and equalization; and (c) therefore, it should be replaced as part of the reforms to improve the education system (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). In short, standardized testing is outdated because the testing does not measure a learner's real potential (Baker et al., 2010; Chingos, 2012; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Kim, 2010). Yet many schools perform these kinds of tests on their learners once or twice per month.

Morgan (2016) pointed out additional potential problems and adverse effects that could arise from reliance on high-stakes standardized testing as the primary method of evaluating schools and teachers. These included learners' underperformance because of excessive pressure on the teachers, unhealthy competition, and inadequate collaboration between school districts. Morgan concluded that evaluating the performance of schools and their teachers using a standardized test is a weak ideology. There is also a widespread perception that the preparation takes away from instructional time, thereby limiting learners in gaining and mastering skills that are essential for success in school and beyond (Morgan, 2016).

Students become discouraged when time that could have been spent on further exploration of topics that excite them is instead devoted to memorization of items that may

appear on the standardized tests. For instance, teachers spend more time helping learners memorize certain vocabulary terms that will be on the tests rather than building students' vocabulary and helping learners explore further on their own (Springer et al., 2011). Teachers are often expected to take time away from the lesson plans and engage more in helping students with tactics to excel on tests. Thus, instructional time is wasted on memorization, which leads to rote learning (Styron & Styron, 2012). Teaching to the test has been proven to waste instructional time, provide inaccurately measurements of a learner's potential and academic achievement, and fail in predicting a student's future success (Kelleghan et al., 2012). The testing only hinders the learning process by increasing a student's nervousness and by encouraging rote learning (Szabo, 2015). Additionally, Szabo (2015) revealed high-stakes tests are being used as political tools to destroy schools, teachers, learners, and the learning process (Szabo, 2015). Sometimes, a student can perform well and achieve good grades in class but fail standardized assessments, indicating a major flaw in the system (Szabo, 2015).

Consequently, learners waste time on preparing and taking the tests, with schools in the United States administering over 20 tests annually on average (Kelleghan et al., 2012). Students also demonstrate reduced content knowledge due to the shift in focus to passing these high-stakes tests rather than demonstrating content mastery (Koretz, 2008). Students receive a diminished curriculum in history, the arts, languages, and other learning programs as they focus more on increasing reading and math scores. Students are denied entrance to gifted programs and other advanced courses when they fail to perform to the standardized test requirements (Wray, 2016). This can result in diminished learner creativity and student engagement; learners are no longer contributors to their acquisition of knowledge, instead they become passive learners, forced to partake in rote memorization of items in preparation for the exams. Young

learners are naturally curious, but when drill teaching happens, they lose the stimulation of their imagination and the curiosity and desire to learn (Kelleghan et al., 2012).

Standardized testing also leads to the labeling of schools as failures, which results in withdrawal of resources from schools presenting a weak performance report on standardized tests (Kelleghan et al., 2012). Once labeled as failures, such schools, which are most often located in communities populated with minorities, are threatened with closure or the stripping away of much needed and essential resources (Kelleghan et al., 2012). Standardized assessments give learners an increased feeling of stress about demonstrating their knowledge and about public scrutiny of their teachers' and their school's effectiveness based on the results (Kelleghan et al., 2012). Once learners become aware of the fact that their school is a low-performing or failing school, their self-esteem, confidence, pride, and enjoyment in learning are increasingly at risk (Kelleghan et al., 2012). The pressure to perform can lead to children's experiencing harmful stress at an early age, which becomes a cyclical problem, further affecting their performance.

Review of Methodological Issues

Researchers from many disciplines and with a variety of paradigms, be they qualitative or quantitative in nature, have called their specific work a case study (Hatch, 2002). This literature review features many authors to support this specific claim. Further, most of the research reviewed was in the form of a qualitative case study. Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). Stake (2005) stated case study research is not a research method, but rather a choice of what is to be studied. According to Stake (2005), the qualitative case study was developed to study the experience of a real case, operating in real situations.

Research based on an ethnography study on the culture of Black Americans by Thompson & Allen (2012), revealed that not much had been achieved with education reforms. The narcissist approach to educational reforms that attempt to create a picture of successful schools even though the students miss out on the important knowledge to help them solve real-life problems and build on their potential have resulted in apathy among the people of color and other minority populations (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Moreover, the study suggests that another mode of testing should be introduced to substitute or complement the standardized tests.

There are claims that the standardization has brought so much undue pressure on educators, and consequently led to the narrowing of the curriculum and placed teachers in a position where they are expected to do so much more with so little. Morgan (2016) observed that the unhealthy competition that was arising from the high expectations brought about by standardized testing dilutes the quality of education. For instance, the pressures have led to unhealthy competition amongst teachers that have also resulted in malpractices in an effort to positively alter the test scores of students. Morgan (2016) indicated that the method has more disadvantages on the learners whose families have low income.

Standardization is important in the evaluation of learning done by the students. On the contrary, there is also evidence that when teachers resort to the standardized test as their primary form of learning assessment, the approach will negatively affect the quality of teaching (Styron & Styron, 2012). However, it should be noted that students have many needs in learning, which may not necessarily be gauged using standardized tests. The education system is aimed at producing well-rounded individuals and not merely excellent grades in the tests (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). The standardized testing has been abused and as a result turns the students into political weapons that are being used to destroy schools and learning processes; thus, undermining the

very core elements of learning, which are teacher autonomy and student engagement in the school setting (Szabo, 2015).

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time through details, in-depth data collection, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents (Creswell, 2013). Case study research is more than simply researching a single individual or situation. This approach has the potential to deal with simple as well as very complex situations. It enables the researcher to answer *how* and *why* questions, all while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated. For the novice researcher, a case study is an excellent opportunity to gain extensive insight into a given case. It enables the researcher to gather data from a variety of sources and to converge the data to illuminate the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Qualitative methods offered an internal view addressing reasons for problem or question, bringing greater insight to the qualitative findings; these methods provided ways to explore and investigate a problem and generate testable hypotheses (Creswell, 2013). A purpose of case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the situational inquiry when it is impossible to control all the variables that are of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Synthesis of Research Findings

The advocates of standardized testing methods claimed it offers more benefits than its opponents recognize. Supporters of standardized testing method asserted that the testing allows the public to monitor the progress and performance of the learning process and hold institutions and educators accountable (Kearns, 2011). They argued assessments covered the prescribed curricula for students and that the standardized testing of students allowed the public to gauge whether the content was delivered successfully. The concept of making results public helps to

put the school and teachers under scrutiny if they fail to perform to the desired standards. Thus, the school invests more effort in ensuring that learners pass the tests to avoid identification as a low-performing school. A consequence of such identification could include job loss for teachers and closure of the school.

Proponents of standardized testing also argued that the testing method guides teachers on what is to be taught and how and when it should be taught, resulting in less wasted instructional time (Taryle, 2015). Additionally, proponents argued that the test results helped the parents gauge their child's performance as compared to other learners, nationally and locally. This comparison also helped parents decide whether their children should continue schooling in the same institutions or go elsewhere.

The Common Core State Standards were adopted to aid in establishing accurate comparisons of learners both locally and across the nation to determine the effectiveness of the program and to reward teachers and schools that have performed well and reprimand failures (Taryle, 2015). Other important advocates argued that the teachers' every move is programmed, so that teachers in different schools but at the same grade level are always teaching standard content at specific times of the year. This organization helps learners to fit in smoothly and maintain continuity should they move to another school.

Research indicated that the results of these tests are objective in that they provided minimal chances for alterations. Results involved a series of questions with specified choices, which means that grading is minimally subjective. Computers score the tests or individuals who are less likely to know the learner directly, minimizing cheating cases. Proponents of the standardized test method argued that the questions are developed and thoroughly scrutinized by experts to ensure that they are not biased (Taryle, 2015). Additionally, proponents claimed that

results may be used to provide accurate data by comparing subgroups (e.g., by ethnicity, socioeconomics, learning disabilities, and more).

Critique of Previous Research

Numerous case studies and evidence presented in books, journals, and historical articles defend and support the use of standardized testing (Baker et al., 2010; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Proponents have argued that test preparation can be beneficial to learners by helping them develop test-taking skills (e.g., working in isolation, listening, writing, and working within strict time frames (Blazer, 2011, p. 1). Yet, the method has also put teachers and schools under so much pressure that some resorted to alter the test scores to keep their jobs and to avoid the closure of schools.

The findings will help the stakeholders to narrow the gaps that exist in low-performing schools and envision changes that may be needed, including, but not limited to, the transformation of the school culture, community, teachers, and learners to challenge them to perform better. Such implementations will not consider scores from the standardized tests but will show the amount of time the teachers are spending on learners' memorization of specific words, which will be on the state test, instead of engaging in useful vocabulary-building exercises.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained a critical review of the literature on standardized testing. Specifically, the literature review comprised issues of accountability, past studies, learner diversity and its effects on the test results, inefficiencies of standardized testing, and the proponents' views regarding the benefits of standardized testing. The findings of the literature review revealed standardized testing affects both teachers and learners negatively. Researchers

showed how curricula are narrowed to allow teachers enough time for student preparation for the tests. Meanwhile, students are diverted from their desire to learn more about the topics that hold their interest because they need to prepare for the tests (Baker et al., 2010; Chingos, 2012; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Kim, 2010). Additionally, teachers use more time on the standardized testing preparation than on the content, denying learners the opportunity to learn valuable content that would help them face real-life challenges in the future.

Educators have no faith in this mode of testing because it is not customized to address the varied needs of different learners such as cultural variations, academic abilities, developmental stages, and special needs (Baker et al., 2010; Kim, 2010). This shortcoming of standardized testing causes teachers to experience extreme pressure because they are judged on the performance of the learners rather than the teacher's expertise in delivering and positively influencing what students learn. As a result, many teachers leave the profession because they feel the education system is not fair and is not using the right metrics to measure learning.

This chapter also presented the research methodology using a case study design and survey questionnaire as the data collection tool. In addition, the chapter presented a critique of previous research and concluded teachers in the current standardized system are overworked, underpaid, and unappreciated despite all they do for learners (Baker et al., 2010; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

Furthermore, it can be concluded that standardized testing has impacts on experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. For instance, there is more pressure on teachers to perform beyond expectations, which can effect a teacher's dedication, loyalty, and professionalism. The literature review also revealed several misconceptions associated with teaching in a turnaround school and many

exaggerated claims. However, the key to overcoming any obstacle is communication and persistence, and the schools in the study have all the change elements and people in place to ensure these challenges are met.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The constructivist theory is grounded in observation and scientific study about how people learn (Pelech & Pieper, 2010), and holds that students construct, or build, their knowledge of the world through their own personal experiences, interactions with objects, and contacts with other people. Educators toil continuously and try to develop collaborative activities, write creative lessons related to real life, and prepare animated projects that allow students to engage by incorporating practical strategies and resources. Students must be actively involved in the processes that structure their knowledge; educators, however, must design a learning environment that is egalitarian while offering differentiated learning to accommodate all learning styles, types, and levels within the classroom. Additionally, lessons must be conducted with rigor, yet be appealing and interactive to change students from passive to active learners. Constructivism places great emphasis upon a student-centered approach.

The purpose of this study was to explain the experiences of teachers using standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. I chose a qualitative approach, which is warranted when the nature of the research question requires exploration (Stake, 1995), as is the case in this study. In addition, qualitative research furthers understanding of a social or human problem through an inquiry process. The objective of this study is to better understand the effects of standardized testing in turnaround schools. In addition, qualitative methods emphasize the researcher's role as an active participant in the study (Creswell, 2012), and in this case I took on such a role. Last, qualitative research methods are particularly suitable for appraising the degree of importance that individuals give to events that comprise their knowledge and experience, which was a goal for this study. Specifically, I used a qualitative case study based on the experiences of teachers who teach in a turnaround school.

Research Question

This study was directed by this research question, "What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?" The research study question provided a path to the study, limited the scope of the investigation, and made it available for calculation development and reasonable conclusion. It was the only element that tied directly to all the components of design in order to solve the case study (Hatch, 2002).

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding regarding the experiences of teachers who use standardized testing in urban turnaround schools. The research site was a public-school district that serves an unincorporated low-income area. Developed in the 19th century, it is the largest public school system in the state and one of the biggest systems in the country. A qualitative case study allowed an examination of the relevance, characteristics and misconceptions, particularly those that appear to exist in an urban turnaround school. At the same time, the study led to a deeper understanding of the experiences of teachers regarding standardized testing in an urban school.

When defining a case or case study, researchers can look to three prominent methodologists for guidance: Yin (2002, 2009), Stake (1995, 2005), and Merriam (2002). The most shared meanings come from the works of Yin (2002, 2009), Stake (1995, 2005), and Merriam (2002) which consider various research such as case study and methodology as a strategy of inquiry in which a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals can be explored. In the same way, my study was an intrinsic approach because according to Yin (2002, 2009), Stake (1995, 2005), and Merriam (2002), a case study is carried out to further the

understanding of a case. Having a genuine interest in the approach helped me to understand the situation better and expand interests to the position to see how the concept would be evaluated (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2002, 2009). This study was an instrumental case study because I focused on an issue or concern and used one case to solve that issue (Creswell, 2013). As such, I focused on the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in an urban turnaround school in the South.

Research Population and Sampling

The research population comprised of teachers who were currently teaching in specific turnaround schools in the southern United States. Any given school could potentially have an enrollment of around 800 students. However, most guidance departments registered just over 1,000 students. Approximately 750 students live in the same neighborhood as their schools; about 90 of those students are assigned to school buses, and all others must walk to school, which negatively impacts overall school attendance. Participating teachers were between the ages of 25-60 years and included men and women, as well as a combination of all races and/or ethnicities. Specifically, the research population included 36 teachers, of which 13 were male and 23 females. Twelve were White, 21 African-American, two Asian-American, and one was Hispanic. The school covers a variety of subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, History, World Language, Wellness, Fine Arts, and Career and Technical Instruction. The school has an exceptional department that provides support for students who need extra help, participants were required to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience in an urban turnaround school because these teachers were in possession of the basic fundamentals, characteristics, knowledge, and capability needed for the study (Stake, 1995).

There were 11 participants who were already familiar with the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the South. These teachers shared knowledge and characteristics that were instrumental in collecting information for the research. Snowball sampling was used because I wanted to study some stigmatized problem or behavior of the population that was particularly suitable for providing the needed data (Patton, 2015). For this case study, 11 teachers had the characteristics as outlined by the population. Snowball sampling was most appropriate because the participants had to be familiar and knowledgeable about the subject at hand. Both Harding (2013) and Patton (2015) discussed the importance of choosing participants who are most familiar with the problem, stating that participants could provide accurate information about the topic under study.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation is the core of the actions used in case studies. I measured variables or items of interest to collect data that were instrumental for the case study. Three forms of data were collected: answers of the interviewees in the initial interview, artifacts (i.e., lesson plans), and answers of interviewees in the second interview.

Initial Interview

For the first interview participants understood the rules and conditions stated on the recruitment letter beforehand (see Appendix A). Participants also knew about the time and place for the interviews to be conducted (Hatch, 2002). I used an interview protocol to guide the initial interviews, including a set of preselected questions that were asked in sequential order of each participant (see Appendix B).

Artifacts

The use of teachers' lesson plans was provided. In addition to using the lesson plan documents; the teachers allowed a behind-the-scenes look at the instruction planning the students received. These documents demonstrated the institutional process and showed how it came about (Hatch, 2002). I requested two to three weeks' worth of printed or electronic copies of the educators' lesson plans; these lesson plans provided a sense of history related to the contexts that were analyzed (Hatch, 2002) (see Appendix C).

Second Interview

In the second interview, participants were encouraged to explain their unique perspectives on the issues concerning the research study (Hatch, 2002). The follow-up questions were determined by how the participants answered questions during the first interview; some had concerns or questions about their participation and they wanted to expand on the answers provided in the first interview (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

Data collection began only after approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Concordia University to conduct the study. As reported by Harding (2013), researchers can employ several methods of data collection. For this study, the following methods were used: initial interviews, collecting artifacts (i.e., lesson plans), and second interviews. Having three data collection processes allowed for triangulation to establish the trustworthiness of the data collection process and credibility of the collected data (Harding, 2013).

Initial Interview

After receiving IRB approval to conduct the study, 11 participants were recruited through snowball sampling, described by Patton (2015) as "an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases" (p. 298). As such, snowball sampling was a helpful method in my study to select the best possible participants for the study. For example, I sent a recruitment email to potential participants based on recommendations from peers and colleagues (see Appendix A). As stated in the consent letter participants were informed, they were under no obligation to continue the research and could withdraw at any time with no explanations. Once participants had volunteered, each one was contacted to schedule the first interview. I arranged with each participant to meet at a location convenient for him or her, the researcher recommended flexible locations suggestions from the participants it was a mutual agreement to meet at the public library where it was quiet and private. When we met at the location, the participants read the consent form and asked me questions. Before beginning the interview, each consent form was signed, and the interviewee gave approval to record the conversation, recordings were deleted immediately after they were transcribed and reviewed by the researcher.

As stated by Harding (2013), the interview must be a conversation in which information is being shared, while also allowing time for small talk and establishing and building a rapport. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to safeguard the authenticity of the information provided by the participants (Harding, 2013). Field notes were taken during and immediately after each interview regarding observations, thoughts, and ideas about the interview that could be useful during data analysis (Harding, 2013).

At the start of the interview I introduced myself and the purpose of the study, indicated to the participant how long the interview process would take, and addressed terms and

confidentiality. Harding (2013) stated, "Interviews are thus primarily used when seeking to capture people's individual voices and stories" (p. 22). Consequently, the format of the interview was reviewed, indicating to participants they could also ask questions at the end of the interview. Five themes were a part of the interview process: teacher accountability, student learning, testing overload, diversity, and teacher preparedness.

I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B), which provided a series of questions to guide the interview. Throughout the process, I made sure I did not lose control of the interview, which meant I stayed on task while taking notes, I wrote down observations made during the interview, and I verified the recording before allowing the interviewee to leave. Finally, I thanked interviewees for their time and reminded them about the second interview and the lesson plans that were another source of data.

Artifacts

The second stage of data collection was a document review of the participants' lesson plans. Harding (2013) noted the significance and advantage of using document review is the quick access and the amount of time saved in collecting data. No other documentation was gathered from the research district, because a snowball or chain strategy was utilized (Patton, 2015). Documents are important indicators of the value system operating within the institution; this means the information can be both official written documentation and unofficial or personal communication (Hatch, 2002). I needed to identify the values as these may have varied from one participant to the next. The lesson plans provided opportunities to look for patterns, relationships, and themes through weekly lessons.

I asked the participants to provide digital copies and paper copies of their lesson plans. Three different lesson plans were collected from each participant; this allowed me to gather

continual pertinent data (see Appendix C). The lesson plan was either a printed copy or an electronic copy to avoid any mistakes or errors while transcribing the information. It was important to gather the material and obtain permission from the participant to use the information for the purposes of this research (Creswell, 2013). The lesson plans provided an account of the institutional process with respect to historical development of the value system involved.

Second Interview

Harding (2013) expressed interviews are helpful because they allow for extraction of personal stories, beliefs, experiences, and emotions (p. 22). To achieve this a follow-up, or second interview, was used. In addition, the process of gathering data through qualitative research could not be accomplished with just one interview; it was critical to collect, process, and analyze every section of evidence to ensure credibility. During the second interview, I gathered data from the participants individually either face-to-face, or via Facetime, or Skype, and allowed them to check the validity of their interview analysis (Koelsch, 2013). During this process, the participants determined if I accurately reported their stories. The member checking process was necessary, so each participant could examine the transcription of the information he or she provided for accuracy and allowed participants to expand on this information if they wished to do so (Stake, 1995).

This second interview served as a member check-in (Harding, 2013) and verification to ensure the information provided by the participant in the first interview was accurately captured and reproduced. The second interview also served to record answers to questions or additional information not presented during the first interview.

Identification of Attributes

Turnaround Schools

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school districts across the United States struggle to meet the requirements of this Act. The U.S. Department of Education is now focused on improving, or "turning around," the nation's lowest performing schools (*Turnaround Schools,* 2017, para. 1). According to the authors of the article,

> In 2009, the federal government repaired the Title I School Improvement Grant program, increased its profit to $3.5 billion with money from the recovery act and specified four turnaround possibilities from which perennially declining schools would have to choose to get a share of the funding. (para. 2)

Those four possibilities included turnaround, shutdown, restart, and transformation. The word turnaround is utilized extensively and implies diverse things to various individuals. Confusingly, it is as of now connected to both the control of enhancing educational systems and individual schools and additionally to a specific methodology that the U.S. Department of Education calls the "turnaround model." Some observers question the simple relevance of this term to portray schools that have never been performing in the first place. Others are skeptical about the correlation with turnarounds in the private sector, where low rates of accomplishment are the usual standard (The Department of Education, n.d.).

The examination on turnaround schools has concentrated mainly on exact change rehearses that are executed by the schools to build student accomplishment and the attributes of viable leaders in the schools that have made progress. The vast majority of the writing on turnaround schools have concentrated on urban schools with a high level of social and ethnic diversity. Some programs are forced on schools and districts that have been structured by outside

organizations. These bought projects are called comprehensive school reform models. These Comprehensive School Reforms (CSRs), for the most part, accompany help and support from administrative offices (commonly state departments of education) and colleges. This way has demonstrated efficacy for a developing number of schools and school districts others, be that as it may, have gotten financial and specialized help through the governmentally subsidized School Improvement Grants (SIGs) (The Department of Education, n.d.). These stipends are granted to state instructive offices that, like this, grant sub-awards to nearby schools that have been distinguished as "relentlessly low-accomplishing." Groups of gifted instructors, alluded to as instructive recuperation pros work on-site in the schools to give oversight to educators and administrators (Burns, 2013). Accomplishment or turnaround is at last controlled by measures, for example, the enhancement of student on state accountability tests and gains in graduation rates (The Department of Education, n.d.) The timeline to success is believed to be associated within two to five years, with enhancement in the school condition and culture happening inside two years and increments in student performance beginning by the third or fourth year. In any case, this course of events will shift and is relied upon to be longer in secondary schools (The Department of Education, n.d.).

Standardized Test

Standardized testing refers to a government-mandated, multiple-choice test in which the examinees (usually students) are expected to give their responses by filling in a bubble on an answer sheet with a No. 2 pencil. However, this definition is limited. The word standardized merely refers to the fact that administration, format, and scoring of a test are the same for all examinees, ensuring essential fundamentals that provide interpretable data (Alcocer, n.d.).

iZone

According to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) (2017), "the Innovation Schools and School Districts Act builds a mechanism for schools, groups of schools, and districts to adopt plans involving new ways of delivering instruction and allocating resources" (para. 1). The law created "a new classification of school districts, 'Districts of Innovation,' that have one or more classes implementing these plans. Communities of innovation provide a greater degree of autonomy and can waive some statutory requirements" (ALEC, 2017, para. 1). The purpose of the iZone is to move schools from the bottom 5% to the top 25% using four key elements: effective principals, high-performing teachers, extended learning day, and iZone support teams.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the method of conveying directives, structure, and significance to the mass of collected data (Harding, 2013). The first step in data analysis is to ensure the data to be analyzed are based on correct information. Every transcript, book, article, and chart must be read thoroughly before beginning analysis. In this research, I used an inductive analysis procedure for interviews and typological analysis for artifacts, as described by Hatch (2002). As noted in the following sections inductive data analysis is a pursuit for patterns of meaning in data so overall reports about the phenomena under enquiry could be made.

Initial Interview

There are certain steps in an interview analysis (Hatch, 2002). For example, in order to prepare the data for its analysis, the participants' recorded interviews of the participants must be transformed into written text (Harding, 2013). By reading and rereading the text and writing down any comments, I began to familiarize myself with the data. The data was then analyzed by

question or participant. Answers for each question by each participant helped organized the data and ease its analysis. Reviewing the text helped to identify connections, relationships between questions or topics, time periods, and events; which allowed for organizing the data by questions, case, individuals, or group. According to Harding (2013), an instrumental case study aims to analyzed a specific case by gaining a general understanding, and insight into a problem or issue. I proceeded accordingly and identified the most relevant information through coding the participants responses from the interview questions which aligned with the research questions and the five interview sections: teacher accountability, student learning, testing overload, diversity, and teacher preparedness (see Appendix G).

Saldaña (2016) recommended the importance of being organized, perseverant, flexible, creative and ethical to be able to code because it requires an ability to be meticulous to ensure validity. Thus, I identified frames of analysis once I read the data (see Appendix E). Themes based on semantic relationships emerged from these frames of analysis. Once the domains were discovered, the most important ones were coded while the other ones were dismissed. Harding (2013) defined coding as the process of attaching a label to experts of the narrative obtained from the interviews; for instance, a code could be a phrase or a short sentence. Coding allows for the data to be categorized into themes by assigning abbreviation codes of a few letters, words, or symbols and placing them next to the themes. Once the themes were found, a master outline of relationships between the domains, or themes was created, supported by excerpts of data (see Appendix E).

Artifacts

The lesson plans, or artifacts, were analyzed typologically. Hatch (2002) stated a typological analysis begins with unscrambling the data into similar groups or categories relevant

to the study. The steps recommended to conduct a typological data analysis include: typologies or themes need to be identified; then the data must be read and classified under the several typologies (see Appendix F). Patterns and relationships should then emerge and be able to be supported by these data. Then, one-sentence generalizations can be written to explain the patterns found in the data, and then be supported by excerpts of data (Hatch, 2002).

Second Interview

The findings of the second interview were analyzed by following the same steps taken to analyze the initial interview (see Appendix E). A member checking process was also necessary as this was when findings of the first interviews were shared with participants to check the validity of the data (Koelsch, 2013).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

Limitations

I selected a case study approach for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teachers regarding standardized testing in turnaround schools. Limitations of case studies included inherent limitations and biases that are embedded in most people's actions. These types of limitations were considered potential weaknesses within a research study (Simon, 2011). I worked on my self-awareness to recognize such potential limitations and biases and worked toward maintaining greater objectivity. A difference can be recognized between bias and limitation. For example, a bias may be a belief, attitude, or perception held by an individual that influences how he or she interprets the data; whereas limitations are an individual's characteristics that will impact or influence his or her understanding of the research findings. I endeavored to achieve objectivity by maintaining ethical, moral, and professional standards

(Simon, 2011). Other limitations of this study included time (participants' time and availability), and the number of respondents who were willing to participate in the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are physical characteristics that restrict the findings and define the limits of the research study. Delimitations are under the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). Delimitation factors include but are not restricted to the research questions, choice of the problem studied, variables of the study, or some of the adopted perspectives of the study. Some reasons for this study could be found in the curiosity that I held about this topic and the need to find ways to improve some components, aspects, or problems related to the topic. Open-ended questions tend to counteract potential obstacles of researcher bias or limitations because they allow respondents to express more information, including feelings, attitudes, and understanding of the subject. This gives the researcher greater access to the respondents' actual perceptions of the issue.

Validation

Validation strategies are used to make sure that all the data are truthful. I made sure high standards were employed from the beginning of this research. Creswell (2013) explained when multiple sources are used for data collection, the triangulation method must be employed. To increase trustworthiness and confidence, I accepted participants who embodied the subject phenomenon from a constructivist perspective. These participants shared experience and knowledge that was obtained from their own lived experiences (Hatch, 2002). The participant group was assumed to be trustworthy, as individuals were selected based upon affability, and zeal to participate in both interviews and artifacts. The participants were informed of the subject matter of the study to ensure a clear, upfront understanding that was free from deception

(Creswell, 2013). The participants were treated with respect at all times. The information the participants provided was collected and analyzed, confidentially.

Credibility

Research validity depends on the credibility of the information presented and the extent to which it is trustworthy and believable. According to Merriam (2002), the qualitative investigator's credibility deals with the question: How congruent are the findings with reality? To establish trustworthiness, Creswell (2013) stated the researcher must be familiar with and maintain a presence in the field. By being a researcher-participant, my presence at the scene was assured and I could ask participants to provide more intricate details, descriptions, and examples.

Dependability

In this section, the issues of validity and reliability of the research are discussed. To begin, validity depends on the magnitude of the degree by which a tool is measuring what it is supposed to ascertain and implement (Stake, 1995). It is unusual for an instrument to be 100% valid, making validity a measurement of degrees (Stake, 1995). As reported by Stake (1995), all researchers know the requirement for not only being precise in evaluating things, but also logical in understanding the meaning of those measurements (Stake, 1995). Validation consists in gathering and evaluating data to assess the truthfulness of the instrument. In addition, member checking is done as a way of establishing the validity of the information by examining the draft (Stake, 1995). Member checking is also done to eliminate any errors while making sure that the respondents' voices are properly heard through this research.

Expected Findings

For this study I asked: What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in turnaround urban schools in the southern United States? In turn, the

participants discussed the cultural, educational, and socioeconomic differences among students; as well as teacher preparedness and how teachers perceived standardized testing and the impact it had on students and teachers. I expected the participants to discuss and analyze the amount of time they had to spend on standardized test preparation while working on their standards and training their students.

Ethical Issues

Conflict of Interest Assessment

I did not anticipate any conflict of interest because the participants and I were on the same professional level; we were all teachers and there was not conflict or discord among us. All participants were required to sign the informed consent form, declaring their written acceptance regarding participation in the research (Concordia University, 2015). Participants were reassured their involvement in the research was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw from participation at any point and for any reason. The chosen participants had to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study.

Research Position

Educators must look carefully into the education systems and decide how to move beyond a mere "reading-writing- "rithmetic" mentality to examine additional areas. As an educator myself, my position was to expand understanding regarding the teachers' experiences with standardized testing. Students miss instructional time and training because the time is used for standardized-testing preparation.

Ethical Issues in the Study

I displayed the fullest degree of integrity when conducting research. I displayed honesty and integrity when reporting the information, and did not attempt to bend, manipulate, or alter

information in any way as exhorted by Creswell (2013). I did not deceive or mislead the participants in any way about my intentions or objectives for this research study. Unethical behavior invalidates the research; therefore, I did not expect the participants or myself to engage in unethical behavior. I expected participants to answer truthfully, thus upholding their integrity during the interview process (Creswell, 2013). As a participant-observer, the relationship between the participants and the researcher was one of trust and understanding. In turn, this relationship supported the effort to present the information in an efficient and responsible manner to serve the greater good of finding solutions to the research problem. I provided each participant with an informed consent form prior to conducting the interview. In addition, I assured participants of confidentiality, informed participants their participation was voluntary, and told participants they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or repercussions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained a description of the research methods of my study. This qualitative case study was conducted to explore the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. I described the research approach, the research site in the southern United States, as well as population and sampling. I explained the three data sources and triangulation and presented a detailed description of the steps of data collection and the planned qualitative thematic analysis. I further discussed validity, dependability, expected findings, and ethical issues, including the protection of the participants' rights and anonymity. The results of the study will be presented in a future chapter. Conclusions will be drawn based on the findings, and recommendations will be offered for practical application and further research on this topic.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter will reveal the findings and analysis derived from the instrumental case study about the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in an urban turnaround school in the southern United States. A total of two sets of interviews were conducted (an initial interview and a follow-up interview) and artifacts in the form of lesson plans were collected. This chapter provides the background to the participants through their year of teaching experience, which will be followed by the findings, an analysis, and a small summary of the data.

Description of the Sample

In this instrumental case study, I contacted 11 participants via a snowball sampling strategy. All 11 participants participated in the first set of interviews, but one withdrew from the research study. All participants were current teachers except one who was retired. The participants were of different backgrounds, had a vast amount of teaching experiences ranging from four to 40 years, and taught different subjects (Appendix G). The followings are the pseudonym names assigned to each participant' to further the commitment to confidentiality.

Vanessa

Vanessa was a single parent who liked to read and walk. She earned her master's degree in education. She taught criminal justice at the high school level. She taught for seven years and enjoyed the challenge the profession brings and the reward of influencing her students with real-life student situation while helping them become better citizens by thinking positively and encouraging them.

She worked with the police department and the correctional offices to schedule field trips to expose her student to real-life situations. Her course offered dual enrollment opportunities for

her students who were considering law enforcement as a career; she was working with the sheriff department to start a mentoring and work-based learning program.

Olivia

Olivia was a passionate young adult woman who strived for perfection in all she did. She taught reading and language arts at the fourth-grade level and taught for 13 years. She enjoyed every moment she helped young minds discover a new world and enrich their vocabulary. She was working on obtaining her Doctorate. She had fun teaching and included lots of hands-on activities to keep her students engaged.

Olivia had a creative mind that allowed her to explore many ways to keep her students engaged. For example, she created a book club at the beginning of the school year, she set goals and high expectations for each of her classes, and she rewarded the class who read the most books. She also celebrated her students' efforts of enriching their vocabulary through reading.

Kenny

Kenny was a creative and talented individual who took pleasure in biking, swimming, and helping his mother with her gardening. He earned a Specialist Degree in Education. He taught English at the high school level for seven years. He engaged his students in several writing competitions and provided a classroom of higher-level learning with his creativity and innovation.

Kenny started a monthly newsletter in which his students were responsible for creating and writing the news events around the school. He served as an advisor and gave his students ownership of the project by taking pictures, conducting the interviews, going to games, editing, and printing. This helped them work together as a unit and learn lifelong lessons in responsibility, meeting deadlines, and cooperating with others.

Pam

Pam was a devoted family woman who delighted in spending time with her family. She was a special education teacher who had the responsibility of teaching writing 504 and IEP for students. She had been teaching for 11 years. She loved to help and improve her inner-city students reach their highest potential by volunteering at the local community center with reading and writing tips; she also volunteered at her local church for vacation bible school.

Pam sponsored fundraising events through her church where church members provided school supplies for the teachers and students of a middle and elementary school. She partnered with the school counselor who gave her students volunteer's hours for delivering the supplies to the school.

Sondra

Sondra was a middle-aged woman, who enjoyed her retirement after 38 years of teaching. She had her master's degree, plus 45. She held several positions throughout her tenure of teaching at all levels of elementary. She was a test coordinator and professional development coach. She loved dogs and was extremely happy volunteering at her local church teaching Sunday school to elementary children. She also pondered the potential education challenges her granddaughter's parents may face regarding testing and school choice and offered advice and support to them. Overall, she was optimistic about the future of education.

Denise

Denise was an iconic, energetic middle-aged woman. She earned her master's degree in Education, and she taught all levels of science at the high school level. She taught for 40 years. Denise loved teaching and helped guide several young people into the profession. She enjoyed long walks and sharing God's words with others.

Denise was a pillar of her school and community, loved by many as she taught many of her students' moms, dads, uncles, and cousins. A reliable and versatile individual, she was the first to enter the school building and the last to leave. She always made sure her students had something to eat, as she eloquently described, "a hungry mind cannot learn."

Rudy

Rudy was a versatile young woman who enjoyed shopping, traveling, and spending time with family. She earned her master's degree in Education. She taught family and consumer science at the high school level, taught for six years, and served in multiple positions. Her aspiration as she moves forward in the teaching profession was to on her Doctorate and become a principal or a superintendent.

Rudy had the drive and passion for getting things done. She was diligent when it came to her students, making sure they had a good environment where teaching and learning take place. She worked with community leaders and company to create internships positions for her students. She also was a prominent advocate in having dual enrollment and acknowledged all students are not college bound, but students can all learn a skill to make them a productive citizen.

Elvin

Elvin was a passionate, energetic young adult. He earned a master's degree in Education. He taught physical education at the middle school level and was also the strength and conditioning coach for the high school. He taught for eight years. He loved the outdoors and would challenge anyone. He enjoyed competition, and he challenged his students to do their best at all levels in the classroom and the playing field. He knew not all student athletes would make

it to the collegiate or professional level; however, he believed "it is my responsibility that they know how to take care of their body."

He challenged each student to take ownership of the condition of their body; he was there to provide support and instruction on how they can improve. He told his students, "We have 180 days to make improvements to our body. Taking it one day at a time, eating and exercising is just the beginning, this is a life-changing experience."

Jaleesa

Jaleesa was a friendly and enthusiastic young woman. She earned a master's degree in Education. She taught English and social studies at the fourth-grade level for three years. She was full of innovative ideas and recommendations and made learning an enjoyable experience for her students. For example, she made reading assignments fun by adjusting her voice like some of the characters of the stories. She made learning feel like an adventure. She liked to travel, cook, and spend time with family.

One of the things that motivated her as a young teacher was the flexibility, she had in creating a classroom environment where students and teacher interacted at the highest level possible while meeting goals and expectations. She welcomed the support she received from the faculty and staff and thought of her work as a friendly and welcoming place to teach and work.

Maggie

Maggie was a mature woman who loved to read and swim. She earned a doctorate degree in Education. She taught Advanced Placement (AP) classes and Honors English at the high school level, and she had been teaching for 26 years. She was a soft-spoken teacher who looked to expand her horizons and become an administrator. She had a passion for literature and liked to transform her students into critics and see them blossom into better readers.

She understood she might not have all the answers, but she was willing to take a leap of faith and help some of the teachers who considering leaving the profession because of school politics. She created a support group where teachers can share and discuss issues and concerns, and where teachers could learn from each other. She was a pioneer and fighter who would be a great principal because of her leadership and teaching experience.

Clair

Clair was an overachiever, a fighter, and a very courageous middle-aged woman. She earned a master's degree. She taught algebra at the high school level for 14 years. Her goal was to make her students apply what she gave them to everyday life and preparing them to see math in all they do. She enjoyed exercising and motivating others and would challenge anyone in kickboxing.

Clair believed each student needed to learn and practice skills that will allow them to excel in school and beyond. She continually pushed her students to see math in all activities and experiences. For example, she told her students,

> "Something as simple as leaving a tip at a restaurant or understanding that all deals do not make sense when you only need one item why pay for something that you are not going to use." There is an importance of making things practical for our students, and it is as pure night and day.

Research Methodology and Analysis

In my instrumental case study, I followed Hatch's (2002) systematic approach for processing large amounts of data aimed at analyzing and gaining a general understanding and insight into a problem or issue. The question that guided this study was: What are the

experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?

For my data collection, I used two sets of interviews (initial and a follow-up interviews) and artifacts (lesson plans). I used inductive analysis to analyze the interviews, and typological analysis to analyze the artifacts (lesson plans) (Hatch, 2002). During the first interview, I met with participants in a public place, had them sign a consent form, and asked them pre-planned questions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then deleted. The same process occurred for the follow-up interviews. During the follow-up interview, I met with each of my participants to review the findings of the interviews to avoid any miscommunication and establish trustworthiness. All participants agreed the information was accurate. During this process, all participants who provided information could determine if I had accurately reported their stories. This process was essential quality control in my qualitative research as member checking is used to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the study (Koelsch, 2013).

Data Collection

Data collection is a process of collecting information from all relevant sources to find answers to the research problem. For this case study, I used three methods to collect the data. The first method was an initial interview followed by an artifact in the form of lesson plans, and finally the third method used was a follow-up interview. These data assisted in answering the research question.

Initial Interview

I met with participants at a time, place, and date that were convenient for them; this process took three weeks, from June 6 to June 29, 2018. There was a total of 11 participants. I

pre-selected 10 questions that were created to assist in answering the research question (see Appendix B). The interview questions encouraged participants to explain their unique perspective on the issues at hand (Hatch, 2002). I asked each of the participants questions and the interview was recorded.

Artifacts (Lesson Plans)

At the beginning of the initial interview, I asked each participant to provide their lesson plans within 30 days after the initial interview. Lesson plans offer a detailed description of the course of instruction or learning trajectory for the lesson. Participants could share their lesson plans electronically or by hard copy. Before the follow-up interview was completed, all participants except for two participants provided a lesson plan. There were no set guidelines for the lessons plans, so participants submitted their lesson plans depending on their preference, subject being covered, and the needs of the students.

Follow-up Interview

After reviewing and analyzing data from the initial interview, I generated five follow-up questions based on the findings (see Appendix D). These questions were created to allow participants to elaborate and extend the opinions, perspectives, and findings gathered from the initial interview. I met with the participants a second time; this process occurred between July 13 and July 26, 2018, using the same locations as the first interview.

Data Analysis

I used the inductive analysis steps to analyze the interviews data I collected (Hatch, 2002) (see Appendix E). This approach allowed my findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or essential themes inherent in raw data, which in terms were aimed at deriving more general concepts through interpretations of the text. The inductive analysis was used for both the initial

and follow-up interviews, focused on how to frame the analysis to look for parameters on how I will start looking closely at the data (Hatch, 2002). For artifacts, a typological analysis was used to analyze these data collected by dividing it into elements based on predetermined categories (Appendix F).

Initial Interview Data

The interviews were conducted one-on-one, in a public place, and lasted between 60–90 minutes, with pre-selected questions (see Appendix B). Once the interviews were completed, I sent them to REV.com to be professionally transcribed. Before deleting the recordings, I checked the transcripts to make sure that the transcribers had noted everything. I played the conversations back to assure that all the information was reproduced verbatim, for accuracy and validity (Harding, 2013), then I deleted the recording as per the CU–IRB approval.

These data then became a narrative, easy to read. I read the text for the first time to familiarize myself with the data. Then, I reread it a second time. Every time I read the transcripts, I used a different color highlighter to find codes. As noted by Saldaña (2015), "A code is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion based or visual data" (p.3). During my third read I coded my data along the margins. Forty codes emerged from these data. However, I realized 40 codes were too much, so I read it a fourth time to reduce the codes to 30. I read it a fifth time, eliminating codes that were redundant or repetitive, and 20 codes emerged from these data. I read the transcripts from the interviews, a sixth time and codes were collapsed to 14. In total, 14 codes emerged from these data. The codes are as follows: AS = Assessment; IT = Instructional Time; SM= Student Motivation; SLG = Student Learning Growth; TE = Teacher Evaluation; TSV = Test Score Values; TTT = Teaching to Test; TEX = Teacher Experience; OP

= Online Platforms; SR = Student Reward; TR = Teacher Readiness; A= Accommodations; AS= Assessment; UD = Uses of Data; CTI = Computerized Testing Imperfections; BOS = Benefits of the Scores; Tec = Technology; and I = Intervention.

I simultaneously created categories based on the codes. I created categories by bringing several codes together; categories are often created by chunking together groups of previously coded data (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). Initially there were 35 categories. I gathered all the similar codes together into categories, or family of codes, and then placed them in separate categories. I repeated the process, as I was coding, and therefore, the categories were reduced to 20, then 11. The categories were teacher growth, teacher expectation, teacher morale, teacher support, teacher condition, students' expectation, test levels, testing time, teacher collaboration, diversity, higher education, teacher professional development, and test taking skills.

The codes supported the categories for reflection on participants' opinions and perspectives, grouping the codes into categories utilizing the same method by reading and looking for words, phrases; this process was repeated several times makings sure that these categories were aligned to the research question. The next step was to identify themes by looking at the group of categories for words and phrases to describe the big idea. In doing so, three themes were generated from the groups of categories that were also aligned with the research question for the list of codes and themes (see Appendix H). Themes are groups of categories that are actively formulating based on similarly because they share some characteristics (Saldaña, 2013). Each time the categories were reduced, I reread it and realized that some categories could be sorted. These 11 categories supported four (4) themes which were teacher preparation, testing overload, student learning, and accountability because they aligned with the research question.

Artifacts (Lesson Plans)

I collected lesson plans from my participants because lesson plans were served to evaluate data (Hatch, 2002). I followed the steps form Hatch typological analysis (see Appendix F) once the lesson plans were forwarded to me electronically; I printed each one of them and proceeded to read them one at a time to familiarize myself with the lesson plans. The predetermined typologies helped guide me. The second time I reread the lesson plans, I annotated, underlined, highlighted and marked all relevant information helped me divide the overall data set into categories based on the typologies that matched the ones I had found during my interview data analysis. For example, in the initial interview, there was already a mention of instructional time, student accommodations and testing and these same categories appeared in the lesson plan. In order to form the categories, I gathered all the similar codes together into categories, or family of codes, and then place them in separate categories. The categories were joined into the broad concepts that brought all these lesson plan data together. The question I asked myself while analyzing the data was: What were the key ideas being expressed within the categories, counting the amount of time a code comes out and connecting cause and effect relationships that allowed me to create a sequence? The answers brought all the collected data together and aligned with the research questions.

Follow-up Interview

The follow up interview was based on the findings from the first interview. I met all of my participants at a public place to ensure my participants were comfortable. Before I asked the pre-selected follow-up questions (see Appendix D), I shared my findings with the participants so that they could verify their interview to ensure the credibility and validity of my findings. This process is called member checking (Stake, 1995). These interviews were recorded and sent to be

professionally transcribed by Rev.com. After receiving the transcripts from Rev.com, I listened to the recording for accuracy to make sure that all information was transcribed verbatim. Then I deleted and formatted the tape. I used the same process of reading and re-reading and analyzing the document as I did with the first interviews

Prior to conducting the second interview, one participant withdrew. Reading and writing codes on the margins, applied and reapplied the codifying process that permits data to be, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation (Saldaña, 2008) making sure that all the information aligned with the research question. These data revealed an additional ten new codes. I continued with the reading and the underlining process while trying to merge similar codes. They were reduced to four (4) codes. In total, 18 codes emerged from these data. AS = Assessment; IT = Instructional Time; SM= Student Motivation; SLG = Student Learning Growth; TE = Teacher Evaluation; TSV = Test Score Values; TTT = Teaching to Test; TEX = Teacher Experience; OP = Online Platforms; SR = Student Reward; TR = Teacher Readiness; A= Accommodations; AS= Assessment; UD = Uses of Data; CTI = Computerized Testing Imperfections; BOS = Benefits of the Scores; Tec = Technology; and I = Intervention.

These codes were grouped by gathering all the similar codes together into categories, or family of codes, and then placed in singles categories to generate six new categories that were analyzed and then combined into two new themes, which were student promoting, and school performance all of which were focused and centered on to be aligned with the research question (see Appendix H for a list of codes and themes).

Summary of the Findings

I looked across the interviews for similarities based on data from the interviews looking for relationships, and I further narrowed the codes and themes they revealed that all participants understood the interview questions. They expressed their views during the initial and follow-up interviews. Six themes supported by 18 codes were discovered from the interviews and artifacts; these themes are accountability, student learning, testing overload, teacher preparedness, school performances, and student promotion. Although the participants discussed each category emphatically, they all suggested that too much is asked of teachers. They discussed the need for students to be accountable for own learning, rather than having teachers be held accountable for every aspect of their students' academics.

Participants discussed the integrity of the standardized test and the platform used to deliver the test. They also shared that the private company responsible for creating the test is detached from the reality of education because the test is not preparing the students for success but creating a negative atmosphere when it comes to testing; the vendor does not include the low social economic and second language learner in the process of generating the test questions.

Presentation of Data Results

My data were collected and analyzed from the initial and follow-up interviews using the inductive analysis steps (see Appendix E), and artifacts (lesson plans) analyzed and collected by utilizing the typological analysis steps (see Appendix F). Both analyses originated from Hatch, 2002. The data and results of my study are presented (see Appendix F). Each theme is explained and shown in support of the research question, "What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?" Six themes emerged: (1) accountability, (2) student learning, (3) testing overload, (4)

teacher preparation, (5) school performance, and (6) student promotion. These findings are presented in detail below.

Accountability

During their interviews, the 11 teachers communicated the importance of accountability. During the data analysis, five (5) codes emerged: AS (Assessment), TE (Teacher Experience), IT (Instructional Time), I (Intervention) and SLG (Student Learning Growth). In her interview, Denise stated:

> Students, not parents, in many cases, in some vocations, are not held responsible; the teacher is held responsible, and then, of course, the supervising principal, and then, of course, the supervising district. Everyone is held accountable except those that probably are.

Maggie expressed it this way, "Teachers accountability for test success is high, and the expectations are high, we just have to do our best." In addition, Clair shared:

> The students understand that there is no accountability for them. All they do is take the test. It is not attached for high school, their final grade of the class, so, it is almost like I can do whatever I want to in the class, I am just taking this test, and there is no accountability". She also added that "They do not understand the importance that it is tied to a teacher, amount of evaluation they can have the teacher could go from having two evaluations to four evaluations, … when students do not have the accountability to tie it back to them, they do not see the importance.

They expressed that the idea of holding teachers, school and districts responsible for students' results causes them to consider alternate careers. The demand for teachers to have their students

excel on standardized tests continues to grow, and expectations continue to climb while the gap of students is not meeting the mark increases**.**

Code AS: Assessment. The data collected revealed that all participants agreed that assessment is necessary to evaluate the progress that students are making in the class. During my initial interview with Kenny, Kenny stated that:

> Common Formative Assessments or CFAs occur on a three-week basis. So, what we do, is we set up so many questions on an exam, we design our cut scores and then from that, we can tell if a student is proficient when we grade the assessment, and inform them of whether they are proficient, or not proficient.

Sondra recalled:

> I would go back again to the two different kinds of testing. The state-mandated testing that was given in the spring was not as valuable as the web testing. There was another formative assessment test that we also used that drilled down more to the student-specific strengths and weaknesses, but the state-mandated test gave a broader overall description of their achievements. So, it was not as useful for instructional purposes.

Rudy expressed it in this way:

> We need more skill-based things to prepare our students. Because our students are not going to college, they are going to trade schools. So, I think it is better if we can partner with some local university trade schools and prepared our students while they are in the high school setting so that they can leave high school with a certification.

Assessment is an integral part of every school settings, and it is the essential factor that determines students learning progress.

Code TEX: Teacher Experience. Experience is significant in any profession. When it comes to teachers, any experience added to their education is a dynamic combination. The group of teachers who participated in this research study was well-prepared and completed graduate studies. The average experience range for this group was sixteen years. Denise as 40 years veteran teacher who taught all aspects of science is has her master's degree and was teaching chemistry. Sondra was a retired teacher with 38 years of experience teaching, and her last assignment was the instructional facilitator for her school. She received a master's degree. Maggie taught 26 years and received a doctorate and teaches AP and honors English. Clair entered her fourteenth year of teaching, taught geometry, and held an E.Ds. degree. Olivia taught students in ELA for the 13 years and earned her master's degree. Pam, as a special education teacher who has her master's degree, provided support to the ELA teachers for 11 years.

Elvin has eight years of teaching physical education he holds a master's degree. Vanessa holds her master's degree and comes from the private sector teaching criminal justice for the past seven years. Kenny was an aspiring principal that was teaching ELA on his seventh year, holding an E.Ds. degree. Rudy earned her doctorate with six years of teaching early childhood education. With only three years of experience, Jaleesa holds a master's degree and taught social studies (see Appendix I). They wanted their students to think on a higher level while utilizing their time, energy, and expertise to meet their student's needs.

Code IT: Instructional Time. During the interviews, all participants mentioned the amount of time devoted to instructional time, and all the additional work they must do to meet state mandates. During her interview Rudy explained:

> A regular block for daily instruction is 90 minutes, and teachers are encouraged to teach from bell to bell, starting with an assignment on the board and presented to students when they arrive in the classrooms so they can work on it. Also, we call it bell work. So, then the last few minutes of class is utilized to review what was taught during the day, during each lesson […] We have ninety-minute courses, at my school. So, students receive ninety minutes of instructional time each day. We have 180 days per year, and you can do the math, ninety minutes' times one eighty per subject, depending on how many subjects, they are testing, do the math.

The retired teacher Sondra, she explained: "Okay I would have said twenty-five percent of the time we spend teaching to the test and the other seventy-five percent strictly on curricular demands." In addition, Maggie described:

> It is an all year long process […] Teachers are not allowed to know the exact content of the tests. We have to try to guess based on the state standards. So, once a week we meet together in PLCs which are also called professional learning communities. This is the name of the group is, but it is teachers on the same grade level teaching the same subject. So, we talk about what standards need to be taught in which sequence. Also, then together, we together what sort of instructional strategies will be utilized and reviewed that week.

The teachers were not opposed to the instructional time; they understood it was a necessity. However, they expressed the need for this time to be used differently with their students' well-being in mind.

Code I: Intervention. Participants agreed on the need to have effective intervention programs or clear guidelines steps to help their students improve in an area of need. Sondra

explained: “There was also a state web program for testing, which was used to benchmark the children in math and reading, and the web program results were used to determine which students needed additional support and interventions.” Also, Pam indicated that, "Intervention is in place for the support of the need of the students." In addition, Maggie expressed,

> All of the intervention time is devoted to preparing students for the test. Also, we have a unique system where we can assign students who seem to be lagging in developing specific skills to the intervention time each day. Also, whoever assigned the student first gets the student. […] Intervention time is a time where you reinforce or introduce new material to students. So, you either strengthen the skills that students need to be learning, or you can add new topics to the students. This has to occur in smaller settings, the entire school which is also a state-mandated program. Well, we do a lot of formative assessments, and then we do summative assessments in ... I mean, yeah, compare the results the summative and the informative. Moreover, students who are not performing well on summative or formative assessments are assigned to that particular intervention time. We do have an intervention teacher who works with the lowest performing students, but those students are not in regular classrooms. So, all of the other students are taught by their teachers during the intervention time.

Jaleesa also added:

> Every year, at the end of the year, they take the data, and they put it on an Excel sheet, and were able to see what they call bubble kids. So, these bubble kids are those that they might have scored like a two, but they were a two that was close to scoring a three. So, we can look at that and see, OK, in the upcoming year, these are the students that we will need to target to give them that push to get to a three. We want threes and fours; those

> are the top-notch scores. Also, they will show us the bubble kids data for ones, twos, threes, and fours. So, we can see, okay, either this kid was very close to being a three, or this kid was a two, very close to being a one, so we need to keep an eye on them- maybe fill out an EIP checklist for them.

Through my research I revealed all participants supported the early identification and support of students learning and behaviors needs, they concurred this process starts with a high level of quality instruction and an intense screening for all students in general, followed by explicit instruction.

Code SLG: Student Learning Growth. Participants agreed that to demonstrate students' growth; there must be a useful and valid method of assessing students' individual growth when it comes to their academic progress. Elvin described it:

> I think if you are looking at growth, then it is the student who needs to comprehend, understand, and make sound judgment in those areas. However, I do not think the test to me shows growth 100% of the time. I do not believe it is accurate for one test to show growth on a student throughout a year. So, growth in all students or just people are going to be different regardless of the individual. Kind of like you said, if you have a student that was reading, he is in the sixth grade, he is reading on a fourth-grade reading level, and he goes up maybe to a fifth-grade reading level, or he is making small strides. Of course, he is not on grade level, but as long as he is making progress, I think we should celebrate that and build on that. To continue to keep pushing for higher levels of thinking and learning.

He went on to say,

> I would tell my students, as a P.E. teacher, my goal is for you to be able to run a mile under ten minutes, do "X" amount of sit-ups or pushups. However, if I can get them to understand, one of my key goals is 'remember toughness.' If I can get them to understand that you can do anything in life if you put your effort into it and you have a great mindset, to me they are learning. Everybody is not going to run fast, everybody is not going to do pushups, everybody is not going to do sit-ups, but if he or she can at least say, 'hey, I gave it my all, I know that I put my effort into it, and I am exhausted, but I tried my best.' That is my goal for them.

Rudy pointed out that:

> Student-centered activities instead of the teacher lecturing for the full ninety minutes, or fifty minutes, whatever that class period may be. I think that just a short period should be spent talking, and then the remainder of the time should be student-centered with the students working together with peers and doing student-centered activities. That gives the students a sense of ownership, and they feel like it is their class. They feel like the teacher wants to teach them versus standing up over the students, walking around, just lecturing all day. That bores the students, and it turns them off. Because everyone's is not college-bound. Being able to read and write, yes you need that. However, you also need to be able to take raw material and be able to produce. We need more skill-based things to prepare our students. I am a more of a hand- on teacher, more practical teacher, preparing the students for practical, lifelong learning. Also, taking my students to the workplace and taking them to see what is going on in the field that occurs outside of school, so that is very important to me. So that is a field trip or outside learning experience. So, that is very important, and I take my students to leadership training.

Olivia explained:

> What are the students struggling with and what needs to be retaught? However, again, as you are reteaching, you are introducing new content, so it is never, let us stop and reteach and see if they grasped it. Instead, the mindset should be, let us continue, reteach, and then test everything together.

In addition, Denise mentioned, “Well, in most professions, there is a test that is involved, and they must be able to get passed those tests." Clair further elaborated,

> So just being able to read if it is nothing more than nutritional labels on the back, understanding that if it says that a bag of chips holds 150 calories per serving, what does that mean? When you are talking about the sugar, what does it mean per serving? So just little bitty things like that that will enhance what you are doing with the conceptual side of mathematics. What is the application? How do I apply this to my everyday life? How can I transition? Figuring out a way to do both, which will bring back rigor into the classroom.

Student Learning

Students attend school to learn, and educators must ensure all their students learn. This theme is supported by these following codes: A (Accommodations), TEC (Technology), and SR (Student Reward).

Code A: Accommodations. All participants concur the importance of accommodating students. Denise elaborated:

> It is left up to the individual teacher. Some things are utilized such as, when you get the IEP, it will give you some idea as to how they best learn, whether it is visual, whether it is auditory, whether they need one-on-one, peer tutoring. Whatever, and from that point,

> you implement into our lesson plans as much as things that will reach each child, whether it's auditory, whether it's visual, you make sure that you have some group time so that they can get one-on-one or they can interact with other students, and that way, you meet ninety-some percent of the accommodations and prepare them for the test.

Pam explained that:

> With state testing, students with disabilities, there are not a whole host of guidelines that they follow, except for the main one is that they have to be accommodated, and their accommodations have to mirror what's on their IEP for testing, they'll be in a small group, they'll receive read-aloud assistance if they need that, they'll receive prompting if they need that or, it just depends on their disability. Those are the guidelines that they will receive as far as accommodations. However, anything else, they will receive it as the regular students" as accommodations.

Olivia explained:

> Well, students with disabilities or English Language Learners, the one which English is not their first language, are both accommodated. They test in a different environment, and they are given more time. For example, the ELL students get double time and the ESE, the exceptional education students, get triple time. Sometimes, there is a specific accommodation where the teacher has to read the test, the teacher has to learn the questions, so it is different ... According to the IEP, Individualized Education Plan, of that student with the disability, those accommodations have to be met.

In addition, Vanessa explained, "It also depends on what their disability is because they can also get a read aloud. So, they will have a teacher that will be reading it to them, and then, of course, they have to mark their answers." Furthermore, these plans must include all modifications or

accommodations that the students need. All students who are identified under the special education department have either an IEP or a 504; they are in place to provide supports and remove obstacles for students with a disability, to ensure equal access to a general education curriculum.

Code TEC: Technology. All participants understood the need to include technology in their classroom as a part of the instructional routine. Jaleesa stated, "Everything is taking a shift into being technology integrated. So, whether it is reading or math just as long as you can incorporate technology and not so that them just on the computer typing, but they are using the tool to further their learning." Vanessa said, "I use Google Classroom a lot, and I share that stuff with the English teachers, their writing." Elvin mentioned "the use of computer-based testing." Maggie also mentioned that in her school something that worked well: "What we do is we administer formative assessments throughout the year using three different online platforms." When the integration of technology is used in their subject area effectively, now the teacher's role becomes one as an advisor, experts, and coaches, technology makes teaching and learning meaningful, enjoyable, and fun.

Code SR: Students Reward. Participants in this study believed in celebrating students' accomplishments. Students strived or worked harder when they are praised; it creates a fun, competitive atmosphere. Olivia said she rewarded the effort of the students demonstrating growth and explained it this way; "For example, there was one year what I did was, if the kid had a 30% and was doing horrible, and the kid, let us say even moved to 32%, that small little increase, I rewarded it." Maggie said, "Well when we do the ones during the year, I try to attach a grade to it. Alternatively, at the end of the year, I allow the students to have a small party in the classroom, you know, for all their hard work." Jaleesa expressed, "We tell them if they do

their best, they can go to the Milestones party at the end of the school year." The belief for the participants is that when a teacher rewarded small steps, it moved and encouraged bigger things, so teachers celebrate tests, projects, and activities. It also helped improve the morale and motivation; students like to see their accomplishments praised, and it allows students to try harder to reach their academic potential.

Testing Overload

Students have to be tested in order for their teachers to gauge learning progress and review necessary concepts the following codes emerges TTT (Teaching to Test), OP (Online Platform), TR (Teacher Readiness), CTI (Computerized Testing Imperfections)

Code TTT: Teaching to Test. Participants mentioned the fact that students are spending much time testing several times a year in preparation for state-mandated tests. Olivia noted:

> Well, this over-testing and this over-preparation of students does not prepare them for life because life is not just, 'Let me go and take a test.' Life is work. Just because they are always preparing to take a test, they are still trying to dissect how the question is formed, there are so many missed opportunities to teach students skills that they need, like social skills, math skills, mental math skills, because it is all about doing something a particular way to get tested, to then pass.

Maggie stated:

> But now, because of the standardized testing, all we do is focus on our small level. Moreover, so from August to April, we teach. So, the entire month of April we test. Then in May, the students are not in the mood to try to learn anything else because they have been faced with the test all year, and they know the test is like, supposed to be the

> climax in the school year. […] They are mentally exhausted, and they do not care anymore.

Jaleesa expressed:

> They have the curriculum map that they build, and then we have pre- and post-tests that we have to give them for each unit. However, I will say that those pre- and post-tests that they give us are 100 percent not aligned with the state test. They are way easier than that standardized test, so we run into the problem where the students are doing amazing on this pre and post-tests, and when they get to their standardized test, they bomb it.

Sondra expressed: "We would make sure that we carved out time to teach those concepts." Rudy also mentioned that:

> Yes, teachers are teaching to the test. That is all we have time for. Because there's so much that has been put on the teachers, for the students to pass the test. Because now they are saying that if the students do not progress well and their results are not strong enough then that is on the teachers' evaluation scores.

Elvin said:

> It seems as if ... I would say yes, to my knowledge, I think the teachers are teaching to that test. Moreover, I think that in itself may be a complication because I do not think you can necessarily ... I do not think the test all the way shows the growth that a student has just based off of that one test.

The participants also agreed schools are under enormous pressure from district and state to improve test scores because schools have updated curriculum with an emphasis to prepare each student for standardized tests, rather than preparing students with valuable skills to enable them to grow and become responsible citizens.

Code OP: Online Platform. All participants engaged their students on a variety of learning platform that integrated interactive online services. Maggie mentioned, "just like the online platforms; we used three different ones this year, so the students had to take six different tests, two for each platform." Vanessa described: "Google Classroom and I share that stuff with the English teachers, their writing. They had to read a book, a whole book, and had to do a book report on it and daily writings from the book that they were reading." In addition, Olivia talked about another aspect of technology use,

> I use YouTube to show videos to increase background knowledge. I also use Flocabulary which introduces concepts and new vocabulary to students in a music platform. I take my students on virtual field trips like for example the online component of a zoo website has virtual exhibits and students increase their knowledge.

Participants confirmed online platforms were helping resources for teachers to enrich their lesson plans. The participants shared the technology they used in their classroom to enhance students' learning experiences included PowerPoint presentations, video lectures, screencast videos, documents, and audio files.

Code TR: Teacher Readiness. Participants stated that the teachers must always be prepared with planned activities that specifically support and challenge each student. Elvin noted:

> I think the quality goes for the test. I think that the teachers start over the summer, and they start looking at what standards they want to test, and they start making really quality instruction, lesson plans, with the end goal in mind. […] So, I think most teachers, good teachers, will spend the summer and the whole year preparing, or looking at assessments

> or looking at work that will help the students be prepared for that. So, I would say, 95% of the summer and year is with that in mind to be prepared.

Jaleesa said,

> So, I tried to build that foundation with these kids, teaching them about when they are doing multiple-choice questions to analyze every choice- A, B, C, D, E- and not just go with the first one. Also, using that mark-out tool to mark out those answers that seem extraneous or just kind of out of place. So, we teach those strategies on our own, but there's no course or anything that the students can take to build those skills.

Clair explained:

> And it takes, and anybody who has taught a state test in the class knows, it takes two or three years to get your craft in that. Moreover, once you get it, you are ready to roll and go, but when you take them out, and you change every two to three years, how can you have one say. Hey, you know what, I got strong algebra I teachers, I got strong geometry teachers, and yeah, I have the process, but when you are changing people every two to three years, it makes it that much difficult.

Olivia explained it this way:

> You have compared and contrast. In math, you could have multiple four-digit numbers, so each of these standards, we have a certain amount of time that we have to teach that standard. Then the students are given a little bit of an assessment which mirrors the standardized testing, and then we have to keep on moving.

Participants also expressed their administrators adjusted the daily activity to incorporate extended time for test intervention tutoring service, for the benefit of increasing students' performance on the standardized tests.

Code CTI: Computerized Testing Imperfections. Computerized testing is useful when it works, but computerized testing can create chaos when it does not work. As Clair stated:

> So, you can have a standard, and the state has rolled out what they call a simple question. However, when you look at other examples of it on the actual exam, it looks nothing like the standard. It is interpreted very broadly. Moreover, there's a limit to show just how in-depth that standard actually is, so as a classroom teacher, I'm interpreting it one way, my PLC is interpreting it another way, but when we look at the sample questions of the state, we're either too far, haven't gone far enough, so there are not many resources to say, 'This is what this standard looks like,' so that's the not-alignment that we see, because we can't, we don't have enough resources.

She continued to say:

> Mainly when you have an outside test vendor that's making the test, that has no correlation with the state, as far as let's work hand-in-hand with the item analysis that you're releasing to ensure that what we're developing as test questions go hand-in-hand, it draws confusion because the state is releasing the sample questions, however, a third party is creating the examination.

Sondra described:

> Nevertheless, I do not believe, at least for the last two years, I do not think that has been done in the district, at least, because either the test results were not received by the district in time to do that, or because there was such difficulty with the online testing that they did not feel that the validity [...] They did not trust the validity of the testing, and so did not count it as a part of student grades.

Rudy expressed it this way:

> The measurements that are provided by those that create the standardized tests it is a measurement, but it does not always lend us information as to what the students know. Also, the reason why I say it does not always give us accuracy in what the students know because there's always those keywords or those terms that might throw the students off.

Participants noticed teachers become frustrated and depressed when what is practiced does not appear on the test and connectivity malfunction alters their hard work.

Teachers Preparation

Participants agreed that preparing for the day to day of teaching and learning is the most challenging time. The following codes will explain this theme: SM (Student Motivation), IT (Instructional Time), OP (Online Platforms) and T (Technology).

Code SM: Student Motivation. The participants mentioned motivating students is a difficult task. The participants stated it was particularly difficult to motivate students from disadvantaged backgrounds; nevertheless, the rewards were more than worth it. Vanessa expressed:

> One of the things that I would do concerning motivation; I would like to give numbers regarding letting students know the benefits of doing their very best on the standardized test because it can affect where they are placed at regarding grade level. They can take AP (Advance Placement) classes if they do their very best, take it seriously. They will be able to take the AP classes, some honors classes. It will open up doors for scholarships and things like that for them. Other fun things that I would do would be to have a semi little party after the test. That would be like I had popcorn this last time.

Pam shared:

> Ways in which we have tried to motivate students is to, for every little success to praise them by giving them some incentive. To give them some kind encouragement so that they can see the end goal or to try to spend extra time with them after school. If they need help or try to bring in things that they like or try to meet them on their level or try to make it relatable in the things that we do to try to motivate them.

Clair stated:

> So, that is kind of how I relate it, and I stay motivated. The days that I want to come in and I want to give up; I figure out a way for us to relate what we are learning to their everyday life. For example, I will have a lesson on transformation, it is tough for kids to understand transformation, but when I relate it to taking a selfie, many times it gets their engagement. So, finding something that you are teaching and relate it to their actual life, that they can go back and say, 'You know, I did not know this.'

Code IT: Instructional Time. Participants agree that the teacher must be an effective communicator, to utilize their instructional time to engage students in the learning process. Pam stated:

> Now, the amount of time that we spend teaching those standards, I mean that is every day, all day, five days a week, whenever we in school. I would say the majority of what we teach is what the students need, or what they will be tested on, or what they will need to be successful on whatever standardized test they are taking.

Kenny expressed it this way:

> I spend the entire school year teaching specialized concepts. I start it from day one of the school years. So, for me, it goes for almost 180 days. Even after the test is completed,

> we are still talking about standardized testing for them, because moving forward, nine times out of 10, with my ninth and my tenth graders, they are going to move the next school year into another tested subject. Also, for me, all year long. Class work, exams. It is a continuous cycle for them.

Clair mentioned, "I am going to say anywhere from about 80 to 85% of the time is spent on standardized testing concepts." Furthermore, Denise expressed:

> Technically, about 90%. In our district, the first three nine weeks are spent teaching the concepts, teaching the content area, teaching those that are relevant for the test. Then, in the fourth nine weeks, you go back, and you review until the test, and after the test.

Participants understood the importance of utilizing instructional times. Several of them incorporated gaming into their lessons to keep all students engaged in the teaching and to break the routine.

Code OP: Online Platforms. The positive impact of online platforms in our education system has enabled teachers, students and parents to solidify communications and to keep abreast of students' progress. Denise mentioned she "has a laptop cart in her room for her students they log in and complete the videos related to the lessons." Kenny mentioned he "created a virtual classroom where his students can access homework and ask questions." While Maggie assigned "reading assignment via her school porta." Participants viewed the online platforms as instrumental tools to elevate the level of communication between parents, students, and teachers.

Code T: Technology. All participants said technology had revolutionized education, the ability to go online and search, collaborate, and post information about your subject and gain access to millions of interactive activities, has changed the way teaching is done. Sondra viewed "technology as a helper because of the use of a computer test, they were able to benchmark the

students in math and reading, and the results determine which students needed additional support and intervention." Jaleesa mentioned, "Whether is reading or math just as long as you can kind of incorporate technology and not so, that they are using a computer typing, but they are using tools to further their learning." In their interviews, Denise and Clair both said technology has its advantages and disadvantages when it works great but when it does not is awful as with the past three years of testing in her district. Participants agreed all schools were equipped with technology resources to help teachers; from laptops to iPads, web pages, smart board, projectors, printers, and scanners to name a few. Also, everyone had a smartphone at his or her disposal to facilitate better practical teaching and learning environment.

School Performance

The data revealed that a school's performance is at a level when students and teachers have attained their short or long-term educational goals. The following codes explain this theme: code UD (Uses of Data), TE (Teacher Evaluation), TSV (Test Code Value) and BOS (Benefits of the Score).

Code UD: Uses of Data. Clair stated:

> The main way my school district uses test data is in evaluations, what you could teach the next school year. If you have great numbers in one subject area, principals may say, 'Hey, you could have great numbers in multiple subject areas.' So, a lot of this is tied into how well you can do with what you teach the next year, number evaluations, or your pay increase.

Jaleesa said:

> We want threes and fours; those are the top-notch scores. So, they will show us the 'bubble kids 'data for ones, twos, threes, and fours. So, we can see, okay, either this kid

was very close to being a three, or this kid was a one, very close to being a two, so we need to keep an eye on them- fill out an IEP checklist for them, something like that.

Also, Rudy mentioned concerning what courses need to be offered:

> We need to make our classes smaller. If we need to hire more teachers, to teach this particular subject because having twenty-four students in this math class, the students are not getting it. So maybe we need to add a tutor to come in on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Code TE: Teacher Evaluation. All participants agreed teacher evaluations were necessary and extremely important, but there must be a better way of assessing teachers' value. Maggie shared:

> Because federal funding is tied to the evaluation system, which requires...Also, the federal funding requires that standardized test scores be used in the evaluation measure. […]at my school the test scores count a great deal in our teacher evaluation and many teachers who have been level 4 or 5 on a 5-point score system, with five being the highest. When the previous year when those test scores did not count and the students made low scores, a lot of the teachers were moved from a 4 or a 5 to a 1 or a 2, meaning that they had to have learning coaches and double the number of evaluations, and different kinds of interventions.

Denise mentioned, "…You could be removed, or you could lower your scores, which is the way they evaluate teachers as far as whether they should be hired or fired or even whether they should receive any merit pay or raised." Rudy expressed, "Because now they are saying that if the students do not progress well and their results are not strong enough then that is on the teachers' evaluation scores." Participants disagreed with the current system about how teachers

were graded, evaluated, promoted, and retentions based on the way their school performed on the standardized test.

Code TSV: Test Score Value. Participants expressed their administrators and school officials expected all core courses to exceed the goal level for their department. Clair stated:

> So, I think tying a student achievement to a teacher's pay raise could be a good thing, but it also could be a fall back, because, on the day of the test, you have to look at, and say, 'well, hey, the news has reported it is not going to count.

Maggie also added, "That is what we all expect. The test scores only counted for the students if it benefited their average. However, if it had a harmful effect on their average, then we had to delete their test score." Denise also added, "If you do not show enough growth or advancement, then you are not going to have your place of employment, it is not going to stay with you." Participants said for the past three years the tests were not counted for the students, but test results continued to affect their pay increase, evaluation, and retention at their school or district.

Code BOS: Benefits of the Score. Participants stated great things could be accomplished when the schools have a good score; however, they should not penalize their teachers for poor ones. Maggie mentioned,

> The students did not try very well the previous year. So then last year when the scores counted, the students made an effort and, of course, we showed tremendous gains. So, we are one of the top-ranked schools in the state.

Denise explained:

> This district wants to make sure that they are going to be seen in a very favorable light, and the state wants to make sure that they are seen in a positive light because of the money that's being spent.

In addition, Kenny stated:

> It determines our funds. That is the number one thing. If our kids perform, we get more money, and that is just the hands down the bottom line. The money comes through. They decide to put more money, more programming, into our buildings and support students who are doing well.

Student Promotion

Participants indicated that promoting students is a priority for all school, the methods some school used to get there can be questionable. To detail this theme, two codes emerged: TSV (Test Score Value) and UD (Uses of Data)

Code TSV: Test Score Value. Participants expressed administrators and school officials placed an excessive pact on the grading system so that all schools achieve from the test itself. Denise stated:

> The district, everyone has a certain standard that he or she has to meet, or you could call it, 'graded,' okay, and each district in each state is going to try to make sure that they can show where they are advancing educationally. So, they do whatever they can to ensure that the proper things are taught so that the testing will reflect advancement.

Kenny explained:

> Then on the opposite hand when our students do not do well; we see things like this happening, low state rating levels. We talk about that level one school, level two school, level three, level four, level five being the highest school. So, when you start talking about things like that, you start talking about teacher stability. Are we able to have a job? Are we able to keep our jobs? Do parents want their students to come to our schools? Do

we attract the best schools, you know the best students in our school because of these ratings?

Jaleesa explained:

So, say they have passed reading and math through the whole school year, but then they fail the state test, they are not necessarily going to keep them in the grade another year. There's a lot of different factors that would have to go into it, so a lot of the times in their permanent records, it will just show as being placed, which means technically they do fail the grade, but they are not going to keep them back a year. […] They changed it a little, and it was a little more difficult, so there were about eight or nine schools in the county, whose scores dropped from last year to this year.

Code UD: Uses of Data. Participants exposed the discrepancies that occurred with the way school officials used their data. Denise explained:

This is school, this is for individuals, this is for districts, this is for all. 4 and 5 is the upper number, you want to be in the upper number. Teachers, they are looking for teachers that have 4's and 5's on their scores, and 4's and 5's when it comes to that component of the score where the testing is concerned. If your scores are low, you are going to have a difficult time finding employment or seeking employment.

Kenny explained:

This year, what was supposed to happen with the test at the end of this year, they had a new policy in place where if you were school A for example, and if you were under the state target and you didn't meet this role, then your principals had to come up with new school improvement plans that were either A self-guided, or B, they turned around and the state had to come in and watch you guide this school improvement plan. So, you got

> all these different tracks where whether your local education agency is paying attention, the state department is paying attention, or you get to hold onto it by yourself, and you handle your situation on your own.

Vanessa said:

> The way that I think policymakers use standardized tests is to show which schools they feel that are performing at the highest level, mid-level, and the lowest level. So, it is more of a ranking system, and I think those schools that prove that I can't say that they prove it, but they feel that they've fared well with standardized tests, they get more attention, more money poured into them, and the other schools get, you know, left by the wayside.

Artifacts (Lesson Plans)

Artifacts are the collections of unobtrusive data in much qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). All teachers understand and agree on the purpose of the lesson that it is the framework used to bring the students into an adventure or journey, is the guide and roadmap that will deliver the lesson. The following codes emerged for analyzing the teacher's artifacts (lesson plans). IT (Instructional Time); A (Accommodation); AS (Assessments); and TEC (Technology).

Code IT: Instructional Time. All teachers mentioned they must allocate their instructional time wisely by maximizing each minute they have with the students; this included adjusting teaching interruption that can affect the progress of the learning. Elvin explained it this way:

> So, including minutes devoted to regular teaching, generally in my class as a physical education teacher, I spend in between 20 to 15 minutes explaining what we are doing that day, demonstrating what I want from my students, what my expectations, what the

objections are. Also, then I usually give them in between 15 to 10 minutes to complete the activity, or what it is that they are doing, now that varies on various days. Some days I will have a shorter explanation or explanation of what I am doing, and then sometimes they will have in between 25 to 30 minutes to complete the assessment, to work on themselves. The model that we usually do is I do; We do, You do. So that normally takes in between for a complete class it usually is 40 to 45 minutes. I would like to spend more time with the students with the what they do. That way they get a chance to model and do what the activity is so that they understand and comprehend the skills that are needed.

Olivia explained that:

> This should not be what someone said about the lesson plan but what is in there. Every day, the standard is displayed, followed by the teaching point, then what she will do and what the student will do. Materials are also presented. Well, my instructional block, I teach reading, so the instructional block is usually 90 minutes. We start by reading a story from a book or an expert in the book, and I am actively teaching that standard. So, telling the students this is how you find the main idea. This is how you locate details that are the first 20 minutes of the class, then she breaks into three small groups for 20 (60) minutes or so, and the last 10 minutes is for closure.

Vanessa mentioned that:

> Generally, about 55 minutes long. The first five minutes was always bell work. After the bell works, there are about 3-5 minutes to cover the bell work, which typically included pair graph annotating, finding the errors. Afterward, then there would be the instructional time, so we would do our reading, go over vocabulary words and that would take about

10-15 minutes the ladder, the last about 20-25 minutes or so, would be devoted to students reading a passage of some sort on their own and then there would be a quiz to follow.

Code A: Accommodation. All teachers mentioned that in their lesson plan they must provide ways they are taking to include accommodation and modification for students that have an IEP, or a 504. Some of the things teachers mentioned were peer to peer, group, independent and collaborative; they also give the students less work as explained by Elvin:

> If I have students that don't read good, I may read the questions to them. So just going in and knowing your students individually in what they need to be successful, I think helps me make reasonable accommodations for all students.

For Maggie, accommodations took a personal note and she encouraged parents to get involved in helping their kids. She shared her son went from an IEP to a 504 because of her involvement with his educational endeavors she explains it this way:

> My son has a 504 because he has a visual processing disorder, and as a result of that disorder, even in the early years of school, he struggled after ... in first grade. In kindergarten, everything was oral, so he did very well in kindergarten. However, suddenly in first grade, he was struggling. He was having a hard time writing. He slipped many of his letters, and he also had a hard time with math because he flipped many his numbers. Also, I noticed he was taking a long time to learn to tie his shoes. He could not untangle knots. Things like that. Moreover, so eventually, through some testing at the Optometry, we realized that he was taking in the information correctly. However, when he tried to process it, something in his mind flipped, and he had to learn how to see things correctly. However, because of that, his eyes would jump around the

> page, and he was a slow reader. He was an excellent reader; he was a powerful reader. He needed a 33 in reading on the ACT, but he had to have some modifications made for all of the state testing's is because he could not move from the test booklet and the answer sheet and bubble the correct answer. He might identify the correct answer in the test booklet, but when he started looking at the bubbles, he could not track which number he was on. So, after he was tested, and we determined that he, at first, had an IEP and later it became a 504 when the law changed. Moreover, so, he was given extra time on all of the state testing, and for a little while, he had a person known as a scribe. He would circle the answers in the text booklet, and the scribe would bubble in the answers on the answer sheet for him. Moreover, as he has gotten older and he has taken the ACT because he had that 504 programs, he applied for extended time on the ACT, and he received it. Also, now he is taking advanced placement courses, and he is taking three advanced placement exams, and on two of them, he got extended time on the exam because he had had only a little time on the other state testing.

Code AS: Assessments. All teachers agreed the assessment was an integral part of their teaching and learning where they are permitted to set their objective and learning targets. In addition, they agreed that the importance of assessing students daily and weekly provided positive or negative feedback for students, parents, and administrations. Clair explained:

> That she likes to make students take ownership of their learning, I start off the school year by allowing students to pick their groups. The reason being, I feel that high school students are more likely to work for you if they have a say so in the group that they are in. However, there are limitations that if I see that the group that you chose is not being effective, we're not getting the grades that we need, we're not working with one another

> to ensure everybody grows, then we will have a reevaluation every three to four weeks so that we can make sure that we stay on task. However, I do not ability group, or grade level group, just because I feel that if they work ... sometimes you work better with people that you know, and if you work better with people that you know, you have a reputation to say, 'Hey, I am struggling.' You feel comfortable with saying, 'Hey I am struggling with this. Can you help me?' Versus being in a group with someone who may be more academically advanced, and you feel uncomfortable in asking a question, I need some help.

Elvin expressed it this way:

> When students can see how they can relate that information or how they can use that information, how it relates to their real world and what they have to deal with, I think it sinks in, and it makes it a little more personable. So, I believe that whatever it is that the content is, you have to make it relatable to the students, regardless if it is math, English, science, history.

Code TEC: Technology. Teachers concurred technology was a huge part of their teaching and learning practice in their classroom. The implementation of games, PowerPoint, and different avenues they used to reinforce and challenge students was incredible. Technology has an of providing several learning models the teachers personalized. Teachers also understood every student learns differently, and technology allowed teachers to accommodate unique learning styles on a case-by-case basis. As Jaleesa said:

> It has a robust integrated, robust technology. Just the way the world is going now those technical skills is what the kids need. Everything is taking a shift into technology integrated. So, whether it be reading or math just as long as you can incorporate

technology and not so that them just on the computer typing, but they are using the tool to further their learning.

Other teachers such as Vanessa utilized Google classroom to share ELA things her students did with the English department, while Olivia used YouTube videos to introduce her lesson and get her students to familiarize with the lesson. Pam also utilized YouTube rap music to relate the lessons to her students, and Rudy used Kahoot or Jeopardy games to prepare student for quizzes or test.

Interview and Artifacts Entries Findings

After viewing both interviews and artifacts data through the inductive analysis process as described by Hatch (2002), four (4) codes emerged in both interviews and artifacts. The codes included the artifact aligning with the finding in the interviews which allowed participants to describe that lesson plans are a detail instructions for their subject area; learning trajectory that are used by teachers as the guide to instruct their students, in the same way the interviews reflected how the teachers delivered each lesson in ways to engage their students, making the learning and knowledge method an excited, motivated and challenging experience.

Findings for both data selection procedures complimented each other in the way that the notes from artifact records revealed participants' interviews straightening. For instance, all participants mentioned they must allocate their instructional time wisely, which is the same in a lesson plan where teachers must include the time for each activity. For example, do now is five (5) minutes and then reading is for ten (10) minutes it must be included in the lesson.

When it comes to accommodation, all participants mentioned their lesson plans must include ways and times they will use to adjust and correct for students that have an IEP, or a 504. Some of the adjustments include peer-to-peer, group, accountability talks, or independent and

collaborative instruction. When providing assessments, all participants agreed assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning. They also agreed there must be a specific time set for how students will be evaluated. In the matter of technology, all participants concurred that utilizing technology in the classroom was an excellent way of providing several learning models that the teachers personalize for their students. For example, the freedom to take the student on a virtual tour and use games and projects helped provide different methods to teach a variety of learners. Finally, all information demonstrated that when it comes to educating the student's participants were excited, motivated, and enthusiastic to teach and provide support to their students.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, all participants' points of view were covered, as well as the determination and contextual research used to analyze the information were clarified and presented. All participants conclusions, contentions, and thoughts were also outlined. Furthermore, the data analysis methods, study results, and a discussion of the findings were presented. Findings from this study have been found to be consistent with the findings of several related studies. Data findings were described. In the next chapter, the implications of the findings for research will be discussed as well as the limitations of this study will also be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter intends to summarize and explain the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in an urban turnaround school in the southern United States. This study's data analysis revealed six themes that support the research question: 1) accountability, 2) student learning, 3) testing overload, 4) teacher preparation, 5) school performance, and 6) student promotion. I conducted my research using the constructivist approach. The findings and conclusions are based on insights gained during data collection. Furthermore, limitations and recommendations for future study, practice, policy, and theory will also be discussed to exceed the scope and findings of this study.

Summary of the Results

Data collected from the structured interviews were carefully analyzed and revealed that the teacher participants understood the research question. In my study, I confirmed teacher participants were mindful that only teachers in urban turnaround schools are held accountable for the results of the standardized testing. I showed in my findings that teacher participants collaborate and engage in many technology activities to promote and inspire students learning. Moreover, teacher participants also divulged participants are not necessarily opposed to standardized testing but were concerned that testing is excessive. Based on the results, I uncovered that teacher participants spend a considerable amount of time preparing lessons for their students.

Teacher participants in urban turnaround schools are conscious of the overall test performance and how these tests affect the entire school. For example, test performance is used for teachers' evaluation, and school's funding can be affected if their standardized tests scores are low. Also based on my findings, I suggest teacher participants in urban turnaround schools

work to ensure all students are promoted to their appropriate grade level. Overall, all teacher participants wanted to engage their students in teaching and learning opportunities.

Discussion of the Results

The research question, "What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing, in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?" was the guiding compass for this research. I conducted two interviews and collected one artifact (lesson plans) from all teacher participants. Once data were collected, I utilized an inductive analysis to deconstruct the results of my interviews and allow the data to speak for itself.

The interviews revealed teacher participants in urban turnaround schools understood the meaning of accountability; to be a duty of any person or institutions to be accountable for its actions, take responsibility for them, and to reveal the outcomes transparently. There must be some checks and balances to ensure that proper procedures and guidelines are in place and followed by everyone in the organization. The teacher participants in the study explained that they are not opposed to accountability or the structure that surrounds it; these teacher participants in urban turnaround schools were opposed to being solely held accountable for the students' scores on the standardized test. Furthermore, the teacher participants in urban turnaround schools explained that because they are held accountable for testing scores their evaluation, job security, and pay or bonus incentive are at risk.

The themes that emerged from the interviews providing insight into the research question were standardized test preparation does not promote or invite students learning and standardized test have no impact on the students learning or their final grade. Teacher participants elaborated the student's performance on their class assessments was far better than the standardized test. This led participants to believe that although they were devoting numerous hours on standardized

test preparation and practice, the hours spent with their students covering their specify areas of study was producing knowledge and learning. Teacher participants attested the use of technology opened the doors to a variety of activities that helped keep students engaged in the learning process.

The artifacts (lesson plans) provided by the participants disclosed the teacher participants spent a vast amount of time in preparing lesson plans that were useless when the majority of the instructional time is devoted to standards that are on the standardized tests. The teacher participants also mentioned the importance of and need for assessment; however, they disagreed that a once a year test should determine students' final grade, or promotional status.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The review of the literature was used to further shed light on the research question: "What are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing, in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States?" Peer-reviewed articles and books were reviewed in order to find pertinent information to support the study. Themes reviewed were: accountability, student learning, testing overload, teachers' preparation, school performance, and student promotion.

Accountability

Accountability is the notion of holding schools, districts, educators, and students responsible for results. Each year in the United States millions of students take the yearly, standardized state tests to get a sense of how well their states, districts, schools, and even teachers are helping them learn (Klein 2018). Teacher participants in this study expressed their concerns with the test and made the connections that the test does not prepare the students or teach the students anything. Starr (2017) demonstrated standardized achievement tests were

deeply flawed, and test-based accountability damaged public education. In this study, teacher participants mentioned principals in urban turnaround schools were under a vast amount of pressure to increase scores and improve their school standing. Starr (2017) stated, "I tell my kids that standardized test does not mean anything in the long run and that they will never have to take such tests once they start working unless it is for certification of some kind" (p.1). Eckes and Bae (2014) found there is considerable debate about whether using students' test scores as a factor in teachers' evaluation systems is fair and effective. Teacher participants in urban turn around schools explained the test score does affect their evaluation. Teacher participants also mentioned to have real accountability, everyone should be held accountable for the progression of the students, including the district, school, community, parents, students, and teacher.

Student Learning

Student learning refers to the activity, action, and performance that the student exhibits in the classroom about a standard, project, or lesson covered by their teacher. Standardized testing is a way used to measure students' academic achievements; however, it should not be the only medium used to determine their success. Teacher participants in urban turnaround schools were not against the use of standardized tests; they expressed concern about how the tests are being used to determine if the students have attained or reached the desired knowledge. Weingarten (2014) stated standardized testing does not measure the big learning picture of critical thinking, perseverance, problem-solving, creativity or curiosity, which are qualities that teachers bring out in their students.

Teacher participants also mentioned the need to move forward and expose the student to a higher level by implementing more skill training which allowed the students to be an active participant and collaborator in the lesson. As expressed by Pike (2014) standardized tests only

measure a student's test-taking aptitudes, while ignoring the more important essential life lessons. The teacher participants discussed how important student learning was and standardized testing does not prepare the student for outside of school their preparation for life-long experiences hands-on programs that teach life-long skills needed to survive.

Testing Overload

One can describe testing overload as an excessive amount of something; in this case, the number of assessment that students are taking. The value of standardized testing is that it serves several purposes, and it is necessary because it helps students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community (Gawthrop, 2014). Teacher participants had a clear understanding that testing was needed and it was necessary; however, participants explained the amount of testing given to students is too much, and in many cases does not suggest or inspire learning. As reported by Viadero (2017) students spend an average of 10 days out of the school year taking the district-mandated tests. Nine days are taking state-required testing; however, this does not include the quizzes and tests students must take during regular classroom lessons and the time spent on test preparation. Teacher participants also expressed that while there is a need for measuring students' learning; the assessment needs to support learning. As noted by Gewertz (2014) most teachers still think too much time is spent on testing. Teacher participants discussed standardized testing does not align or does not assess mastery of any specific content; furthermore, standardized tests do not prepare students to achieve their potential.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation is to have the required knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills to accomplish the commissions effectively in the classroom, school, and community. According to

Pecheone and Whittaker (2016) described a current era of transformation in the preparation, induction, and assessment of prospective teachers. Teacher participants in this study understood the need for preparation, education, and certification in a specified subject area. Participants also contended teacher participants need better professional development session that will help promote teachers' growth. Carl (2014) found the current educational movement implements a variety of reforms including scripted curricula that often limit teachers' autonomy. Teacher participants agreed schools are under enormous pressure from districts and states to improve test scores. Schools have updated their curriculum with an emphasis on preparing each student for their standardized test, instead of educating them with valuable skills-based training that will enable them to grow and become responsible citizens (Carl, 2014). Teacher participants explained preparation for lifelong experiences come from skills-based programs that including life skills, critical and creative thinking, decision making, and self-awareness. Related, Yasin, Amin, and Hin (2018) found 21st century skills are necessary to achieve in the current job market. Teacher participants also stated hands-on programs teach students those lifelong skills they need to endure.

School Performance

School performance can be described as the magnitude to which a student, teacher, and the school has attained their short or long-term educational objectives. Klein (2018) explained the way American schools view assessment must change; assessment cannot reasonably attribute the performance of the school or assign the performance of a school to an individual. Teacher participants expressed frustration because their evaluation and the performance pay are attached to the ways the school performed on the standardized test. Koretz (2017) stated these were the effects of decades of educational reforms that progressively expanded the amount of externally

imposed testing and ratcheted up the pressure to raise scores. Teacher participants disagreed with the system at hand that evaluated, promoted, and retained teachers based on the way their school performs on the standardized test. Glasswell, Singh, and McNaughtm (2016) determined inside the changes of accountable reforms, teachers' work is evaluated in relations of value-added measurements which claim to assess individual teacher productivity against individual student test score performance, and rank and merit-pay teachers in a like manner. Teacher participants explained how standardized tests determine funding if students performed well on their test the school gets more financial support and principals could add additional programs to the school.

Student Promotion

One aspect of learning environments that can evoke intense affective reactions in students is testing. For decades, standardized tests, especially large-scale tests, have been used to measure student achievement with significant consequences for students (Rosenzweig & Miele, 2016). Teacher participants communicated the test is not a determining factor for the students to pass or fail it, some tests count as 10 or 20% of students' grades. According to Bhattacharyya, Junot, and Clark (2013), tests are not structured to accommodate each student's learning style or possible learning disabilities. Teacher participants expressed administrators and school officials place a heavy emphasis on the grading system so that all schools' accomplishments are from the test itself. Venable (2015) found that since standardized testing emphasizes accountability and the desire to increase academic standards, there was an effort to return toward retention. Teacher participants elaborated the facts were never about the students. Instead, the teacher participants explained the focus was about ranking systems, outnumbering the other schools in the area, money, programs, and to make the school better.

Limitations

Restrictions are viewed as factors influencing my investigation outside my ability to control or potential shortcomings in a study (Simon, 2011). The interviews were limited to one hour and ten questions. Also, another limitation was participants choosing not to elaborate on some answers. The results were constrained to the experiences of the teacher participants who were interviewed. Another confinement was time imperatives. The data accumulation process endured two months, and I focused my typological analysis (Hatch, 2002; Harding, 2013) in a four-month term. The artifacts (lesson plans) I collected were few, some teacher participants did not provide one, and others had limited information. Therefore, I could only collect the data that were on the lesson plans. Also, I did not observe the teacher participants in a class setting environment which constrained my analysis to the information on the lesson plans.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, Theory

In this section, I examine the implications of the outcomes with regards to practice, policy, and theory. I relate the outcomes to the conceptual framework of constructivism and clarify the implications of this study about practice and policy in association with the literature.

Practice

The depth found in practice is to isolate the factors adding to the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing, in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. Most teachers concurred assessments were critical, and all students must be given a type of evaluation to perceive what is being learned, however teachers were worried about the amount of testing that was occurring. The information introduced in this study demonstrates the teachers had no autonomy and the average weight of the test affected instructional time. This time set for

test preparation has restricted or shortened specific teaching techniques. Testing can affect the educational modules, and the instructional techniques teachers use.

Through my findings I demonstrate the disconnection that exists with those that prepared the standardized test and the one that administered the test. As reported by Viadero (2017) students spend an average of 10 days out of the school year taking the district-mandated test is and nine days taking state-required testing. However, this does not include the quizzes and tests they are given during their regular classroom lessons. This time also does not include the amount of time students spend on test preparation. Teachers participants expressed their concerns; they were using their experiences and those of their colleagues to make decisions to help students strive when it comes to taking the test.

The literature reflects that standardizing testing is a source of concern and the structure of standardized testing also does not account for potential testing differences about students from low-income family background, or students who identify with an ethnic or racial minority group, both of which may negatively impact student test scores. Language barriers may also affect a student's test scores (Banerjee & Lamb 2016; Bhattacharyya et al., 2013; Kim & Zabelina 2015; Mitchell 2017).

Policy

I also suggest those who make curriculum decisions need to look at the advantages as well as disadvantages of using standardized testing. Broussard (2014) expressed the need to avoid basing an entire education system on materials so costly that big, urban districts cannot afford to buy them. An authentic evaluation might be best composed by the teacher who taught the material and who knows the students and their current academic progress. If teachers

outlined assessments that are more directly correlated to material taught, parents would be given a more reasonable assessment of their child's advancement and achievements.

Policymakers should not ignore this situation, but instead it should be taken into serious consideration when changes in education policy are being made. Broussard (2014) illustrated how the majority of this has to do with the economics of testing. Across the nation, standardized tests come from one of three companies: CTB McGraw Hill, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, or Pearson (Broussard, 2014). Adopting programs created by outside sources is not new to government-funding education. However, the findings of this study indicated that as of now, the most considerable concern when considering the selection of a program appeared to be with its ability to raise test scores as opposed to addressing other aspects of education such as an individual student's needs.

Theory

Through the results of my study, I suggest the teacher participants are actively involved in the instructional learning experiences they are providing for their students, their knowledge of these experiences is based on their learning and insights acquired over the years as educators. Concerning the conceptual framework of this study, Dewey (1966) conducted a dynamic rational atmosphere of education in where he produced learning. Dewey illustrated education was an activity in which thoughts appeared by circumstances the learner generally faced in the process of gaining knowledge. The teacher's participants obtain knowledge based on their own experiences.

Furthermore, constructivists share attention on the student-focused approach and the density of the student's psychological strategy for their learning and support needs and the benefit of investing students with a chance to make sense and be suitable, influential, and

advocates in the instructional learning process. According to Brooks and Brooks (1999), "For building understanding, the pupil should have certain liberties to consider, inquire and to interrelate with thoughts." As the information and results from this research study illustrated, teachers no matter what type and where they are in their respective careers; all teachers keep performing at a high level by gained and shared experiences.

However, in light of the discoveries, teacher participants did not receive the measure of instructional support and the preparation they needed to provide a balance and challenging atmosphere of teaching and learning to their students. In the broadest sense, the results imply urging students to utilize effective procedures (critical thinking, experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and afterward to consider and discuss what they are doing and how their comprehension is evolving. Brader et al. (2002) suggested, "constructivism is the thought about the expansion of knowledge entail the student in forming a sense of knowledge utilizing dynamically connected with the thought." It is the teacher participant's responsibility to ensure she or he understands their students' preexisting conceptions and guides the activity to address them and then build on them.

Furthermore, all teacher participants in the study expressed the need to incorporate work base skills into the program of study and allow teacher participants to build an environment in which students can determine their potential as a reason for learning. Holthuis et al. (2018) proposed that "our projects not only provide an excellent opportunity for students to gain skills and content understanding but also serve as performance-based assessments." Teachers believed students' work-based learning should encompass constructivism. Further, it is imperative to incorporate work-based learning in lesson plans; and to use instructional delivery to help students learn from their experiences while providing opportunities for them to work together,

encouraging them to think critically and make sense of the information, assisting those that need extra help to develop and focus them on being productive citizens in this new era of multicultural, sociocultural, and diverse society in which they are part of.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research are as follows: additional participants and classroom observation on a larger scale could further insight on teachers' perceptions of standardized testing of students over a stipulated time frame. Another recommendation is to have a broader study of several turnaround schools and using triangulation of data would provide an expansive view of the use of standardized testing. A replication of this study may also contemplate the value of a comparable methodology to the sampling method feasibly to included other turned around schools in the district the purpose will be to identify why some turnaround schools are more proficient than others.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of this research study and discussed the findings of the literature. The teacher participants wanted to be considered in order to utilize their experience and knowledge to have an active part in the development and implementation of educational reform. The education of students is the most important task in a society. If students are the future, a society have to make sure that they have the best opportunity for a full, rich education. Students face global changes and technological advances, so society members need to prepare students for the challenges at hand.

In my dissertation I considered a gap in the teaching practice, embedding the framework of constructivism to understand teachers' perspectives. I aimed to pinpoint and understand factors contributing to experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in an

urban turnaround school in the southern United States. In my study I addressed reactions of the teacher participants to standardized testing. In doing, more questions were brought up for further study about this issue.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase our understanding of what are the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the south. As a teacher in an inner-city school, you are in an ideal position to give me valuable first-hand information from your perspective. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of teachers regarding the use of standardized testing in urban turnaround schools in the southern United States. I will need to collect data from you in the form of lesson plans.

The interview takes around 60 to 90 minutes and is very informal via Facetime, Skype or face-to-face I am flexible and what to accommodate what is best for you. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a teacher in an urban setting. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. There is small compensation for participating in the entire study. Your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to a higher public understanding of the issue. At the end of all process, you will receive a $20 Visa gift card.

If you are willing to participate, please provide a good cell number where you can be reached so that we can communicate and suggest a day and time that suits you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks!

Mely Jemmott
Email–xxxxxxxx@gmail.com

Appendix B: First-Interview Questions

1. Please state your name, how long have you been a teacher, and what are your duties at your current school.
2. Tell me more about standardized testing guidelines at your school. Which guidelines are effective?
3. Describe how testing accommodations are done for student with disability.
4. Tell me what amount of instructional time is spent each year teaching concepts that are on the standardized tests. How necessary are these concepts to the students learning?
5. Describe the quality of measurement provided by standardized tests in creating assessments of student's performance.
6. Describe student understanding of standardized test instructions
7. Explain the role that the standardized test system or state–wide testing plays in promoting decisions.
8. Describe the ways in which schools and policy makers use standardized testing data.
9. Based on your experience, tell me how standardized testing prepared students for lifelong learning and the challenges of the 21st century.
10. Explain why the final subject grade should or should not reflect students standardized testing score.

Appendix C: Example of Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 9-12
Course Name: Biology, likely best suited for an AP Biology class
Unit: Biochemistry
The length of Unit: 12-14 days: allowing extra time for virtual labs and scaffolding to ensure students have made meaningful connections to the content. Will use "additional activities" to further content understanding, as necessary.
Standards Covered:
Science Framework for California Public Schools (Code: FW-Standard Set#-letter)
* denotes slightly more advanced material

I. Biology
    1. Standard Set #1: The fundamental life processes of plants and animals depend on a variety of chemical reactions that occur in specialized areas of the organism's cells.
        a. Students know cells are enclosed within semipermeable membranes that regulate their interaction with their surroundings.
        b. Students know enzymes are proteins that catalyze biochemical reactions without altering the reaction equilibrium and the activities of enzymes depend on the temperature, ionic conditions, and the pH of the surroundings.
        a. Students know good energy is captured from sunlight by chloroplasts and is stored through the synthesis of sugar from carbon dioxide.
        b. Students know the role of the mitochondria in making stored chemical-bond energy available to cells by completing the breakdown of glucose to carbon dioxide.
        c. Students know most macromolecules (polysaccharides, nucleic acids, proteins, lipids) in cells and organisms are synthesized from a small collection of simple precursors.
        d. *Students know how chemiosmotic gradients in the mitochondria and chloroplast store energy for ATP production.
    2. Standard Set #4: Genes are a set of instructions encoded in the DNA sequence of each organism that specify the sequence of amino acids in proteins characteristic of that organism.
        a. Students know the general pathway by which ribosomes synthesize proteins, using tRNAs to translate genetic information in mRNA.
        b. Students know how to apply the genetic coding rules to predict the sequence of amino acids from a sequence of codons in RNA.
        c. Students know how mutations in the DNA sequence of a gene may or may not affect the expression of the gene or the sequence of amino acids in the encoded protein.

e. Students know proteins can differ from one another in the number and sequence of amino acids.
f. *Students know why proteins are having different amino acid sequences typically have different shapes and chemical properties.

3. Standard Set #5: The genetic composition of cells can be altered by incorporation of exogenous DNA into cells.
    a. Students know the general structures and functions of DNA, RNA, and protein.
    b. Students know how to apply base-pairing rules to explain precise copying of DNA during semiconservative replication and transcription of information from DNA into mRNA.
    c. Students know how genetic engineering (biotechnology) is used to produce novel biomedical and agricultural products.

I. Chemistry

1. Standard Set #10: The bonding characteristics of carbon allow the formation of many different organic molecules of varied sizes, shapes, and chemical properties and provide the biochemical basis of life.
    a. Students know large molecules (polymers), such as proteins, nucleic acids, and starch, are formed by repetitive combinations of simple subunits.
    b. Students know the bonding characteristics of carbon that result in the formation of a large variety of structures ranging from simple hydrocarbons to complex polymers and biological molecules.
    c. Students know amino acids are the building blocks of proteins.
    f. *Students know the R-group structure of amino acids and know how they combine to form the polypeptide backbone structure of proteins.

Next Generation Science Standards

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

HS-LS1-1 - Construct an explanation based on evidence for how the structure of DNA determines the structure of proteins which carry out the essential functions of life through systems of specialized cells.

HS-LS1-5 - Use a model to illustrate how Photosynthesis transforms light energy into stored chemical energy.

HS-LS1-6 - Construct and revise an explanation based on evidence for how carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen from sugar molecules may combine with other elements to form amino acids and other large carbon-based molecules.

HS-LS1-7 - Use a model to illustrate that cellular respiration is a chemical process whereby the bonds of food molecules and oxygen molecules are broken, and the bonds in new compounds are formed resulting in a net transfer of energy.

Lesson #1: Biomolecules/Macromolecules

Day #1: Introduction to Biochemistry and Biomolecules - You are what you eat.

Objectives:

1. Students will understand carbon, its bonding characteristics and how organic molecules are the building blocks of monomers, which make-up polymers.
2. Students will understand that polymers are the simple subunit that make-up macromolecules.
3. Students will know the four major macromolecules are DNA/RNA, proteins, carbohydrates, and lipids.
4. Students will build their macromolecule using common household materials.

Standards covered: FW 1h, 10a, 10b; HS-LS1-6

Instructional Strategies:

1. HANDOUT: BIOCHEM PUZZLE (5-10 min.)
    a. Give students the “Biochem Puzzle” handout (see "biochem_puzzle_1" doc).
    b. Instruct them to briefly read through the 19-word definitions to preview terms that will be covered as part of the PowerPoint Presentation. They will complete the puzzle at the end of the lesson.
2. POWERPOINT PRESENTATION (15 min.): Intro to biomolecules, vocabulary terms defined, concepts introduced, basic structures, functions, polymers of each of the four major macromolecules (see "biomlcules_pp" slides 1-11).
3. ACTIVITY: Build your macromolecule (20 min.)
    a. **Instruct** students to build their macromolecule using beads, pipe cleaners, and paper clips.

Appendix D: Second-Interview Questions

1. Describe your instructional block: include minutes devoted to regular teaching and assessment preparation.
2. How would you accommodate students during instructional time, so they are ready for the test?
3. Describe how the school rating affects your teaching.
4. What do you think teachers should spend most of their time teaching? Please provide rational and examples.
5. Describe ways you can motivate student's performance on standardized testing when they are overwhelmed or do not want to perform.

Appendix E: Inductive Analysis Coding Steps

- Read the data and identify frames of analysis.
- Create themes based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis.
- Identify salient themes, assign them a code, and put others aside.
- Reread data, refining salient themes and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data.
- Decide if your themes are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your themes.
- Complete an analysis within themes.
- Search for themes *across* themes.
- Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among themes.
- Select data excerpts to support elements in your outline.

Inductive Analysis Coding Process

Initial reading of text data	Identify specific segments related to the objective	Label the segments of text to create categories	Reduce overlap and redundancies among the categories	Create a model incorporating the most important categories
Many pages of text	Many segments of text	30 to 50 categories	15 to 20 categories	3 to 8 categories

Appendix F: Typological Analysis Coding Steps

- Identify typologies to be analyzed.
- Read the data, marking entries related to the typologies.
- Read entries by topology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet.
- Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies.
- Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which element of your patterns.
- Decide if patterns are supported by the data and search the data for nonexamples of your patterns.
- Look for relationships among the patterns identified.
- Write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations.
- Select data excerpts that support your generalizations.

Appendix G: Participant Teaching Information

Pseudonym	Subject	School System	Years
Vanessa	Criminal Justice	Regular public school	7
Olivia	English	Regular public school	13
Kenny	English	Regular public school	7
Pam	Special education	Regular public school	11
Sondra	Instructional facilitator	Regular public school	38
Denise	Chemistry	Regular public school	40
Rudy	Early Childhood Education	Regular public school	6
Elvin	Physical education	Private school	8
Jaleesa	Social Studies	Regular public school	3
Maggie	English	Regular public school	26
Clair	Geometry	Regular public school	14

Appendix H: Codes and Themes

Theme	Abbreviation	Codes
Accountability	AS	Assessment
	TEX	Teacher Experience
	IT	Instructional Time
	I	Intervention
	SLG	Student Learning Growth
Student Learning	A	Accommodations
	TEC	Technology
	SR	Student Reward
Testing Overload	TTT	Teaching to Test
	OP	Online Platforms
	TR	Teacher Readiness
	CTI	Computerized Testing Imperfections
Teacher Preparations	SM	Student Motivation
	IT	Instructional Time
	OP	Online Platforms
	TEC	Technology
School Performances	UD	Uses of Data
	TE	Teacher Evaluation
	TSV	Test Score Values
	BOS	Benefits of the score
Student Promotion	TSV	Test Score Values
	UD	Used of Data

Appendix I: Participant Teaching Experiences

Pseudonym	Subject	Degree	Years
Vanessa	Criminal Justice	Master	7
Olivia	English	Master	13
Kenny	English	E.Ds.	7
Pam	Special education	Master	11
Sondra	Instructional facilitator	Master + 45	38
Denise	Chemistry	Master+45	40
Rudy	Early Childhood Education	Doctorate	6
Elvin	Physical education	Master	8
Jaleesa	Social Studies	Master	3
Maggie	AP English	Doctorate	26
Clair	Geometry	E.Ds.	14

Appendix J: Instructional Time

Pseudonym	Percentage
Vanessa	90
Olivia	100
Kenny	100
Pam	100
Sondra	25
Denise	90
Rudy	100
Elvin	50
Jaleesa	95
Clair	80
Maggie	90

Appendix K: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Appendix K: Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced. All permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Melida Vega Jemmott
(Digital Signature)

Melida Vega Jemmott
(Name)

11/30/18
(Date)